

**From the “Kano Party” Onwards: Revisiting the State Veto on Christian Missionary
Evangelisation in British Northern Nigeria**

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Abstract

European and North American Christian Missionaries came to evangelise in Northern Nigeria at the turn of the 20th century. The Christian Missionaries who evangelised in Northern Nigeria, at the turn of the 20th century, did so under the supervision of British colonial officials. Hence, British officials permitted Christian missionaries to evangelise in certain places and restricted them from working in other locations. Official restrictions on Christians evangelisation in Northern Nigeria created religious spheres in the area. The government creation of religious spheres in the area emanated from tensions between state officials and Christian missionaries. As such, when British officials were ready to take over political control of the territories that became Northern Nigeria Christian missionaries were also preparing to proselytise in the same area. The attention of the two groups of Europeans over the same territories and their population resulted in a clash of interest that generated tensions. British officials, therefore, instituted policies so as to mitigate the tensions. One of the strategies employed by colonial officials was the restriction on Christian proselytisation in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria. An outcome of the policy was the demarcation of non-Muslim areas, such as the Jos Plateau area and its surrounding low lands, the Adamawa high lands and the Benue valley area for Christian evangelization. Despite the demarcation of religious spheres, however, Christian missionaries were later allowed to undertake limited endeavours in the locations that were under Emirate rule. Scholars have examined the events of the Christian missionary enterprise in British Northern Nigeria and presented their perspectives on the encounter. My intension, in this article, is to contribute to the scholarly conversation on the encounter and review the salient perspectives on the subject matter.

Key words: Christian, Mission, Evangelisation and Northern Nigeria

Introduction

Towards the end of the 19th century European and North American Christian mission organisations mobilised volunteers to convey Christianity to the Soudan.¹ The western, central and eastern areas located to the south of the Sahara desert were referred to as the Soudan in European and North American Christian Missionary circles during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Soudan encompassed areas from the Senegal valley, in the west, to the Camerounian mountains, in the east.² As such, what became the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria fell under the central and eastern parts of this western Christian missionary geography. The area consisted largely of the erstwhile politically centralised Hausa states and the Kanuri empire that were located on the fringes of the Sahara Desert as well as the numerous multi-

¹ Abdullahi, Samuel Sani. “Women and the Christian Missionary Encounter in the Jos Plateau Area of British Nigeria”, *African Journal of Social Science Education*, vol. 2: 1 (2022), 11.

² Abdullahi, “Women and the...”, 11.

cultural polities that inhabited vast areas to the south of the centralised entities.³ The politically centralised areas had encountered Islamic influences many centuries ago.⁴ Islam had begun to penetrate the Hausa states as from the 14th century and by the 19th century reformist Muslim preachers, under the leadership of Usman dan Fodio, constituted the area into Emirates. While the leaders of the Emirates were Muslims there were large numbers of non-Muslim animists and polytheists within the Islamic theocratic territories. Similarly, the leadership of the Kanuri empire, known as the Kanem-Borno empire, had accepted Islam as far back as the 11th century.⁵ Despite, the existence of Islam in the Soudan, however, there were many members of numerous cultural groups that inhabited vast territories to the south of the two large political entities that practiced various forms of indigenous polytheism. Members of these cultural groups inhabited areas in the Guinea savannah belt, parts of the Benue trough and Niger basin, the Adamawa high lands as well as the Jos Plateau high lands and its surrounding lowlands.⁶ The intention of the Christian missionaries was to stop the southward spread of Islam from the Maghreb into sub-Saharan Africa.⁷

European and North American Christian missionaries who planned the evangelisation of the Soudan referred to their mission as “the burden of the Soudan”.⁸ The missionaries also labelled the process to enlist volunteers for the mission as the “call for the Soudan”. The call for the Soudan was made, at different locations and by various Christian missionary organisations. Some of the Christian organisations include the Sudan Mission Party that metamorphosed into the Sudan United Mission (SUM), the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and its affiliates.⁹ Others were the United Missionary Society (UMS), the Church of the Brethren (CBM) and the various Catholic Missionary groups such as the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CSSp.) and the *Societe des Missions Africaines* (SMA) among others, that were

³ Abdullahi, Samuel Sani. “A History of Christianity during the Period of British Colonial Rule in Nigeria, 1900-1960” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2019), 1-4.

⁴ Abdullahi, Samuel Sani. et al “The Impact of Islam on Pre-Jihad Hausa Society”, *Bokkos Journal of Humanities*, (2015), 154-165.

⁵ Doi, Abdu Rahman Ibn. “Spread of Islam in West Africa (part 3 of b3): The Empires of Kanem Borno and Hausa-Fulani Land” <https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/302/spread-of-islam-in-west-africa-part-3> retrieved on 26th May, 2025.

⁶ Abdullahi, “A History of 3-5 and Abdullahi, “Women and the... 11

⁷ Abdullahi, Samuel Sani. “The Christian Encounter and European Racial Attitude(s) in the Jos Plateau Area of British Nigeria” this volume.

⁸ Abdullahi, “Women and the..., 11.

⁹ Abdullahi, “Women and the..., 14.

collectively referred to as the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM).¹⁰ Hence, the pioneer Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria consisted of people who responded to the “call for the Soudan”.

Staging Areas

At the time Christian missionaries were preparing to evangelise the “Soudan” Christianity had already been conveyed to the people of the coastal and rain forest areas of what became the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria.¹¹ During the same period, that Christianity was conveyed to the south, some missionary organisations deployed a few African agents to locations around the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers.¹² Hence, African Christian missionaries were stationed in places such as Lokoja, Bida and Pategi. As such, the Anglican Bishopric of Western Equatorial Africa, established by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, had a station in Lokoja while missionaries of the SIM had theirs at Pategi.¹³ Other missionaries such as Allakura Sharpe, a Kanuri man of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS), also operated in Nupe land while expatriate Catholic priests of the SMA and Cssp made advances into Lokoja and Ibi respectively.¹⁴ A group of 12 English Christian missionaries of the CMS, known as the Sudan Party, also operated from Lokoja in 1890.¹⁵

The Niger-Benue confluence was perceived by these local and expatriate Christian missionaries as the staging area from where they would convey Christianity further north into the Hausa Emirates and Kanuri areas. To achieve the desired objective the local Christian agents around the Niger Benue confluence sent reports, that envisioned the readiness of the local population for religious conversion to Christianity, to their parent organisations in the western hemisphere.¹⁶ These reports made members of the European and North American Christian mission organisations that wanted to evangelise in the Soudan to entertain high hopes for the mass religious conversion of the millions of people that populated the area to Christianity.¹⁷

¹⁰ Ubah, Chinedu Nwafor, “Christian Missionary Penetration of the Nigerian Emirates: The Village School Approach” *TransAfrican Journal of History*, vol. 17, (1988), 109.

¹¹ Crampton, Edmund. *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. (Bukuru: ACTS, 2004), 22-31 and 35-42.

¹² Crampton, *Christianity in Northern...* 22-31 and 35-42.

¹³ Turaki, Yusufu. *An Introduction to the History of the SIM/ECWA 1893-1993*, (Jos: Challenge, 1993), 100-104.

¹⁴ Ayandele, E. “The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria, 1870-1918,” *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 3 no. 3, (1966), 503-4.

¹⁵ Ayandele, “The Missionary Factor...”, 507.

¹⁶ Ayandele, “The Missionary Factor...”, 508.

¹⁷ Bingham, *Seven Sevens of Years and A Jubilee: The Story of the Sudan Interior Mission*. (Toronto: Evangelical Publishers, 1943), 9-12.

The Christian missionary staging area around the Niger-Benue confluence was also shared by European explorers, company agents and scholars. In fact, some of the voyages and deputations of these agents of European imperialism were carried out jointly.¹⁸ Thus, these imperial agents, who had been sent to open up the Niger areas for the purpose of trade, political domination and religious conversion, shared similar aspirations.¹⁹ For example, Canon Charles Henry Robinson, a lecturer at Cambridge University, reported that the Hausa were not bigoted Muslims.²⁰ Robinson, who resided in Hausa land for three months, to study the Hausa language, reported that the Hausa population of the Emirates were not deeply religious compared with their Fulani rulers. Christian missionaries who nurtured the ambition to evangelise the Soudan saw in Robinson's information an opportunity to proselytise a population that already possessed the religious knowledge of monotheism but were not enthusiastic about the version that had been transmitted to them. As such, the Christian missionaries thought that converting the Hausa from Islam to Christianity was going to be an easy task. However, they were soon to be proved wrong.

At the time that Christian missionaries were operating around the Niger-Benue confluence agents of the British chartered Royal Niger Company (RNC) were also stationed at Lokoja.²¹ This was so because Christian mission posts in the Niger area were stationed alongside trading stations of the RNC. The proximity of the operations of the two points of European interests made the missionaries to admire the commercial prowess of the company that was often perpetrated along with political chivalry. One of the aspirations of the company was the usurpation of the authority of the Emirs of the Sokoto confederacy.²² The prospects of the overthrow of the Fulani leaders of the Emirates by the agents of the RNC and the possibility of bringing their subjects under British rule was exciting to the Christian missionary superintendents of the CMS, as well as those of other missions that wanted to proselytise the Hausa people, who felt that Fulani leadership was an obstacle to the religious conversion of the masses.²³

The Niger-Benue confluence area was not the only staging point for European Christian missionaries who wanted to evangelise the "Soudan". This is so because some Christian

¹⁸ Kenneth Onwuka Dike "Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891" A Paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on 13th November, 1957. (Ibadan, University Press, 1962).

¹⁹ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor... 508.

²⁰ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor... 508.

²¹ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor... 508.

²² Ukpabi, S. *Mercantile Soldiers in Nigerian History: A History of the Royal Niger Constabulary Army 1886-1900* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation Limited, 1987), 31.

²³ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor... 504-8

missionaries, who were very enthusiastic about the religious conversion of the Hausa Emirates, went as far as Tripoli to learn Hausa in preparation to tackle the “burden of the Soudan”.²⁴ These include missionaries such as Grattan Guinness and his family, Dr. Herman Karl Wilhelm Kumm, founder of the SUM, Canon C. H. Robinson and Walter Miller of the CMS. Others include Mr. Charles Robinson and Mr. Albert Taylor of the SIM. Tripoli, at that time, was an important route/stop over for Muslim pilgrims from the Hausa territory en route to Mecca. The city had a thriving Hausa community and Christian missionaries and British officials preparing for service in the “Soudan” used it as a centre to learn both Hausa and Arabic before being deployed.²⁵ It was at Tripoli that Karl Kumm met Mr. C. L. Temple, a British official who was designated for service in Northern Nigeria.²⁶ In Tripoli, Temple convinced Kumm to begin his intended evangelisation of the “Soudan” in Northern Nigeria. Temple later became the British administration’s Resident of Bauchi Province.²⁷ Bauchi Province at the beginning of British rule in Northern Nigeria included the northern and central parts of the Jos Plateau, referred to at that time as the Bauchi Plateau or Bauchi highlands.

European Christian Missionary Pioneers to the Soudan

The first attempt at the evangelisation of the core of the Soudan was carried out by members of the SIM in 1893.²⁸ Three members of the SIM namely Rowland Bingham, Walter Gowans and Thomas Kent made an expedition beyond the Niger-Benue area with the hope of conveying the Christian message to the heart of Hausa land. However, sickness and tragedy truncated their mission.²⁹ All three of the missionaries fell sick. The first to succumb to sickness was Rowland Bingham who fell ill in Lagos and was left behind at Ogbomosho. The second was Walter Gowans who died of ill health and was buried at Gierku, located to the south of Zaria. Thomas Kent also succumbed to ill health, died and was buried at Bida, after returning inland with supplies from the coast. Bingham, the only survivor of the first team of Christian missionary evangelists to the Soudan made another attempt to reach the heart of Hausa land in 1900 but was forced to return home due to ill health. Despite their intention to be the first set of

²⁴ Maxwell, J. *Half a Century of Grace: A Jubilee History of the Sudan United Mission*. (London: SUM, 1953), 13 and Turaki, Yusufu. *An Introduction to the History of the SIM/ECWA 1893-1993*. (Jos: Challenge, 1993), 66.

²⁵ Maxwell, *Half a Century...*, 13 and Turaki, *An Introduction to...*, 66.

²⁶ Maxwell, *Half a Century*, 26 and Boer, Jan. *Missions Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* (Ibadan: Day Star Press, 1984), 32-33, 75.

²⁸ Baba, Eliazar Daila. “The Chronicles of the SIM Missions in Nigeria between 1893-1950” *IJHSSE* vol. 9: 9, (2022), 9.

²⁹ “Our History-Evangelical Church Wining All” <https://ecwaglbai.org/our-history> retrieved on 31st May, 2025.

Christian missionaries to evangelise in the Soudan members of the SIM were only able to open a station at Patigi, within the earlier mentioned staging area, in 1901. Thus, although members of the SIM were eventually able to establish a strong presence all over Northern Nigeria they were, however, restricted to the Niger-Benue confluence area at the beginning of the 20th century. The responsibility of reaching heart land of the Hausa Emirates was, therefore, left to another set of Christian missionaries. Known as the “Kano Party”.

The “Kano Party”

The first Christian missionary expedition to reach the heart land of the “Soudan” took place between the end of 1899 and 1900.³⁰ Thus, in the first half of 1900 the medical doctor Walter Miller, in the company of Reverends J. C. Dudley-Rider, A. E. Richardson and Mr. Burgin, all British missionaries of the CMS, met Bishop Herbert Tugwell at Lagos and travelled northwards with the intention to reach Kano and begin the conversion of Hausa people to Christianity.³¹ Kano was one of the most important political and commercial centres of the Hausa and Fulani admixture in Northern Nigeria hence it had been an attraction to European Christian missionaries since the late 1800s when European Christian missionaries hoped to create a buffer zone against the southwards expansion of Islam from the Maghreb. Bishop Tugwell succeeded Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther as the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa. At the same time that Christian missionaries were making efforts to reach Hausa land British military forces had begun the conquest of territories north of the Niger and Benue confluence. Thus, members of the missionary expedition had been advised not to go beyond areas where British forces had not subjugated.³² The advice not to outrun British troops was given, first, by Fredrick Lugard the newly appointed High Commissioner for Northern Nigeria, who met the team before their departure from England, and second, by the CMS hierarchy at Salisbury Square.³³ Despite being advised not to outrun the British military the missionary group went ahead of British forces and stopped over at Zaria. From Zaria the group made for Kano where they hoped to open a station.

³⁰ “Expedition to Hausa land” *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, vol. 51: 25 (1900), 675-687.

³¹ “Expedition to Hausa, 675.

³² “Expedition to Hausa, 675 and Linden, Ian. *Emirs, Evangelicals and Empire*, www.ianlinden.com retrieved on 17th June, 2025. 16-19.

³³ Abdullahi, “A History of ...”, 65-66

The Hausa party were encouraged by the friendly reception they had on their way to Zaria.³⁴ At Zaria the Emir, Kwassau, received the CMS missionaries in a friendly manner.³⁵ The friendly disposition of the Emir to the missionaries emanated from his belief that a pact with the Europeans would safeguard his office. This was so because European colonial conquests had begun with the British approaching from the south while the French were subjugating territories from the north. In addition, the ruler of Zaria was out of favour with the seat of the Sokoto Caliphate and was also not having optimal relations with his neighbour the Emir of Kano. Thus, Kwassau felt that aligning with British subjects will put him in a favourable stance with the impending British forces when they arrived in his domain. Kwassau implored the missionaries to remain in Zaria but they were fixated on Kano. Therefore, the ‘Kano Party’ left for Kano.³⁶

The journey of the CMS missionaries from Zaria to Kano contrasted with their trip from Lokoja to Zaria. This was so because despite the warm welcome that the Christian missionaries received on their journey to and within Zaria metropolis they were treated with less enthusiasm on their way to Kano. Aliyu the Emir of Kano did not want the Christian missionaries in his domain and had even sent messengers to inform the missionary expedition not to proceed to Kano.³⁷ However, a decision by their guides to use Fanisho, a less popular route from Zaria to Kano, instead of the Dan Soshia road made the emissaries to miss the missionary party. The Christian missionaries eventually reached Kano, sang hymns at the city gates and were received by the *Ma’aji* (treasurer), who was the third ranked official of the Emirate.³⁸ The missionary party had audience with the Emir the following day and the *Ma’aji* accommodated them before and after they met with the ruler. Aliyu, the Emir was stern with the missionary party during their engagement. The exchanges during the discussions between the Emir and the agents of the CMS ended with their expulsion from Kano.³⁹

Reverend A. E. Richardson, a member of the Hausa party, recounted their experience in Kano. He said although they were able to secure an audience with the *Sarkin* Kano he, however, refused them permission to reside and evangelise within his domain.⁴⁰ As such, the unfriendly countenance with which *Sarkin* Kano attended to the missionaries sealed the fate of the first

³⁴ Ayandele, “Missionary Factor in...”, 510

³⁵ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 675-687 and Ayandele, “Missionary Factor in...”, 510-511.

³⁶ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 680.

³⁷ Ayandele, “Missionary Factor in...”, 510.

³⁸ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 681 and Ayandele, “Missionary Factor in...”, 510-511

³⁹ Emirs of Kano in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period are known to make important public pronouncements that concern policy thrusts of the Sokoto Caliphate.

⁴⁰ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 675-687 and Abdullahi, “A History of ...”, 66.

attempt by European evangelical Christian missionaries to proselytise at the core of Hausa land. To show his displeasure at the missionaries, the *Sarki* not only gave them audience at his country home in Faniso, located six kilometres beyond the Kano city wall, but referred to them in the third person while speaking to them.⁴¹ ‘Reverend Richardson recalls the Emir asking: “Why have they come? And Bishop Tugwell’s reply: We are religious teachers, we are Christians, and we have come to ask permission to teach your people”. He recalls the Emir’s angry retort “What will they teach? Will they teach the Qur’an?” “They must go back they must go back. I cannot permit them to stay in my town. I *sallame* them" i.e. I bid them farewell.⁴² The Christian missionaries entreated the Emir by saying that they were not only teachers but had a doctor among them who would attend to the sick. To which the Emir replied that “We have all the medicine that we need according to the Qur’an”.⁴³ In this manner the Emir Aliyu rebuffed the appeals of the members of the Kano party to be permitted to reside and work in Kano. Furthermore, he gave the Christian missionaries three days to leave Kano metropolis or face a fatal end.

Members of the Kano Party felt humiliated by their encounter with Aliyu Emir of Kano. However, despite the Emir Aliyu’s stance against keeping the ‘Hausa party’ in his Emirate the *Ma’aji* in whose care they were kept treated them well and assigned his steward Dan Kurege to attend to their needs. The *Ma’aji* was later fined for his friendly disposition towards the missionaries while his servant who attended to their welfare was rumoured to have been taken to the gallows.⁴⁴ The humiliation of the ‘Kano party’ by *Sarki* Aliyu was felt not just by the members of the missionary expedition but also by high ranking colonial officials such as Lugard who felt that the ‘white’ man’s prestige had been slighted.⁴⁵ They, therefore, put measures in place to prevent such incidences from reoccurring. The preventive measures that colonial officials put in place to forestall any future European Christian missionary diplomatic mishaps in Northern Nigeria were infused into the administrative policy known as “Indirect Rule”.

Indirect Rule and the Official Veto of European Christian Missionary Activities in Northern Nigeria

⁴¹ The Emir addressed the Christian missionaries in the third person in accordance with the Hausa Saurata tradition whereby the *Sarki* (i.e. King or in this instance Emir) communicated with an audience through an intermediary. The intermediary transmitted what the *Sarki* said to his audience in the third person and reported the audience’s response to the Emir in the third person as well.

⁴² I *sallame* them as Reverend A. Richardson narrated or *Na sallame su* in Hausa means “I bid them farewell” See “Expedition to Hausa...”, 681 and Abdullahi, “A History of ...”, 66.

⁴³ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 681.

⁴⁴ “Expedition to Hausa...”, 684.

⁴⁵ Ayandele, “Missionary Factor in...”, 511 and 514 and “Expedition to Hausa...”, 681.

At the onset of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria British officials enacted a policy known as “Indirect Rule”. Indirect Rule was an administrative policy of governance during the period of European, especially British, domination of Africa and other parts of the world whereby colonial officials governed the subject population using local intermediaries.⁴⁶ The policy was meant to solve the problem of the shortage of European staff in the colonies. As such, indigenous administrative structures were made subordinate to European authority by incorporating local officials into the colonial administration while maintaining traditional norms and customs that were not at variance with European laws. The implementation of Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, not only, gave authority for local administration to Emirs and chiefs who were made subordinate to British officials but also sought to control local social and religious dynamics of the subject population.⁴⁷

It is often assumed that the incorporation of indigenous political structures was cardinal to the operations of Indirect Rule in colonial Northern Nigeria, in particular, and in British African colonies in general. The assumption seems credible when the importance of the roles that local officials played within the scope of operations of the Indirect Rule is considered. Despite the centrality of local officials and indigenous structures in the adoption of Indirect Rule its implementation was, however, sometimes at variance with its core principle. This is so because the application of indirect rule in certain places entailed the creation of centralised authority in areas where local customs did not confer the administrative and judicial powers of their communities on an individual or on a few individuals. This was the situation among the Igbo communities of Eastern Nigeria where their tradition administrative hierarchy was based on egalitarian principles.⁴⁸

The implementation of Indirect Rule in some places also entailed the extension of the authority of certain sub colonial officials over areas and people whom they previously had no influence over. In this regard, the extension of the authority of local rulers beyond their traditional pre-colonial spheres of influence meant the importation of alien customs and leaders over certain indigenous people. As such, local officials were appointed from certain cultural groups and posted to administer people of other cultures as part of the exigencies of Indirect Rule.

⁴⁶ Lugard, Frederick. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (London: Frank Cass: 1965), 196, 198 and 200-213. Also see Nwabughuogu, Anthony. “The Role of Propaganda in the Development of Indirect Rule in Nigeria 1890-1929”. *The International Journal of African Studies*. Boston University African Studies Centre. 14: 1, (1981). 77-78.

⁴⁷ Linden, *Emirs, Evangelicals and...*, 29-30 and 44.

⁴⁸ Afigbo, A. E. “The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect Rule?”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 3: 4, (1967), 683-700.

Such occurrences followed the implementation of Indirect Rule in the Yoruba areas of south western Nigeria, some parts of Northern Nigeria and parts of Uganda.⁴⁹ This practice was also replicated in parts of Northern Nigeria such as the Adamawa area, southern Kaduna and parts of the Jos plateau area.⁵⁰ From the foregoing British officials used the implementation of indirect rule to justify the extension of Fulani and other Muslim authority beyond the Emirates into non-Muslim areas. On one occasion Lugard affirmed the policy when he said “Fulani rule has been maintained as an experiment and I am anxious to utilise, if possible, their wonderful intelligence.”⁵¹ On another, he said “they form an invaluable medium between the British staff and the ‘native’ peasantry”.⁵²

As a safe guard for the implementation of the Indirect Rule policy Lugard assured Emirate leaders in Sokoto, the seat of the Caliphate after it was brought under British rule in 1903, that the practice of religion was not going to be tampered with by the colonial administration.⁵³ As mentioned earlier, Islam preceded both colonial rule and Christian evangelisation in a significant part of Northern Nigeria while the introduction of Christianity to the area was contemporary with the extension of European rule to the area. As such, colonial officials felt it was within their purview to moderate Christian proselytization in Northern Nigeria. Thus, Lugard’s statement in Sokoto was interpreted by his subordinates to mean that the position of Islam was to be revered in Northern Nigeria. The statement was, therefore, used as a policy guide by his successors to veto the activities of Christian missionaries during the period of British rule in Northern Nigeria.⁵⁴ Consequently, colonial officials drew on the Kano encounter and enacted policies that guided Christian proselytisation in both Muslim dominated and non-Muslim dominated areas of British Northern Nigeria.

British officials in Northern Nigeria implemented a series of policies that controlled the activities of Christian missionaries in the area.⁵⁵ The policies were layered with multiple

⁴⁹ Ikime, Obaro. “Reconsidering Indirect Rule: The Nigerian Example” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 4: 3, (1968), 421-438 and Gartrell, Beverly. “British Administration, Colonial Chiefs and the Comfort of Tradition: An Example from Uganda”, *African Studies Review*, vol. 26: 1, (1983), 1-2,4-7.

⁵⁰ NAK/JosProf/132/1914 and Schatht, Joseph, “Islam in Northern Nigeria”, *Studia Islamica* No. 8 (1957), 127-128.

⁵¹ See Colonial Reports, Annual No. 346 Northern Nigeria 1900-1, <http://www.hathitrust.org> accessed on 07/12/2015.

⁵² Lugard, *The Dual Mandate...*, 209-210.

⁵³ See “Second Address by Sir Fredrick Lugard, High Commissioner, to the Sultan, Waziri and Elders of Sokoto, regarding the Conditions of British Rule, Reasons for the War &c 21st March, 1903 in Colonial Annual Report No. 409, Northern Nigeria 1902, <http://www.hathitrust.org> accessed on 07/12/2015, appendix III and Fredrick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 462. Also see “A History of ..., 69.

⁵⁴ Walsh, Jarlath. *The Growth of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Jos 1907-1978: The Contribution of the Society of African Missions to its Development*, (Iperu-Remo: Ambassador Publications, 1993), 47.

⁵⁵ Ubah, “Christian Missionary Penetration..., 110-111.

bureaucratic checks. Thus, there was the need for multiple officials to give consent before permission was granted to Christian missionaries to carry out their activities. As such, Christian missionary organisations had to write formal applications to the District Officer(s) (D. O.) for permission to establish a station, build a church or to open a school or health facility in any part of Northern Nigeria. The D. O. in turn asked for the opinion of the local official placed in charge of the locality where the Christian venture was to be established before making his recommendation to the Resident who passed on the application to the Lieutenant Governor of the Region for final approval or denial. Some applications got positive recommendations based on the opinion of local rulers while others were rejected due to concerns raised by either the local middle figures or D. O. In so doing both local and expatriate officials had a role to play in the decision to give or refuse Christian missionary organisations permission to operate in different locations of the region.

In addition to the need for Christian missionary ventures to request permission before they were allowed to work in Northern Nigeria they were also required to apply for building permits before they could erect structures.⁵⁶ The process for acquiring these permits also served as avenues for colonial officials to control the locations that the different Christian missionary bodies could work in the area. Consequently, permits were either granted or denied based on the suitability or non-suitability of having Christian evangelisation in a given area.⁵⁷ For example applications to establish a school by the SIM at Tasa in Kano Province and Darazo in Bauchi Province were both rejected by the colonial officials based on the opinions of the Emirs.⁵⁸ The application to for the School at Tasa was rejected because the Emir opined that the proposed site was too close to the Native Authority school at Tamburawa while that of Darazo was turned down on the grounds that the town was dominated by Muslims and hence there was no need for a Christian missionary school in the location.

As earlier mentioned, the policies enacted by British officials during the early colonial period in Northern Nigeria prevented Christian missionaries from evangelisation in the core areas of Muslim Emirates and in non-Muslim populated areas that were administered by Emirate officials.⁵⁹ Based on the policies, Christian missionaries were encouraged to work in communities that practiced various forms of traditional religions such as those located in the Jos

⁵⁶ Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 110-111.

⁵⁷ Abdullahi, "A History of ...", 79-88.

⁵⁸ Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 110-112.

⁵⁹ See "Second Address by Sir Fredrick Lugard, and Lugard, *The Dual Mandate...*, 462

Plateau area and its surrounding low lands, the Adamawa high lands and the Benue valley area.⁶⁰ Despite the initial prevention of Christian missionaries from working in Muslim dominated areas of Northern Nigeria they were later allowed to work in the non-Muslim communities that were located within Hausa land and the Borno area. These areas became the hub of Christianity within the Northern Provinces of Nigeria boasting of thousands of adherents towards the end of British rule in Nigeria.⁶¹

As already mentioned, the state control of the Christian missionary venture in Northern Nigeria was aimed at forestalling a reoccurrence of the Kano party's 1900 misadventure and to prevent religious evangelisation where it was not appreciated. In addition, British authorities in Northern Nigeria claimed that their policies concerning the control of Christian religious proselytisation were for the preservation of law and order. Although British authorities claimed that their policies concerning religion was for the preservation of law and order the implementation process translated to the use of official veto to ward off Christian missionaries from evangelising the large Hausa population so as to prevent any religious or cultural influence that will erode the authority of their preferred Muslim sub colonial officials over them.⁶²

The control of Christian missionary ventures by British officials in Northern Nigeria brought about a new dimension in the missionary encounter in Africa. Such that events in the area differed with the encounter in most parts of Africa, including parts of Nigeria such as the south west, south east and the Niger delta areas, where the entry of Christian missionaries preceded colonial subjugation.⁶³ In contrast the sequence in Northern Nigeria was inverted. Here Christian proselytisation followed British subjugation of territories and it made the Christian missionary enterprise subject to veto by colonial administrators in the area. Although state officials monitored evangelisation by European missionaries they could not supervise proselytisation by indigenous converts who evangelised informally within local communities.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Abdullahi, "Women and the...", 11-12.

⁶¹ Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 118 and Abdullahi, "A History of ...", 190-194.

⁶² Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 112-113.

⁶³ As shown in works of Comaroff, John. and Comaroff, Jean. *Of Revelation and Revolution Volume Two: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) Tasié, G. *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta 1864-1918*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), Isichei, Elizabeth. "The Missionary Presence, 1885-1906" in *The Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship to 1906*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), Ekechi, F. *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igbo land 1857-1914*, (London: Frank Cass, 1972), Ajayi J. *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*, (London: Longman, 1965) among others.

⁶⁴ Abdullahi, "Women and the...", 170-180.

Despite the attempts by British officials to prevent Christian missionary evangelisation in the Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria during the first quarter of the 20th century the second quarter witnessed a more liberal disposition to Christian endeavours in the area. Hence, Christian missionary organisations were later on permitted to carry out a limited type of evangelisation in the areas under Emirate rule. This was so because colonial officials collaborated with Christian missionary organisations in the provision of education and health care, especially, during the occurrence of health epidemics. As such, most of the work that Christian missions embarked on in Muslim dominated communities of colonial northern Nigeria revolved around the provision of education and health care services in places where government facilities were either not available or in short supply.⁶⁵ The type of work that state officials wanted Christian missionary ventures to undertake in the Emirates aligned with what is referred to in evangelical circles as the social gospel. The social gospel was a method of Christian evangelisation that addressed the physical requirements of the target audience along with their spiritual needs.⁶⁶

With regards to the social gospel the CMS were the first, under the leadership of Dr. Walter Miller, to be given permission to establish a station that included a school and a health facility in Zaria in 1902.⁶⁷ The station was relocated to Wusasa, two miles beyond the city walls due to the need for expansion, in 1929.⁶⁸ Previously Dr. Miller had stayed briefly with his colleagues of the Kano Party at Gierku, after retreating from Zaria in 1900, and worked there in 1902 before he was permitted to establish the station in Zaria metropolis.⁶⁹ Later on the CMS operated a bookshop in Kano. The bookshop doubled as an unofficial school where a few boys received the initial part of their elementary education.⁷⁰ Although the CMS had operated a bookshop/ unofficial school in Kano since 1924 their main operations in the Muslim dominated Provinces of Northern Nigeria was at the Wusasa station.

Other Christian missionary organisations that were active during the early period of British rule in Northern Nigeria also tried to penetrate into the heart of the Emirates as the CMS had done, with its Wusasa establishment, but were not successful. The lack of success on the part

⁶⁵ Bunza, Mkhtar. and Shehu, Jamilu. "Curing or Converting Them? A Critical Study of Christian Mission Leprosarium in the Muslim Emirates of Sokoto and Katsina", *Journal of Religion and Theology*, vol. 3, Issue 1, (2019), 48-55 and Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 114-115.

⁶⁶ Samuel, Vinay. "Social Concern and Evangelisation". *Transformation*, 7: 1, (1990). 1-2.

⁶⁷ Gaiya, Musa. "Miller, Walter Richard Samuel 1872-1952" <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/miller-wr-samuel> retrieved on 17th June, 2025.

⁶⁸ Gaiya, "Miller, Walter Richard

⁶⁹ Linden, *Emirs, Evangelicals and...*, 26-29, 43 and 45.

⁷⁰ Shankar, Shobana. *Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria 1890-1975*, (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 28 and 33.

of the other Christian missionary establishments in the area was largely due to the already mentioned bureaucratic bottlenecks instituted by colonial officials through the policy of Indirect Rule. Despite the official blockade Christian Missionary organisations used various approaches to break down institutional barriers. As such, some established friendly relations with both local and expatriate officials while others employed formal channels in order to secure permission to evangelise in the Emirates. For example, the SIM and CMS petitioned the Secretary of State for colonies, in London, so as to have the British government rescind its decision on their exclusion from establishing mission stations in the Muslim dominated Provinces of Northern Nigeria.⁷¹

The petition written to the British government resulted in a meeting between representatives of some Christian mission organisations and British Administrators in Northern Nigeria and the leadership of the Church of England and its missionary arm the CMS as well as members of the International Missionary Council.⁷² Those who attended the meeting include Mr. Gilbert Dawson Secretary of the SUM, Reverend H. G. Farrant Field Director of the SUM and Reverend G. W. Playfair Field Director of the SIM. Others were His Excellency the Governor of Nigeria Sir Graeme Thomson, the Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria Hubert Richmond Palmer and the Lord Bishop of Salisbury. Also in attendance were Mr. J. H. Oldham and Reverend W. Paton both Secretaries of the International Missionary Council, Reverend W. W. Cash of the National Assembly of the Church of England and Reverend H. D. Hooper Secretary of the CMS.⁷³

The meeting between representatives of some Christian mission organisations, the leadership of the Church of England and British colonial administrators resolved that preventing Christian missionary organisations from evangelizing in the Muslim Provinces of Northern Nigeria was not an official British policy. Although the meeting resolved that preventing Christian missionary organizations from evangelizing in Muslim Provinces of Northern Nigeria was not an official British policy Sir Graeme Thomson, however, maintained that it was still premature to allow wholesale Christian missionary activities in the Provinces concerned and advocated for the introduction of Christian influences “in a wise and discreet manner subject to

⁷¹ John Salmon and Rowland Bingham “To The Right Honourable Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for Colonies” in Policy of Government with Regard to Missionary Work in Northern Nigeria NAK/SNP 7/3154/1911, CMS Application to be Allowed to Undertake Work in Kano (Conf. 110/1909) AHA 1/25/187. Also see Shankar, Shobana. “Medical Missionaries and Modernising Emirs in Colonial Hausaland: Leprosy Control and Native Authority in the 1930s”. *Journal of African History*, vol. 48: 1, (2007), 54.

⁷² Report on American Mission in the Northern Provinces AHA 1892/9/4/39 and AHA 1892/9/4/59

⁷³ Report on American Mission in the Northern Provinces AHA 1892/9/4/39 and AHA 1892/9/4/59

the willingness of the ‘Native’ Authorities’⁷⁴. Thus, despite getting the attention of the highest level of temporal and spiritual authority in England the policy on the control of Christian missionary evangelisation in the Muslim Provinces of Northern Nigeria was still firmly in place.

The colonial administration in Northern Nigeria further reiterated its position on restricting Christian missionary activities in the predominantly Muslim Provinces of Northern Nigeria at a conference of Residences held at Kaduna on 12th September, 1927.⁷⁵ Officials at the conference declared that although “the time must come when there ought to be complete religious tolerance in any Protectorate under the British Crown, nevertheless it must also be recognized that an endeavour to force the pace (in Northern Nigeria) would be a definite political error”.⁷⁶

Despite official blockade on Christian missionary evangelisation in Northern Nigeria the use of friendly relations and the social gospel, as already mentioned, provided avenues for some of the Christian missionary organisations to penetrate, albeit on the fringes of, the Emirates. Consequently the SMA, CMS and SIM were eventually able to establish themselves in the rural and urban areas of Kano respectively.⁷⁷ In this regard, the SMA priests in Shendam, in the low land area of the Jos Plateau, made contact with the Emir of Kano through U. F. Ruxton the Resident of Muri Province.⁷⁸ The Catholic missionaries had embarked on a successful agricultural project in Shendam and had showcased their produce at an agricultural fair in Kano. The Resident of Muri Province asked the Emir to take advantage of the missionaries’ agricultural innovation to enhance production at his plantations in Kano. The Emir, therefore, sent two of his wards who were trained at the SMA farms in Shendam. The period also coincided with the period that Father Sirlenger attended a medical dispenser’s course at Kano.⁷⁹ Thus, the SMA took advantage of their cordial relationship with the Emir of Kano and asked for and received permission from him to establish a school among the southern Nigerian Catholic community at

⁷⁴ “From The Secretary Northern Provinces to all Residences on “Religious Toleration” 21 October 1927 and “From Resident Benue Province to The Secretary Northern Provinces” 3rd November, 1927 in Report on American Mission in the Northern Provinces AHA 1892/9/4/39 and AHA 1892/9/4/59 and Mission Activities in Muslim Areas NAK/SNP/JosProf 1371

⁷⁵ “In Amplification of the Record of Discussion at the Residence Conference 1927 on the Subject of the Extension of Missionary Activities” G. J. Lethem Resident of Bornu 25th September, 1927.

⁷⁶ “In Amplification of the Record of Discussion at the Residence Conference 1927 on the Subject of the Extension of Missionary Activities” G. J. Lethem Resident of Bornu 25th September, 1927.

⁷⁷ Walsh, *The Growth of...*, 58

⁷⁸ Shankar, Shobana. *Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria 1890-1975*. (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 27-28.

⁷⁹ “Grants to Medical Missions” Memo dated 2nd January, 1930 in Missions Attempting Medical Work-Assistance to NAK/SNP/60/1928/63

Sabon gari in Kano. The school was established in 1929.⁸⁰ John Garba one of the pupils at the CMS Bookshop school at Fagge in Kano acquired part of his primary education at the Catholic Holy Trinity School in Sabon Gari before he attended Dr. Miller's school at Wusasa in Zaria.⁸¹

As mentioned earlier, the SIM had earlier tried to penetrate the core of the Muslim Provinces via official channels when its members wrote a petition, though without success, to the British Secretary of colonies. Having failed to secure an official waiver the SIM had to wait until the opportunity to deploy the tenets of the social gospel availed itself. Hence, between 1932 and 1952 the SIM registered its presence in the core of the Muslim Provinces when they were given permission to operate a number of leprosariums at Garko, Samaila and Yadakunya in Kano Province, Dange and Kalgo in Sokoto Province, as well as Babbar Ruga in Katsina and another one located in Bauchi between 1936 and 1957.⁸² The SIM also established an eye clinic in Kano metropolis in 1943.⁸³

The Christian encounter in the Muslim Emirates of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria passed through phases of official control. Thus, as a measure of control colonial authorities prevented Christian proselytization in Muslim dominated areas of Northern Nigeria as from 1906.⁸⁴ As from the 1930s however Christian missions were allowed into the Islamic society of Northern Nigeria but restricted to the provision of social services and were domiciled in the segregated 'sabon gari' quarters in Muslim urban areas.⁸⁵ With these restrictions Christian mission organisations in the Muslim parts of Northern Nigeria operated schools, clinics and leprosariums.⁸⁶ The limitation of the work of Christian mission organizations in Muslim dominated areas of Northern Nigeria to social welfare institutions by colonial officials was a control measure that aimed to restrict their influence on the larger Muslim population in the area.⁸⁷ While most European Christian missionaries might have adhered to these restrictions Christian converts indigenous to the Islamic society, however, used the locations of the institutions that were meant to restrict them as transit points for freelance itineration.⁸⁸ Some

⁸⁰ Walsh, *The Growth of...*, 58, 64 65, and 70 and Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, 28

⁸¹ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, 43.

⁸² Bunza, and Shehu, "Curing or Converting them...", 48-54, Shankar, "Medical Missionaries and...", 54 and 60 and Shekarau, Ruben. "A Critique of the Control of Approaches in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1965", *African Historical Review*, UNISA Press, (2023), 9-10.

⁸³ Turaki, *An Introduction to...*, 43, 182-183 and Shankar *Who Shall Enter...* pp. 78-79 and 98

⁸⁴ Ayandele, "Missionary Factor in...", 516.

⁸⁵ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, xviii, 40, 71-115 and 121. Also see Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 115, 117-118.

⁸⁶ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, xviii and 40-43.

⁸⁷ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, 78-80.

⁸⁸ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, xviii, 79-80 and 98-100.

among this category of Christian converts engaged in independent itineration that perturbed European colonial officials who preferred that the prominence (i.e. the political, social and cultural expressions) of Islam in the erstwhile emirates of Northern Nigeria be maintained and not disturbed by Christian missionary proselytization.⁸⁹

Scholarly Perspectives on the State Veto on Christian Evangelisation in Colonial Northern Nigeria

I have mentioned earlier that the Christian missionary encounter in colonial Northern Nigeria has been examined by scholars. As such, salient perspectives of the events of the encounter have been offered by Emmanuel Ayandele, Edmund Crampton and Chinedu Ubah. Important contexts of the encounter have also been presented by Andrew Barnes, Mukhtar Bunza and Shobana Shankar. The perspectives of these scholars on the Christian missionary encounter in colonial Northern Nigeria are important because they shape the trajectory of discussions on the subject matter. To begin with these scholars are in agreement on the centrality of government control in discussions over the Christian missionary enterprise during the colonial period in the area. Despite the agreement on the centrality of state control over Christian proselytization in the area the scholars are, however, in disagreement over the salient reasons for the implementation of official veto over issues around religion in the region and are also divided over the outcomes of the government policy on Christian evangelisation in the area.

To start with, Ayandele's examination of the Christian missionary enterprise in Northern Nigeria shaped the tone and direction of intellectual discussions on the encounter. In his analysis he distinguished three phases in the early period of the encounter.⁹⁰ In the first phase, between 1870 and 1888, the missionaries, he says, made relative success by befriending some of the Emirs of Islamic states. As such, Bishop Crowther reached out to several Muslim rulers including the Emirs of Bida, Kontagora, Ilorin and Gwandu.⁹¹ He is adjudged to have used courtesy, mutual respect and tact to gain the friendship of local rulers. With the knowledge of Hausa language, the Bishop and his staff wanted to use their presence around the Niger-Benue

⁸⁹ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, 19-21.

⁹⁰ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor...", 504 and 520-521.

⁹¹ Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor...", 505-506.

confluence to convey Christianity into Hausa territory. The efforts of Christian agents around the Niger-Benue confluence area did not count for much in terms of gaining local proselytes.

In the second phase, between 1888 and 1900, Christian missionaries, Ayandele says, encountered suspicion and apprehension from Muslim rulers who associated them with political agents of the British Empire who had begun to encroach on their territories. In the third phase, between 1900 and 1918, he says, the opposition Christian missionaries encountered, in their attempt to proselytise among Muslims, came from British colonial officials who prevented Christian evangelisation of territories under Islamic leadership for political reasons. He, therefore, argued that senior colonial officials in Northern Nigeria prevented Christian evangelization in the Emirates, during the first quarter of the 20th century, so as to protect their autocratic approach to governance in the area and wade off any interference from Christian missionary for authority and influence over the local population.⁹²

Ayandele's analysis prompted further investigation of the Christian missionary encounter in colonial Northern Nigeria. Thus, Edmund Crompton portrayed colonial Northern Nigeria as a religiously diverse society in spite of the large numbers of Muslim adherents in the area.⁹³ He based his analysis on the outcome of government-mission cooperation, in the provision of education and other social services, that he said was eminent in the emergence of Christian communities in Wusasa, the Jos Plateau area and the Benue area, as well as the Adamawa, Sardauna (Taraba) Provinces and the Igala and Kabba Divisions of Kabba Province.⁹⁴ Crompton also acknowledged the existence few Christians among the Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri cultural groups. The numbers of indigenous Christians in the Islamic centres of Northern Nigeria, he says, was augmented by Christians from the southern Provinces of Nigeria that migrated to the area in search of job opportunities. The evidence of Christian adherents in both Islamic and non-Muslim communities of Northern Nigeria that prompted Crompton to argue that the area was diverse in religion and culture.

In contrast to Ayandele's previous assertion on the reasons behind the official control of Christian proselytization in the Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria Andrew Barnes has opined that British officials sought to control Christian evangelisation in the area in a bid to

⁹² Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor...", 504-521.

⁹³ Crompton, Edmund. *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. (Bukuru: ACTS, 1975, 3rdedition 2004), 1, 107-123, 200 and 206.

⁹⁴ Crompton, *Christianity in Northern...*, 107-123, 200 and 206.

regulate the nature, extent and context of local acculturation to European civility.⁹⁵ The official superintendence over the Christian mission enterprise, he said, was carried out to maintain the local social hierarchy that colonial administrators had brought under their authority from being destabilised by partially acculturated local Christian converts who migrated to the north from the southern Provinces. Thus, Barnes argued that the state control over Christian missionaries was to prevent social disorder in the colonial space.

Chinedu Ubah has said that despite the state veto on Christian religious evangelisation in the northern Provinces of colonial Nigeria the Christian missionary enterprise, through the establishment of schools, dispensaries and clinics made significant efforts in the fight against ignorance, illiteracy and diseases. In doing so he said that the Christian missionaries were able to gain a few local converts from the Islamic community. He further argued that despite the paucity in the number of Christian proselytes from Islam the contentment of the missionaries was placed in the fact that they were able to lay the foundation for a growing Christian community within a traditionally Muslim dominated environment.⁹⁶

Mukhtar Bunza considers Christian evangelisation in the Muslim dominated Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria as an affront on Islam and its adherents in the area.⁹⁷ He sees the extension of British rule over former Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate as the subjection of Muslim communities and their rulers to a Christian power (i. e. Britain).⁹⁸ To him British rule localised global Christian-Muslim tensions in Northern Nigeria. The situation, he said, was exacerbated by government-mission cooperation, whereby the colonial state gave financial grants to Christian mission organizations for the provision of education and healthcare in the Emirates as from the 1920s.⁹⁹ As such, he accused colonial officials of supporting Christian evangelisation despite an earlier promise not to interfere with the practice of Islam in the area.

Although the colonial state supported Christian missions, Bunza said, the number of Muslims who converted to Christianity was small. He also explained that people who abandoned Islam for Christianity were treated as apostates and were boycotted and rejected by Muslims. As such, Bunza insisted that converts lost social networks and kinship affinities on account of their

⁹⁵ Barnes, Andrew. "Evangelisation Where It Is Not Wanted: Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria During the First Third of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25 no. 4 (1995): 414-415.

⁹⁶ Ubah, "Christian Missionary Penetration...", 1

⁹⁷ Bunza, Mukhtar, *Christian Missions Among Muslims: Sokoto Province, Nigeria 1935-1990*, (Trenton, NJ 0892: Africa World Press, 2007).

⁹⁸ Bunza, *Christian Missions Among...*, 21-26.

⁹⁹ Bunza, *Christian Missions...*, 38-58 and 171.

change in religious belief. The treatment meted on people who left Islam for Christianity in Muslim dominated communities was, not only, responsible for the paucity of Christian converts in the Emirates of colonial Northern Nigeria but was reflective of the cultural “expressions of competition for economic resources and political ascendancy in the area.”¹⁰⁰ In the end, he concluded that, Christian evangelisation in the Muslim dominated Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria was a failure because some of the local converts to Christianity reverted to Islam so as to avoid discrimination.

The point raised by Bunza presents Islam as a communal religion with strong in-group and out-group partitions that placed non-Muslims on the fringe of local society in colonial Northern Nigeria. His submission is important as it gives us an insight into local societal dynamics of the communities of the Emirates of Northern Nigeria. Despite the importance of Bunza’s point about the threat of isolation for Muslim converts to Christianity his submission that Christian evangelisation in the Muslim dominated Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria was a failure has been challenged by Shobana Shankar.¹⁰¹ Shankar who engaged the perspective that dismissed the work of Christian evangelization in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria unsuccessful agrees that Christian converts were a minority in the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri communities in Northern Nigeria. She, however, disagrees that the outcome of Christian Missionary evangelisation in the area was a failure. This, she argues, was so because some Christian converts held on to their new faith and avoided isolation in a Muslim dominated environment by maintaining networks among themselves over wide, and sometimes distant, areas.¹⁰² Through these networks, she says, Christian converts sustained their faith and provided support to each other by upholding a sense of community among themselves.¹⁰³

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined how the events of the first major Christian encounter influenced state policies on faith in the area. My examination of the Christian encounter in the area also considered the salient perspectives of scholars on the subject matter. Thus, my analysis of the different perspectives of various scholars has shown that there is a debate on the outcome of the Christian missionary enterprise in the Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria. Despite the

¹⁰⁰ Bunza, *Christian Missions...*, 35, 73-81, 100, 121, 179 and 180.

¹⁰¹ This is the focal point of her work *Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria 1890-1975*.

¹⁰² Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, xix.

¹⁰³ Shankar, *Who Shall Enter...*, 14-22 and 38.

debate, however, I have pointed out that all the scholars, who examined the events, agree that state control was a cardinal point in the encounter. Thus, instead of supporting a particular perspective against others my conclusion will take a leaf from the point of convergence and historicise them in a manner that brings out a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Christian missionary religious encounter in the area under study.

From the foregoing, therefore, Ayandele has offered a perspective that not only set the tone for academic discussions on the subject matter but shows the authoritarian nature of colonial rule in the firm state control over the local population through the preferred sub colonial officials. In this regard, subsequent analysis of the events within the period have taken a cue from his submission. Thus, Crompton went further to say that the official control of Christian evangelisation in Northern Nigeria did not prevent the emergence of local Christian communities that were spread thinly across the region. Ubah then explained that in spite of official control on their activities Christian enterprises, in the area, persevered and achieved the limited success that they had by deploying the tenets of the social gospel.

Still leaning on the preceding tone set by Ayandele Barnes drew a contrast by arguing that the aim of the official veto of Christian missionary activities in colonial Northern Nigeria was not to prevent Christian missionaries from carrying out their desired goal of spreading Christianity but was so as to control the local social and cultural stratification in the area. Despite that his argument may seem to contrast with the pioneering submission of Ayandele on the subject matter his submission, however, helps to widen the perspective on the various outcomes of the state policy of Christian missionary control. As such, his position teases out the need by colonial officials to maintain control over the politically subjected population even if it meant placing sanctions on the activities of their fellow countrymen whose activities were also geared towards establishing religious and cultural domination over the local population.

In the scholarly conversation on the process and outcome of Christian missionary evangelisation in colonial Northern Nigeria Bunza relates his submission towards the theme of control within the spectrum of competition for economic resources and political ascendancy in the area. His position is predicated on the fact that Islam in Northern Nigeria is a communal religion and its adherents deploy the sense of community that it offers to attain social status within the local society in which they exclude non-Muslims. As mentioned earlier, his argument that the loss of communal affinities, that he said, checkmated Muslim conversion to Christianity

has been challenged. Despite, the counter his submission is important as it helps us in the understanding of the local religious, cultural and social dynamics that transpired within the in-group settings of the Islamic communities of Northern Nigeria. I will conclude my analysis of the dynamics and outcome(s) of Christian missionary encounter in colonial northern Nigeria by drawing on the argument of Shobana Shankar who has insisted that Christian evangelisation in the Muslim dominated Provinces of colonial Northern Nigeria, despite state veto, was not a failure because Christian converts sustained themselves from isolation by upholding a sense of community among themselves. Members of this religious minority, she pointed out, provided support to each other through networks that covered wide and distant areas located within a larger Muslim dominated environment.