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The Christian Encounter and European Racial Attitude(s) in the Jos Plateau Area of British Nigeria

by

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Abstract

A significant part of the Christian encounter that took place in Africa, as a whole and the Jos Plateau area of Nigeria in particular, occurred during the period of European domination of the continent in the 19th and 20th centuries. European Christian missionaries played important roles in the extension of European influence(s) in Africa during the period under study. In this regard, Christian missionaries were, on the one hand, precursors of European political domination in Africa and, on the other hand, cultural harbingers of European primacy on the continent. European political domination of Africa, in particular and the world in general, was hinged on Caucasian perspectives on race. European perspectives on race classified races of the world according to an anthropological stratification that placed Europeans at the top of the ladder and Africans at the bottom. This European perspective of race, that was prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries, seeped into Christian missionary thoughts and practices. Hence, recorded events of the Christian evangelization of Africa show that Christian missionaries upheld the notion of European racial and cultural superiority in their interaction with members of local communities. As such, this study sets out to examine how European ideas of "race" affected missionary attitude(s) towards indigenous people, during the early part of the Christian and colonial encounter, in the Jos Plateau area of British Nigeria.

Key words: Race, Encounter, Christian, Colonial and Jos-Plateau,

Introduction

Christianity was introduced to the Jos Plateau area in the early part of the 20th century shortly after the subjugation and incorporation of the people of the area, by the British, into the northern part of the colony of Nigeria. (Abdullahi 2019, 1) European political domination of Nigeria, in particular and Africa in general, and the introduction of the Christian religion to the continent was hinged on European perspectives on race. (Fischer-Tine 2009, Sonderegger 2009, 48; Harlow 2003, Curtin 1960, 46-48). Therefore, the Christian encounter that took place during the period of European colonial domination in Africa, and other continents of the world, centred around the dynamics of European racial relations. As such, the role of "race" and racial relations has constituted an important theme in studies on the Christian encounter that occurred during the period of European colonial domination in, 19th and 20th century, Africa. (Fischer-Tine et al 2009, Lewis 2004, Lewis 2003, Stanley 2003). In this regard, scholars of the encounter have examined the centrality of European racial attitude(s)

in relation to Christian evangelisation during the period of European political domination on the continent.

In his examination of the role of racial stratification during the Christian encounter in sub-Saharan Africa Andrew Ross says that the initial motivation for the Christian evangelisation of the continent was hinged on the concept of human equality. (Ross 2003, 86-89, 90) However, he said that the concept of human equality within the European Christian missionary enterprise suffered a setback from the permeation of scientific anthropology in the mid-19th century. European concepts of scientific anthropology revolved around the pseudo-scientific classification of human beings in a hierarchical manner, based on skin colour, (i.e. physical appearances and cultural attributes), that they referred to as the ladder of civilisation. (Ross 2003, 86-89, 90) European racial classification of the world emanated from their strong urge for global domination. Hence, Europeans brought up anthropological concepts, drawn majorly from economic, biological and psychological as well as religious projections of human progress, to advance their ambition for global domination and to defend their imperial attitudes towards Africa, in particular, and the world in general. (O'Connell and Ruse, 2021, 12-15 and 24)

European imperial designs were drawn from the evolutionary thoughts that dominated western scholarship in the mid-19th century. The height of these evolutionary thoughts, in relation to human relations, was known as Social Darwinism. The theory of Social Darwinism was espoused by Herbert Spencer who argued that nature had a way of removing weak people from its habitat. (O'Connell and Ruse, 2021, 13-14) Hence, Spencer argued that human progress was achieved through successive differentiation of its advanced heterogeneous forms from its less developed homogenous forms. He therefore advocated, not only, for the differentiation of the advanced human forms, (i.e. more competent persons from the less competent), but also for the reliance on the natural order of things, (i.e. survival of the fittest), to remove or extinguish the less competent from existence. (O'Connell and Ruse, 2021, 13 and14)

Accordingly, Spencer advised against giving aid to less privileged people as that was, in his opinion, only going to delay but not refute the laws of nature. (O'Connell and Ruse, 2021, 14) These so called "laws of nature", as projected by Spencer, were gleaned from dominant European theories of the time, including the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage, Malthusian theory of population and the Darwinian theory of natural selection, to formulate and convey a deep sense of European racial and cultural superiority. (O'Connell and Ruse, 2021, 14) Hence, European intellectuals including anthropologists, explorers and

business men as well as state officials and Christian missionaries bestowed on the European population the position of strength, competence and capacity to make progress while they appropriated the position of weakness, incompetence and lack of capacity to make progress on Africans, and "other" human populations of the world.

The racially inclined opinions, that were pervasive within European intellectual circles, penetrated European Christian missionary thinking and were expressed in the Christian missionary encounter in Africa. Hence, Brian Stanley has given evidence on the permeation of European racial attitudes into the Christian missionary endeavour in Africa and other European imperial possessions in the early 20th century. (Stanley 2003, 80-82) In his work, Stanley noted that the inclusion of racial considerations was demonstrated in the report of Commission VII of the World Missionary Conference that was held in 1910. The report, he said, classified races of the world according to a stratification that members of the Commission referred to as the "hierarchy of civilisation". The "hierarchy of civilization", according to Stanley, placed Europeans at the top of the ladder of human development while it put Africans at the bottom with people from Asia, the Middle-East and the Pacific Islands positioned in the middle of the racial stratum. The report, he said, also advocated for cooperation between colonial governments and Christian missions in the civilising objective of European imperialism in Africa and other continents of the world.

The notion of European racial superiority within Christian missionary endeavours has been examined from various angles. One of the perspectives, in the examination of the European concept of race within the Christian and colonial encounters in Africa, is the viewpoint that Europeans deployed racial prejudice as a common denominator to mediate the differences in social status, within their ranks, in the colonies. (Thorne 1997, 170, 253-254; Stanley 2003, 80-82) According to this perspective, racial prejudice was deliberately fostered, by European colonists, so as to mediate class difference among themselves and justify their religious and political hegemony over the people that they colonised.

Another racially motivated concept, in the European Christian missionary establishment that has been examined, is "trusteeship". Trusteeship was a European Christian missionary construct that perceived African Christian converts as children that needed everlasting mentorship in order to be admitted into, and remain within, the ranks of 'civilised' human categories. This perspective has been projected in the views of some European Christian missionaries that worked in Africa. In this regard, Patrick Harries, in his examination of the permeation of social or scientific anthropology into European Christian missionary endeavours in Africa argued that Swiss Protestant missionaries, who worked in

the 19th and 20th century southern Africa, considered their target audience to be members of a weaker race that needed to be protected and tutored like children. (Harries 2000, 47, 52-53) Hence, the said Swiss missionaries took on the role of parents who sought to raise their "children" by showing them how to deploy their new found Christian faith in navigating the challenges of the modern world.

Further analysis of the principle of trusteeship, within the European Christian mission structure in Africa, shows that its adoption was intended to perpetuate European authority over Africans. As such African workers within the Christian missionary structure were ranked below their European counterparts. For example, European trusteeship was enforced in the Church Missionary Society's (CMS) Niger mission field when African Christian missionaries, including the Bishop Ajayi Crowther who founded the mission in 1841, were placed under the supervision of a Finance Committee that was constituted, entirely, of Europeans. (Anyika, 1988) Hence, the Finance Committee, formed in 1882, superintended over both African clergy and lay workers of the mission. As part of its supervisory role the committee took over superintendence of the financial and administrative duties of the Bishop. As such, it meted disciplinary measures against some workers of the mission, who were mainly recaptives from Sierra Leone, on the basis that the affected members of staff were found to have either embraced local values or had taken to local vices. (Anyika 1988, 25-26) Therefore, the Committee dismissed some of the African Christian missionary agents, of the Niger Mission, for engaging in trading activities while others were laid off for exhibiting questionable behaviours. Such contentious conducts comprised of the submission of inaccurate official reports, taking wives without solemnisation and brutality towards people on the margins of local society. The other African staff of the Niger Mission, who were not found to have erred, felt slighted by the Finance Committee's usurpation of the authority of the Bishop over his episcopal territory, especially, since there was no one at the rank of Bishop within the Committee. The African agents of the mission also observed that the measures taken by the Finance Committee were severe and as such showed a lacked empathy for the tough conditions within which agents of the local mission worked.

The use of trusteeship as a mechanism for entrenching European notions of racial superiority, within the context of Christian missionary evangelisation in Africa, has also been examined. In this regard, Waibinte Wariboko, in his work on the African Christian encounter argued that West Indian workers, of African descent, in the missionary establishment suffered racial and financial segregation from their European counterparts. Wariboko narrated that the

dismissal of indigenous African workers, from Sierra Leone, in the CMS's Niger Mission caused a shortfall in the workforce. The CMS in London, therefore, turned to former British slave colonies, in the West Indies, to remedy the situation. (Wariboko 2010, 223) Hence, evangelists, catechists and teachers were recruited from Jamaica and other Caribbean Islands and sent to the Niger Mission. However, despite the fact that these West Indians were foreigners in Africa the CMS denied them expatriate status so as to prevent them from being at par with missionaries of European descent. (Wariboko 2010, 223-224) Waibinte Wariboko, therefore, argued that the consequences of the CMS' racial bias against the West Indian missionaries meant that they were denied equal financial benefits. The monetary benefits that the West Indian missionaries were excluded from, due to their African ancestry, encompassed paid holidays in England, a paid education plan for their children as well as a fully financed retirement plan in the case of invalidation in the mission field. (Wariboko 2010, 229-234)

Katja Fullberg-Stolberg has also given similar examples with Wariboko on the segregation meted on West Indian Christian missionaries, of African descent, that came to evangelise in Africa by their European counterparts. In her examination of the participation of Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans in the colonial and Christian missionary enterprise in Africa she observed that expatriate Africans who heeded the call to evangelise in Africa did so in the hope that they would escape from the racial discrimination and repression that they endured in the Americas and gain advancement in social status in the colonies. (Fullberg-Stolberg 2009, 198-2001) She, however, noted that these African expatriates were placed in an ambivalent position within the colonial space as they were disappointed when their attempts to rise in status were opposed by their Caucasian colleagues. European Christian missionaries attempted to maintain their racial hegemony on African Christians beyond the period of the European political domination of Africa. As such, despite that European direct imperial domination ended in most parts of Africa in the 1960s, European Christian missionaries still tried to perpetuate themselves at the highest echelon of leadership within the Christian missionary enterprise. (Hastings 2003, 15-33). However, the misnomer begun to be corrected from the 1950s when indigenous leaders began to emerge in missionary churches across Africa. (Hastings 2003, 105).

Africanist scholars, who emerged from the 1960s through the 1970s, also examined European Christian 19th and 20th century ideas of race. (Ade-Ajayi 1965, Ekechi 1972 and Tasie 1978). These set of scholars criticized the attitude of some European missionary establishments towards Africans. As such, J. Ade-Ajayi, whose work is a watershed for

Africanist responses to Eurocentric representations of the Christian encounter in Africa, examined the early missionary enterprise in south western Nigeria. (Ade-Ajayi 1965, 144, 233-234). In his work, Ade-Ajayi argued that the weight of missionary paternalism and their support for the imperial intentions of their home countries transformed some of their indigenous converts into campaigners for self-determination. (Ade-Ajayi 1965, 72-273). Writing in support of Ade-Ajayi's perspective John Peel has agreed that European Christian missionary societies of the 1890s demonstrated imperial attitudes. This attitude, he said, did not allow Africans to participate at policy and decision making levels of the missionary church hierarchy. The protests against this imperial attitude, he argued, brought about the emergence of African Indigenous Churches such as the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, (both referred to as 'Aladura'), in South west Nigeria. (Peel 1968, 1-2 and 55).

On the whole, various analysis of events within the Christian missionary encounter of the 19th and 20th century Africa reveal that the establishment and maintenance of European racial hegemony was a glaring part of the encounter. Despite that the European racial dominance was very visible within the context of the encounter, however, the attempts at maintaining or dissolving the entrenched racial divisions, within missionary circles, were not one sided but were a crisscross that involved Europeans versus Africans, on the one hand, and Europeans versus Europeans, on the other. (Fischer-Tine et at 2009, Lewis 2004, Porter 2003 and Stanley 2003)

Racial and Cultural Context of the Introduction of Christianity to the Jos Plateau Area

European Christian missionaries played important roles in the extension of European influence in the Jos Plateau area, in particular, and Africa in general. In this regard, Christian missionaries were, on the one hand, precursors of European political domination in Africa, and on the other hand, cultural harbingers of European primacy on the continent. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991) As such, the entry of Christian missionaries preceded the extension of European economic and political control of parts of Southern and Eastern Africa as well as the coastal areas of West Africa. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Tasie 1978, Ekechi 1972 and Ade-Ajayi 1965) Although Christian missionaries were forerunners of European political domination in many parts of Africa, however, their activities followed closely on the

backdrop of the extension of colonial rule in other areas such as the Jos Plateau area of Nigeria. (Abdullahi 2019, 1)

The Christian religious experience of people in the Jos Plateau area occurred within the spectrum of the uneven racial relations that characterized the dynamics that shaped British rule in Nigeria. I earlier mentioned that Europeans considered themselves to be the only category of people who had achieved a high level of development in their society while "others", i. e. non-European communities, were at earlier stages of development. (Ross 2003, 90, Stanley 2003, 80-82, Harries 2000, 47, 52-53 and Stoler 1989, 137). This idea of racial and cultural superiority was used by British officials, not only to differentiate between themselves and their subjects but also, to divide their subjects into hierarchical cultural categories. (Christopher 1988, 233-234) Thus, British officials in Northern Nigeria separated indigenous people into two categories. The first category consisted of members of 'superior' cultural groups while the second was made up of members of 'inferior' cultural groups. 'Superior' cultures include the sedentary Fulani, Hausa and the Kanuri, (as well as other people who had accepted Islam), while 'inferior' cultures consisted of all the sparsely populated ethnic groups in the region who were polytheists. (Abdullahi 2019, 49, 70 and 159) The European Christian missionaries who evangelised in Northern Nigeria also adopted the hierarchical separation of culture instituted by colonial officials in the area. However, when Christian missionaries wanted to proselytise in Northern Nigeria they were directed, by colonial officials, to evangelise among the 'inferior' cultural groups.

Political Context of the Introduction of Christianity to the Jos Plateau Area

Prior to the imposition of British rule in Northern Nigeria Muslim members of the Fulani cultural group led in the institution of Islamic governance across the Hausa states of the central Sudan, through puritan coups, and established the Sokoto Caliphate. (Imam 1966, 21-36) In due course, the leadership of the Sokoto Caliphate projected an imaginary picture that suggested that all communities located to the south of its Emirates were under Caliphal rule despite that not being the situation. (Ochonu 2008, 95-117, 103, 103. Ochonu 2014, 29, and Logams 2004, 29). As such when the British enacted a policy known as "Indirect rule" in Northern Nigeria they gave authority, for local administration, to Emirs and chiefs who were made subordinate to British officials. British officials used this policy to justify the extension of Muslim Fulani leadership beyond the Emirates into non-Muslim areas. This policy made the inhabitants of the Jos Plateau and the "Middle Belt" area politically and administratively

subservient to Emirate officials, and to ordinary Muslim "subjects" from the Emirates, who were appointed as political agents/ middle figures in colonial Northern Nigeria. (Ames 1934, 7- 8, Ochonu 2008 and 2014, Barnes 2007, 591-610, Turaki 1993, 40, Crampton 1978, 49, 52-53, 81 and 88-89).

As mentioned earlier, British officials upheld the primacy of Islam, among local people, in Northern Nigeria. Hence, after the British subjugation of the Northern Nigerian Emirates, in 1903, Fredrick Lugard the British High Commissioner assured Emirate leaders in Sokoto, the seat of the Caliphate, that their practice of religion was not going to be tampered with by the colonial administration. (Appendix III Nigeria Annual Report 1902, Lugard 1965, 462). His statement was, therefore, 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 guide by his successors to veto the activities of Christian missionaries during the period of British rule in Northern Nigeria. (Walsh 1993, 47).

British officials vetoed Christian evangelisation in Northern Nigeria. As such successive colonial officials that worked in the area leaned on the promise that Frederick Lugard made to Caliphate officials by restricting Christian missionary activities in the area. (Walsh 1993) The prohibition of Christian missionary ventures by British officials in Northern Nigeria brought about a new dimension in the missionary encounter in Africa. It contrasted with the encounter in most parts of Africa, including parts of Nigeria such as the south west, south east and the delta areas, where the entry of Christian missionaries preceded colonial subjugation. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Tasie 1978, Ekechi 1972 and Ade-Ajayi 1965) The sequence in Northern Nigeria was inverted. Here Christian proselytization followed on the hills of British subjugation of territories and therefore made the Christian missionary enterprise subject to veto by colonial administrators in the area. (Logams 2004, 29-32) As such, European Christian missionaries had to obtain permission from state officials before they could evangelise in any province or district.

As mentioned earlier British officials appointed Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri and other Muslims as middle figures and adopted the Emirate system of governance for local administration. Despite the appointment of Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri and other Muslims as middle figures and the adoption of the Emirate system of local government in Northern Nigeria, British officials were, however, unable to mediate local traditions of non-Muslims in the Jos Plateau area and the Middle-Belt area using Islam. (Colonial Reports 1900-1 and Lugard 1965, 196,198 and 200-213) Hence, colonial officials directed Christian missionaries,

who wanted to proselytise in Muslim territories, to carry out the function. (Maxwell 1954, 36 and 38). Therefore, when members of the Sudan United Mission (SUM), *Societe des Missions Africaines* (SMA), Cambridge University Mission Party (CUMP) and Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) came to evangelise in Northern Nigeria they were directed to the people of the Jos Plateau area. European Christian missionaries exerted moral and administrative authority over members of their African congregations. (Bukar 2014) As such, Christian missionary authority became the avenue through which some indigenous people became acquainted to European authority in the Jos Plateau area. On the whole, the sequence of events narrated above explains the political context within which the European Christian missionary encounter took place in the Jos plateau area during the period of British rule in Nigeria.

European Missionary Racial Attitude(s) in the Christian Encounter in the Jos Plateau Area

During the closing decades of the 19th century, when British authorities were preparing to extend their rule into Northern Nigeria, (Colonial Reports 1897-8) European and North American Christian missionaries mobilized volunteers so as to prevent the southward advance of Islam from the Maghreb into sub-Saharan Africa. (Roome 1909, 1910, and 1914, Bingham 1943, 9-12, Boer 1984, 32-33 and Shankar 2014, xvii and 3-5). As such, Christian missionaries who came to proselytise in Northern Nigeria at the turn of the 20th century were part of this mission. Christian missionaries who championed this cause referred to their mission "the burden of the Soudan" and their effort to mobilize volunteers for the venture as the "call for the Soudan". (Roome 1909, 1910, and 1914, Bingham 1943, 9-12, Boer 1984, 32-33 and Shankar 2014, xvii and 3-5) Christian missionaries, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, referred to the area to the south of the Sahara Desert, from the Senegal valley to the Camerounian mountains, as the Soudan. The historical Soudan consisted of territories of the Hausa Emirates, Kanem Borno and areas to their south.

The Hausa people, as mentioned earlier, had evolved centralized city-states in the area of the Soudan that had been transformed into Emirates by Fulani Muslims. The cultural and political organization of the Emirates attracted the attention of both secular and religious institutions of Western Europeans. As such British authorities wanted to use the Emirate model of governance to administer the vast territories of Northern Nigeria while Christian missionaries wanted to evangelise the sizeable number of rural dwelling non-Muslim Hausa

population so as to use them to form a buffer zone that they hoped would halt the southward advance of Islam from the Maghreb into sub-Saharan Africa. (Boer 1984, 32-33; Shankar 2014, xvii and 3-5) While Emirate officials, after their defeat by British led military forces, accepted to be deployed by colonial officials as middle figures they, however, refused Christion missionary aspirations to proselytise within Emirate territories as they felt Christian evangelisation will erode their religious and cultural hegemony. (Barnes 1995, 410, 412 and 415)

Since Christian proselytization in the Hausa Emirates was prevented by both British and local Muslim officials Christian missionaries looked southwards towards the Jos Plateau area, and the "Middle Belt" area as a whole, as an alternative buffer zone intended to halt the southward spread of Islam. Christian missionaries pondered the shift in attention from the Hausa population in the Emirates, whom they considered "culturally" advanced enough to grasp the Christian message, to the multicultural, multilingual and politically diverse people of the Jos Plateau area. They expressed doubt about the capacity of people of the Jos Plateau area to assimilate the ideology of the Christian religion and serve as wedge against the spread Islam in the "Soudan". Doctor John Crofton Fox of the CUMP, an affiliate of the CMS, demonstrated this sentiment when he said: "Can they in any way help to form a barrier to keep back the flood of Mohammedanism that is slowly rolling southwards from the Hausa states?" (Fox 1913, 85 and 86). He also wondered aloud: "Cannot these men be won for Christ and then fitted for the work to be done?" (Fox 1913, 85 and 86). This is an example of how European Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria demonstrated their perception of the dichotomy between cultures that they considered to be advanced and those they considered backward.

J. Lowry Maxwell, one of the pioneer missionaries of the SUM, also shared the sentiment that was prevalent among European officials and Christian missionaries about the "cultural inferiority" of the people of the Jos Plateau area when he documented what took place at the onset of the Christian encounter in the area. Maxwell recounts that Dr. Kumm, the leader of the SUM, went to meet Fredrick Lugard, the British High Commissioner, at the Government Headquarters Zungeru, in 1904. (Maxwell 1954, 35). Accordingly he reported that "The Dr. had told [the High Commissioner] of the proposal that we should open the work among the people in the Bauchi hill country; whereupon His Excellency had approved our project for opening mission work among 'pagans'". (Maxwell 1954, 36 and 38). The reference to the inhabitants of the Jos Plateau area as "people", implies that the Christian missionaries thought that the local population belonged to the general human race, on the one

hand, and as “pagans”, suggests that the Christian missionaries, however, thought that the indigenous people belonged to a backward stage of cultural development, on the other. This example shows how the pioneer Christian missionaries grappled with the idea of whether or not the indigenous people of the Jos Plateau could be redeemed both “culturally” and “spiritually”. The paradox emphasizes the role that European perception of local identities played in the Christian and colonial encounters in Northern Nigeria.

Despite the fact that European Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria, at the beginning of the colonial and Christian encounter, were left with no other choice but to evangelise among the non-Muslim people of the area they continued to perceive their target audience as the “inferior other” incapable of imbibing European civility. Again Maxwell, of the SUM, further demonstrates this perception when he described the appearance of Adamu a young Christian convert from the Kulere cultural group. “Adamu, (he said), was a proper savage whose outward appearance did not alter even after he made a profession of faith. He did not look ‘civilised’ or anything like that. One can imagine that he was promptly classed as an eater of men”. (Maxwell 1954, 234). This particular example shows that British officials and Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria shared similar views about people in the Jos Plateau area because both categories of imperialists, (i.e. political and economic/ religious and cultural), not only, subscribed to the European division of racial and cultural hierarchy that placed Africans at the bottom of the ladder of civilisation but, also, relegated certain categories of indigenous people, such as those in the study area, further down the ladder of human cultural civility.

The European notion on cultural backwardness of the people of the Jos Plateau area was also shared by members of the SMA. The members of the SMA Catholic missionary organisation came to the Jos Plateau area in 1907. (Mouren Excerpts) They were the second Christian missionary organisation to enter into Jos Plateau area. Priests of the SMA were directed to the Jos Plateau area through instructions they received from Bishop Pelleti, their Superior in Lyon, to establish a mission somewhere between the fifteenth degree north of the Cameroons, the right bank of the Benue and the left bank of the Niger. (Walsh 1993,15-16) When the SMA priests wrote to several British administrators in Northern Nigeria requesting permission to evangelise in the area only Captain Upton Fitzpatrick Ruxton, the Resident of Muri Province, responded by expressing willingness to accept the Catholic missionaries in his domain. (O’Connor 2007, 52-53).

Ruxton directed the SMA priests to the Goemai area and dispatched them with a letter of recommendation to the Long Goemai (Chief) of Shendam. (O’Connor 2007, 60). On

arrival, the missionaries of the SMA received a warm welcome from the people and Long Goemai of Shendam. During the encounter, the Chief communicated with the missionaries through his *mallam* (i. e. Hausa/Islamic teacher) while the Catholic priests spoke through their cook who also served as their interpreter. In the documentation of the encounter the priests wrote that "Shendam was small; built square, with a multitude of pointed thatched roofs, and around it was a defensive wall thrown up during fierce 'tribal wars'." (Mouren "Excerpts") This statement shows that the missionaries of the SMA perceived the architecture of the town as archaic and they considered the reason for a defensive wall around the town to be an indication of pre-modern inter-action among the people of the area. The missionaries also said "We [found] the whole population waiting for us. At their head was the Chief, a fine tall man in flowing Muslim robes though he [was] a 'pagan'." (Mouren Excerpts)

The contrast made between Goemai and Hausa clothing, by the missionaries of the SMA, could pass for a mere observation of Goemai pre-colonial attire. However, once the observation is placed within the context of European colonial perception of Muslim and non-Muslim cultural groups in Northern Nigeria it becomes proof that the missionaries also considered their target audience as culturally backward. This is so because Goemai traditional attire was made up of a rectangular piece of woven cotton cloth that women tied around their body, covering themselves from the chest to the legs, while men tied it to cover their body from the waist to the legs. Men of royal standing, however, adorned the attire like women but with one edge of the wrapper thrown over the shoulder. In contrast, Muslim attire in Northern Nigeria consisted of a set of clothing including wide robes. A complete suite of clothing consisted of a wide embroidered robe, worn over a kaftan, and wide trousers made up the male attire while the female attire consisted of a rectangular blouse that covered the body from the neck to the waist, worn over a wrapper that covered the body from the waist to the legs. (Abdullahi 2015). As such, the comments of the Catholic missionaries on their first encounter with the Goemai showed that they were also not immuned from the classifications that pervaded European racial and cultural thought of the 19th and 20th centuries and thus were yet to mediate their views on the European imposed cultural "inferiority" of the people of the Jos Plateau area.

The agents of the third Christian missionary organisation, the CUMP, that evangelised in the Jos Plateau area also adopted the cultural bias against the local population that was prevalent among Europeans. The members of the CUMP made their way into the Jos Plateau area in 1907, the same year as the SMA. (Harford 1912, 308). Members of the CUMP chose to evangelise among people that Christianity had not yet reached. As such, members of the

CUMP were assigned to the CMS' Niger Mission area from where they were detailed to the Jos Plateau in 1906, following a memorandum between the CMS and CUMP. (Wambutda 1991, 147). It was after they were assigned to the Jos Plateau area that Dr. Doctor John Crofton Fox expressed doubt about the capacity of people of the Jos Plateau area to assimilate the ideology of the Christian religion and then serve as a wedge against the spread Islam in the Soudan. As such he inquired: "Can they in any way help to form a barrier to help keep back the flood of Mohamedanism that is slowly rolling southwards from the Hausa states?" "Cannot these men be won for Christ and be fitted for the work to be done?" (Fox 1913, 85-86) Dr. Fox's queries, at that time, seemed urgent and important. Although there seemed to have been some urgency regarding the situation around which Dr. Fox posed his questions I will, however, discuss the outcome of his queries in the next section.

European Christian Missionary Paternalism in the Jos Plateau Area

European Christian missionaries, who worked in the Jos Plateau area, initially shared similar views about the cultural backwardness of indigenous people with colonial officials. Although European Christian missionaries initially shared similar views with colonial officials, on the cultural backwardness of indigenous people, their position later on changed to paternalism. As explained earlier, paternalism was a racially influenced attitude whereby European Christian missionaries viewed indigenous people as children that needed to be brought up to cultural and religious maturity. Paternalism was a dominant sentiment in European Christian missionary circles during the colonial period in Africa and other continents of the world in the 20th century. (Ross 2003, 86-88 and 90). As earlier mentioned, this view has been reflected by Patrick Harries in his work on Swiss Protestant missionaries who evangelised in southern Africa. (Harries 2000) Accordingly, Harries argued that Swiss missionaries mediated their racial attitudes towards indigenous southern Africans by viewing their target audience as the weaker race that needed protection and tuition. In this regard, the Swiss Christian missionaries concluded that Africans needed to be tutored in both scientific reasoning and Christian morality so as to enable them cope with the rigours of the modern world and to protect them from extreme behaviours, such as heavy alcohol consumption, gun violence and sexually transmitted diseases, that were prevalent among European colonists in southern Africa. In order to achieve their set goals, the Swiss Protestant missionaries, therefore, conceded that Africans possessed the same physical and mental capacities with Europeans and were not limited by any biological hindrances. (Harries 2000, 47, 52-53)

A similar perspective to that of the Swiss Protestant missionaries, that worked in the 19th and 20th centuries in southern Africa, was expressed by Dr. Andrew Stirret. Dr. Stirret was a member of the SIM that evangelised among members of the Rigwe, an indigenous ethnic group that inhabited the north western part, of the Jos Plateau area. Dr. Stirret observed that "They excel any other race I ever saw in general physique, it is a prayer of mine that many might be saved in this 'tribe' and that the Lord might send them forth as His special messengers to other 'tribes' to tell the good news of salvation". (Blench 2012, 43-44). In other words, Dr. Stirret felt that if the SIM could convert the members of this "backward" cultural group to Christianity their industrious and athletic abilities could then be put to use in the work of evangelising other "backward" cultural groups in the Jos Plateau area. His wishes were based on his observation of the athletic manner in which members of the Rigwe cultural group carried out their chores. For example, he admired how the men ran to their farms early in the morning and back home, later in the day, to carry out domestic chores and how the women multi-tasked, by making crafts, while tending to their children.

The paternalistic attitude of European Christian missionaries towards their indigenous converts in Africa, in general, and the Jos plateau in particular was frequently exhibited while they tutored their proselytes. As such, European Christian missionaries often, genuinely, took on a parental approach while they mentored their converts. This was the situation when Vrenkat Lot, a young boy that belonged to the Mwaghavul cultural group in the central part of the Jos plateau, converted to Christianity. Vrenkat began his Christian agency by interacting closely with the European missionaries in Panyam when the Reverend and Mrs. Edward Hayward, who arrived Panyam in 1911, made him their "house boy". (Lere 1996, 58 – 59). 'House boy' was the term Europeans in the colonies used for male house servants. His employment gave him the opportunity to interact with the Europeans more than anyone else in his community. Vrenkat used the opportunity provided by his employment not only to observe the European Christian missionaries closely, but also to get extra Bible and literacy lessons from them.

In 1919 the Haywards were replaced by Miss Elsie M. Webster who had warm memories of her first encounter with Vrenkat. (Goshit 2013, 65). She recalled that when she first arrived at the "mission compound" in Panyam, she was met by Vrenkat who informed her excitedly that "he was her boy". (Gutip 1998, 102). Vrenkat attended the classes for religious instruction where the missionaries noticed his ability to grasp what he was taught, including Bible stories, arithmetic, reading and writing, quickly. Thus, Miss Webster recalled: "Quite soon he was able to help teach others and I gave him individual lessons at other times

as there was no one else anywhere near his ability. He was a dedicated soul even at an early age". (Gutip 1988,102). Webster's comments, above, portray a parental display of affection towards her mentee whom she felt was making steady advances both in Christian religious tenets and European civility.

Furthermore, after some self-examination, Maxwell, of the SUM, came to the conclusion that he and his colleagues had to get rid of the sentiments, that made them to view Africans as sub humans, if they were to make sufficient progress in the Christian evangelisation of the area. (Boer 1984, 43) Thus, Christian missionaries began to view their target audience as cultural and religious "children" and took on the role of parenting the children to "progressive" Christian maturity. Dr. Karl Kumm expressed this sentiment when he said "the 'heathen' clans are in our hands as little children whose faith and future we may make or mar". (Boer 1984, 42). Dr. Kumm's comment shows a significant departure from outright European Christian missionary prejudice against Africans to paternalism. On the whole, Webster, Stirret and Kumm's display of affection towards their proselytes, as demonstrated through their comments above, portray the nature of the paternalistic attitude(s) exhibited by European Christian missionaries towards their local Christian converts in the study area.

Conclusion

The perception of local identity was an important aspect of the European colonial and Christian encounter in the Jos plateau area of Nigeria, in particular, and the African continent in general. As such, the first set of European Christian missionaries to the Jos Plateau area misunderstood the racial and cultural composition of their target audience just as colonial officials did. This was so because they used European cultural and social standards to misinterpret aspects of the material culture of the people of the area. However, it took less than two decades for the missionaries on the Jos Plateau to start questioning the validity of their perception of indigenous people.

Christian missionaries in the Jos Plateau area, therefore, mediated their prejudice with paternalism as they sought to engage the local population in the area meaningfully. They viewed themselves as parents who were to nurture their "culturally backward children" to "progressive Christian maturity". European Christian missionaries, therefore, de-emphasized their views on the cultural "inferiority" of the people of the Jos Plateau area and shifted their gaze, on the matter, to a paternalistic standpoint. In this manner, Christian missionaries mediated their racial and cultural prejudice(s) so as to be able to transform their target

audience(s) to "progressive" Christians for the intended purpose. In conclusion, European Christian missionary change in attitude from racism to paternalism, during the period of European political domination of the continent, was not restricted to the Jos plateau area alone but was part of the European Christian encounter in other parts of Africa, in particular, and the world in general.

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