Why Do We Need the White Man's God? African Contributions and Responses to the Formation of a Christian Movement in Cameroon, 1914-1968

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Abstract

This study analyses local processes of appropriating Christianity in anglophone Cameroon. It centres upon Christian communities which were established under the auspices of the Swiss/German Basel Mission (BM). Earlier research on the BM in Cameroon deals mainly with metropolitan, colonial and institutional dimensions of mission history. Other related work on the relevance of the missionary enterprise to specific areas and peoples barely extends beyond the 1920s. With few exceptions, "native" agents – African clergy, sub-clergy and lay people – and their functions in mediating Christian faith have received little attention during the period under review here. Thus the necessity to overcome this limitation is addressed by placing African agency at the core of my thesis, employing a comprehensive comparative approach.

The study takes up two suggestions put forward by several serious scholars from the mid-1960s: first, to recognise Christian advance in Africa as a black advance and second, to shift the emphasis from metropolitan mission history to local histories of religious encounters and Christianity. Bearing this reorientation in mind, the present research interlaces two strands of historical reconstruction. The first strand maps out the broader context of interaction between the key parties who influenced the BM's agenda: European missionaries, colonial officials, merchants, planters and African Christians and non-Christians. The second strand relates to local levels of contest or accommodation between African traditional belief systems and social institutions on one side, and "native" agents, evangelism and conversion experiences on the other.

African participation in the evangelisation programme is examined from several vantage points. The partially overlapping themes are presented in seven chapters. They include the impact of the First World War, connections between colonial rule and missionary activity, linkages between religion and economic development, the role of traditional authorities (precepts and practices of chiefs and secret societies) in legitimising religious change, the vernacularisation of Christianity, nationalism and autonomy, and conversion, Christian adherence, and "native" agency. To conclude, the path from foreign missionary control to African church leadership is appraised.

Written sources, interviews and photographs feed into a multi-pronged approach geared to elaborate the social-historical dimension of the missionary enterprise. The analysis of encounters with Christianity through biographical evidence is combined with reflections on the political, economic and social transformation of the mission field. Through its comparative framework the study seeks to add to a large picture of the interplay between colonial rule, Christian movements and the evolving concepts of traditional authority, identity, and modernity in 20th century sub-Saharan Africa.

To my family, "moyos", friends,
and everyone who has
shared this experience

Contents

Acknowledgments

I have frequently thought of Cameroon as a school of life, a society where I could learn to cherish a sense of pace and rhythm. I lived with the intriguing sensation of experiencing a world full of paradoxes, of simplicity and complexity alike, a world of timelessness, yet driven by a throbbing, exciting pulse. Those I got to know were colleagues, companions, friends, guides, counsellors and teachers at once. To this mixed host of personalities from church circles, universities, archives, NGOs, cultural associations, and other backgrounds, I direct my initial words of gratitude. May everybody who is not mentioned in person but deserves my undivided attention rest assured that I hold her or him in deep esteem. It was the team of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Archives and Library (PCCCAL) who saw most of me. I think of Stanley Ngum Tegha, my partner and successor as Head of the PCCCAL, who passed away in early May 2001, shortly after his thirty-third birthday, with dismay and deep sadness. He stood by my side as a pillar of support and frank critic who 'disappeared' all too soon. Lawrence Ebah, Pius Sabum and Kenneth Tanifor were close throughout, lending me an ear or a helping hand at all times. I also convey my appreciation to the entire Synod Office 'family' by turning to the Moderator of the PCC, the Rt. Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, for sharing the vision of protecting the archival heritage of the PCC.

Nicodemus Fru Awasom, Jonas N. Dah, Verkijika G. Fanso, Steven Fomin, Edward F. Lekunze, Anthony Ndi, Martin Z. Njeuma and Richard Tantoh Talla offered me invaluable suggestions and inspirations. Their insider knowledge, writings and congenial friendship opened many a window on the history of Cameroon. They showed me the way. However, I might have got lost or side-tracked, had it not been for the unfailing assistance by Henry Kah and Julius Muokweh who alternately accompanied the interviews and ploughed acres of data. They made a profound impact as willing, flexible, well-informed collaborators. An additional advantage was my good relation with the two 'old hands' at the Buea National Archives, Primus Forgwe and Prince Henry Mbain. They are as close to living catalogues as it gets, gave me special consideration, and made me feel at home whenever I showed up.

Home is evidently a key term when it comes to narrowing my focus on the informants. In the course of the acquaintances I generally received a warm welcome, whether a meeting had been prearranged or not. These were some of the most unforgettable highlights where my research plans and the intimacy of family life ran together. It is difficult to find words fit to acknowledge the generous care, trust, interest and fascinating insights I encountered. Nor would it do to simply list the names of the informants, each of whom merits far more than collective praise can express. The individual interviews have left profound marks on my way of relating the protagonists of my narrative to the larger framework of the study. I attempt to reciprocate their gestures – if more modestly – by deploying their accounts and views in the story that follows. I hope my representations of this human interaction are fair – and pay my respects to those who are regrettably no more able to judge for themselves.

If Cameroon is the bedrock of my thesis, two places in Europe provided a stimulating academic environment for its realisation: Basel and London. The Basel Mission Cameroon Archive is not merely a splendid collection of records but is also part of what has become a reputable centre of intercultural dialogue. The archivist, Paul Jenkins, has in many ways been responsible for nurturing my interest in African history and the social history of the missionary enterprise. I am exceptionally fortunate to have been let in on a variety of ideas, knowledge and intuition that have been shaped by his 30 years of experience at the helm of this repository. But most of all, Paul Jenkins and his wife Jennifer have become friends of a very special kind. Innumerable are the times when they put me up in an uncomplicated manner that has been enormously conducive to the self-directed routine of research. I wish to thank them dearly for their kindness and for their knack of combining intellectual tasks with a delightful form of *savoir vivre*. I could not leave Basel without mentioning Barbara Frey-Näf who was in charge of the BM Archive's photo project for a good decade. Many were the occasions when she helped me to make use of this valuable collection of sources.

Coming back to London, it is difficult to imagine a more suited place than the School of Oriental and African Studies to write the present work. First and foremost, this is thanks to the untiring encouragements, suggestions, criticisms and confidence of Richard Rathbone. To simply call him a supervisor would be to miss the essence of the crucial part he played. The German equivalent *Doktorvater* is more to the point. He is indeed the father who has auspiciously piloted me through a haze of doubts and convictions that invariably reigned while researching and producing the thesis. His sagacious comments on my chapter drafts were second to none. I am immensely grateful for such fruitful commitment and guidance. Several others have given me rich food for thought. Of these, J. D. Y. Peel deserves special mention as the *spiritus rector* of my concerns with religious encounters and change. Apart from disclosing a wealth of illuminating insights in his research, he offered me a hand of friendship and good tips without which the thesis would have lacked its vital groundwork. Moreover, I have benefited enormously from questions and advice by Richard Fardon and Paul Gifford, and from a year of close collaboration and the resulting friendship with John Parker. Ian Brown in his capacity as Head of the History Department as well as Joy Lewis and Carol Miles of the Departmental Office were welcoming and supportive throughout. They merit heaps of praise for never failing to find a solution when problems cropped up. A most useful forum for the development of arguments and interpretations was the African History Research Seminar. This is a seedbed from which I gleaned abundant ideas.

However anti-social working on a thesis becomes at times, I enjoyed every opportunity, related or unrelated to the research, to step out of these confines and reinvigorate my mind. Shirley Ardener and Elizabeth 'Sally' Chilver in Oxford are two monuments of Cameroon studies who have enlightened me through their experience, knowledge and memories in a number of long afternoon conversations. They occupy a very special place in my world of

inspirations. Samia Ali-Moussa, Greg Cameron, Mark Fenemore, Patrick Germann, Paivi Hasu, Joseph Lee, Laura Lloyd, Nayanika Mokherjee, David and Rhonda Semple, Dennis Tambe, Olga Ascurra-Teck and Roger Teck became friends with whom I shared precious moments. My thanks goes to all of them for their most stimulating, relaxing company. In the same breath I think of friends in Switzerland, Timothy and Natalie Frehner and Astrid Baer and Christoph Rüegg, who have remained close despite the distance that separated us for the past years. I am also indebted to Ueli Knecht for producing a set of excellent maps.

More than anything else, the background of my thesis can best be described as a family matter. My parents, two of the most seasoned travellers to all corners of Africa that I know, sowed the early seeds of my orientation towards various parts of the continent. They have keenly followed up my trips in and out of Cameroon and indeed asked me to join them on a most spectacular voyage through Senegal and Mali in 1995. Both their broadmindedness and ceaseless ability to take in different cultures, livelihoods and environments has taught me a lot about tolerance and respect for distinct peoples. Their curiosity about my research never turned into impatience, pressure or resignation, though they have perhaps questioned my venture silently, wondering, as parents would be expected to, where it will take me next. My brother and sister Ben and Letitia have challenged and propped me up on numerous occasions while my brother Frank put me to the test whenever I found a chance to escape to the Alps. They supported, pushed and prodded me in many more ways than I can detail here, underscoring that we are one. I thank Ben for his assistance with the photographs.

My largest debt, particularly for my reduced role as a husband and father, is to Sylvie, my wife, and our three children, Kadesh, Naomi and Alexia. I am of course deeply relieved that they have endured this tale of the seemingly unexpected. It is primarily their merit that I have achieved what I set out to do in 1998. Numerous were the pleasant distractions that prevented me from becoming a slave to my target of completing the thesis. In retrospect, it was this balance between the theoretical nature of my work and the proximity and reality of my family which rendered life as a doctoral student more human. While the children are becoming fairly independent at an early age, they continue, together with their mother, to teach their father about the pace and rhythm which he sought to explore in Cameroon. Not least, Sylvie hails from the society under study and often exposed her origins as one of the most thought-provoking critics of my work. She knows best how much I owe her as well as her mother, Celine Endam Mbah, who invested much energy in keeping up our spirits. In this last respect I am also fortunate to have two true brothers-in-law, Protus and Tchana.

My undertaking would have been impossible without the generous financial support of the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Scouloudi Foundation. Maintaining the family in one of London's child-friendly neighbourhoods was a priority we could meet up with due to such resources. Moreover, I was able to conduct my research in Basel without imposing another strain on the family. Finally, I received a grant to attend a conference on Cameroon in Houston in April 2001. I am very grateful for all these motivating privileges.

Illustrations

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Abbreviations

A.D.O	Assistant Divisional Officer
AFC	African Fruit Company
BM	Basel Mission
BMCA	Basel Mission Cameroon Archive
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BNA	Buea National Archives
CCC	Cameroon Church in Christ
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CDC	Cameroons Development Corporation
CMF	Christian Men's Fellowship
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPC	Cameroon Protestant College
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CTI	Catechist's Training Institution
CWF	Christian Women's Fellowship
CYF	Christian Youth's Fellowship
D.O.	Divisional Officer
EEC	Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun
ETC	(Government) Elementary Training Centre
GBM	German Baptist Mission
Jeucafra	Jeunesse Camerounaise Française
KPP	Kamerun People's Party
NA	Native Authority
NC	Native Court
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
PCCCAL	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archives and Library
PCWC	Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
PRO	Public Record Office
PTS	Presbyterian Theological Seminary
S.D.O.	Senior Divisional Officer
SSP	Secretary Southern Provinces (in Lagos)
TTC	Theological Training Centre
UAC	United African Company
UFCS	United Free Church of Scotland
WAPV	West Afrikanische Pflanzungs Vereinigung

A note on orthography

The present study contains a considerable range of names and terms, referring to peoples, places, traditional institutions and local customs. Anglophone Cameroon, the area covered, and its neighbouring territory to the north, east and south can be mapped out by following Cameroonian, English, French or German spellings. I have attempted to strike an adequate compromise that mirrors the diversity of the varied regions under review by drawing upon contemporary spellings which are compared with, and verified through, historical evidence.

Introduction

The white men's 'God-talk' has left a prominent mark on the biographies of numerous Africans. For each Cameroonian who, directly or indirectly, has contributed to the present study, missionary evangelism raised decisive questions about their beliefs, livelihoods and identities. On a larger scale, such religious encounters engendered, or fed into, pressures to reform African societies. This research is concerned with individual and collective ways of coping with such pressures. It relates personal experiences with appropriating Christianity to social change in Cameroon during and immediately after the colonial era. The result is a regional study that bears witness to some of the multiple motives of Africans for engaging with the fundamental underlying question of the Christian discourse and its goals: Why do we need the white man's God?

Christian Advance as Black Advance: The Ascendancy of "Native" Agency

Assembling a wide range of biographical fragments proved essential for the purpose of illustrating the considerable diversity of the missionary impact in Southern Cameroons. This study therefore attempts to reconstruct the social history of the interaction between an expanding Christian movement and its African host societies.[1] It takes on Roland Oliver's proposal 'to write the history of the Churches as opposed to that of the missions.'[2] Local actors and structures of the Swiss/German Basel Mission's (BM) enterprise in Cameroon lie at the core of my interest in keeping faith with the view of Cameroonian Christians that 'It is important for us to write not just the history of the Basel Missionaries, but also that of our Cameroonian fathers and mothers.'[3] In so doing, it is worth reiterating what Dennis Osadebay, one-time Prime Minister of Nigeria's Midwestern Region, prophesied in 1947: 'When African historians come to write their own account of the adventure of Africa with imperialism, they will write of the missionaries as the greatest friends the African had.'[4]

By the standards of nationalist and other critics of economic and cultural imperialism, Osadebay's opinion sounded contentious at the time it was voiced. Indeed, as Emmanuel Ayandele notes, missionaries and the Christian heritage were much disputed by religiously indifferent, 'ardent apostles of secularism' during the years to follow.[5] However plausible their scepticism was, European missionaries and their African counterparts often forged

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[1] On the social history approach, see Paul Jenkins. 'Mission history – A *Manifesto'*, *Research Bulletin of the Institute for Worship and Religious Architecture,* University of Birmingham, 1982, pp. 81-92.

[2] Roland Oliver. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*. London: Longmans, 1965 (2nd ed.), p. xiii.

[3] 'Life Story of a Cameroonian Pioneer Assistant to Missionary Workers....Ba Mateo Wakum', in 1995 CWF-CMF Study Material "God's Finger is Warning!", p. 107.

[4] Quoted in J. B. Schuyler. 'Conceptions of Christianity in the Context of Tropical Africa: Nigerian Reactions to its Advent', in C. G. Baëta (ed.). *Christianity in Tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968., p. 208.

[5] 'Address by Professor E. A. Ayandele, Principal, University of Ibadan, Jos Campus, on Sunday, 31 August, 1975', in Edward Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings & Godwin Tasie (eds.). *Christianity in Independent Africa*. London: Rex Collings, 1978, p. 607.

alliances which instigated powerful political, economic, and religious initiatives. Unlike the sparsely distributed colonial officials in British Southern Cameroons and profit-seeking plantation managers and merchants, missionaries and their target groups often engaged in long encounters. Recognising this, as Elizabeth Isichei remarks, Jacob Ajayi and Ayandele pioneered a thorough appraisal of African contributions and reactions to the missionary enterprise in Nigeria.[6] A key distinction between their analyses lies in the particular social milieux they focus on. Both authors view the missions as hotbeds of a social revolution in Nigeria around the mid-19th century. Ajayi shows how this stimulated the formation of an educated African middle class which in turn laid the foundation for socio-economic and political reformism in Nigeria.[7] Ayandele chose a broader approach, laying emphasis on African responses rather than on contributions to missionary activity. Instead of limiting his focus to the emerging *élite*, he considers society as a whole with the aim of illustrating the extent to which Christian missions depended on African assent and participation.[8]

Remembering the achievements of these two eminent Nigerian historians, an addendum to Osadebay's prediction is called for. If missionaries have *not* unanimously gone down as the 'greatest friends' of Africans, they do merit attention among all those interested in African history. Apart from the two studies by Ajayi and Ayandele, their records have fed into a large corpus of research on religious encounters. The versatility and volume of such sources suggest that no single mission field, whatever its size, could be written off as over-exploited *terra cognita*. A good example of why well-known religious encounters ought to be revisited is J. D. Y. Peel's impressive book on the Yoruba. This features an intriguing analysis of narratives, principally reflecting the archive of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).[9] While Ajayi and Ayandele expose the political and social realms of missionary activity, Peel tackles the underlying theme of accommodating Christianity and its influence on the shaping of Yoruba identity. By exploring journals of African CMS agents, all three authors demonstrate the indispensability of Nigerian sources in retracing Nigerian history.

This study does not aim to undermine the basis upon which Christian missions set out to evangelise and "civilise" African peoples who were being or about to be colonised. It does however deny the fallacy of crude theories of cultural imperialism since evangelism tended to prompt social change rather than a wide Christian conquest. Thus I explore ways in which collaboration and controversy between the missionaries and the missionised were responsible for challenging colonial rule. As Thomas Beidelman affirms,

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[6] Elizabeth Isichei. *A History of Christianity in Africa. From Antiquity to the Present*. London: Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995, p. 74.

[7] Jacob F. A. Ajayi. *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a new Elite*. London: Longmans, 1965, pp. 17f., 270-273.

[8] Emmanuel A. Ayandele. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longmans, 1965, p. xvii, 331f.

[9] On African sources and narrative, see J. D. Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 9-22.

> the mission was no more self-destructive than other institutions in the broader colonial endeavor; as the task of converting an alien world to one's own values succeeds, these values exert powerful influences to reduce differences between teachers and taught, alien and native, administrator and administered. With that the bases of colonial rule are undermined.'[10]

From this viewpoint we can infer that African Christians were unwittingly taught to contest self-arrogated authority among European colonial officials and missionaries. A peculiar trait of mainstream missions in British Southern Cameroons is their resilience in the face of emerging Pentecostal and Charismatic churches elsewhere in 20th century West Africa, notably in Ghana and Nigeria.[11] This, however, must not detract from a rather unorthodox, popular Christianity that challenged missionary conformity. As such, the BM's Christian movement was initially not a unified association. It was pieced together from diverse local initiatives to form Christian grassroots movements. Generally, as Terence Ranger remarks,

> In many parts of Africa, then, there were periods of rapid grass-roots Christian growth during which the whole atmosphere was that of an African religious movement. Thereafter, the structures and institutions of the mission churches hardened, though even then a vigorous popular Christianity often bubbled beneath the surface. [It has been] argued that African independent churches arose in reaction against the institutional rigidities of mission Christianity. What has been much less noticed is that movements of independency almost nowhere swept the mission churches away.[12]

Grassroots movements thrived in the wake of attempts at decentralising the missionary enterprise as 'the cutting edge of mission growth was now in the villages, their schools, and catechists.'[13] These movements were vital for the appropriation of the BM's brand of Christianity by Africans before being fused and incorporated into the PCC's structures of Presbyterianism. The formation of grassroots movements was coupled with a process of broadening interaction between Europeans and Africans through the exchange of religious symbols. Moving between loyalty and defiance or resistance, African agents engaged in 'shifting relations' with colonial, mission and indigenous institutions.[14] Shifting relations are characterised here by "native" agents capitalising on those missionaries who were

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[10] Thomas O. Beidelman. *Colonial Evangelism. A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 213.

[11] See David G. Burnett. 'Charisma and Community in a Ghanaian Independent Church.' London, Ph.D., 1997; Adrian Hastings. *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*. Cambridge: CUP, 1979; Birgit Meyer. 'Translating the Devil: An African Appropriation of Pietist Protestantism. The Case of the Ewe in Southeastern Ghana, 1847-1992.' Amsterdam, Ph.D., 1995; G. C. Oosthuizen. *Post-Christianity in Africa. A Theological and Anthropological Study*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968; J. D. Y. Peel. *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba*. London: OUP, 1968.

[12] Terence O. Ranger. 'Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa', *African Studies Review* 29(2), 1986, p. 35.

[13] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 421.

[14] For a comparable analysis of this process in an East African case study of the Moravian and Lutheran missions in colonial Tanganyika, see Marcia Wright. *German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891-1941. Lutherans and Moravians in the Southern Highlands*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 64, 100, 103, 118, 127, 141, 159f., 178.

immersed in local cultures.[15] Christian standards were fashioned jointly by the two camps before being disseminated as among the Tswana whose *baruti* (preachers) 'were far more important in restructuring "missionary" Christian life than a handful of missionaries.'[16]

"Native" agency can be placed within the contours of its narrow, *élitist* (Ajayi) or of its popular (Ayandele) representation. Over two decades ago, Richard Gray proclaimed a shift 'from the work and careers of prominent individual Africans, important and significant though they still remain, to attempt to assess the developing demands, the new horizons and the changing cosmologies of African societies as a whole.'[17] The focus has changed from the centre to the periphery, 'from the mission station to village Christianity and to the movements of Christians which often founded them.'[18] As it appears – in retrospect and in anticipation of further research – the two dimensions of "native" agency belong within one and the same picture, being inextricably bound together. Thus it is important to accord "native" agents statuses that are reflected in their biographies. The key point expounded vehemently by Peel is that self-identification must be taken into account when attempting to 'explain the behaviour of individuals in society' rather than the 'behaviour of society' as a whole.[19] This problem of grasping 'the precise linkages between the individual and his environment' is also addressed in the life history of Michael Iwene Tansi, a Nigerian Catholic priest, by Elizabeth Isichei.[20] For Paul Jenkins, the widened 'linkages' imply that 'it [African church history] should be *an ecumenical history of the reception of the Christian impulse* in all its forms, however they are understood, *in each traditional culture and political group in the continent.*'[21] Here lie the connections between collectivity – congregations, Christian communities, society – and individuality – agents and informants.

"Native" agency as it is presented in the following chapters would not have existed if not for the missionary enterprise. Along with the African agents, their European colleagues and teachers have a prominent part in the encounters that are discussed. Action, reaction, and transformation of African peoples in response to enduring religious encounters afford a context (as discussed below) within which to address the dialectics between missionaries and missionised. It is here, in this attempt to create a deeper understanding of faith-related interaction and the germination of African ideas on Christianisation, that the need to revisit the BM and her "native" agents in Cameroon manifests itself clearly.

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[15] For a similar argument in connection with missionary activity on the 19th century Gold Coast, see Anne Hugon. 'L'implantation du méthodisme en Côte de l'or au XIXe siècle: Stratégies d'evangélisation et modalités de diffusion (1835-1874).' Paris, Ph.D., 1995 (vol. 1), p. 289.

[16] Paul Landau. *The Realm of the Word. Language, Gender, and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995, p. 131.

[17] Richard Gray. 'Christianity and Religious Change in Africa', *African Affairs*, 1978 (79), pp. 89f.

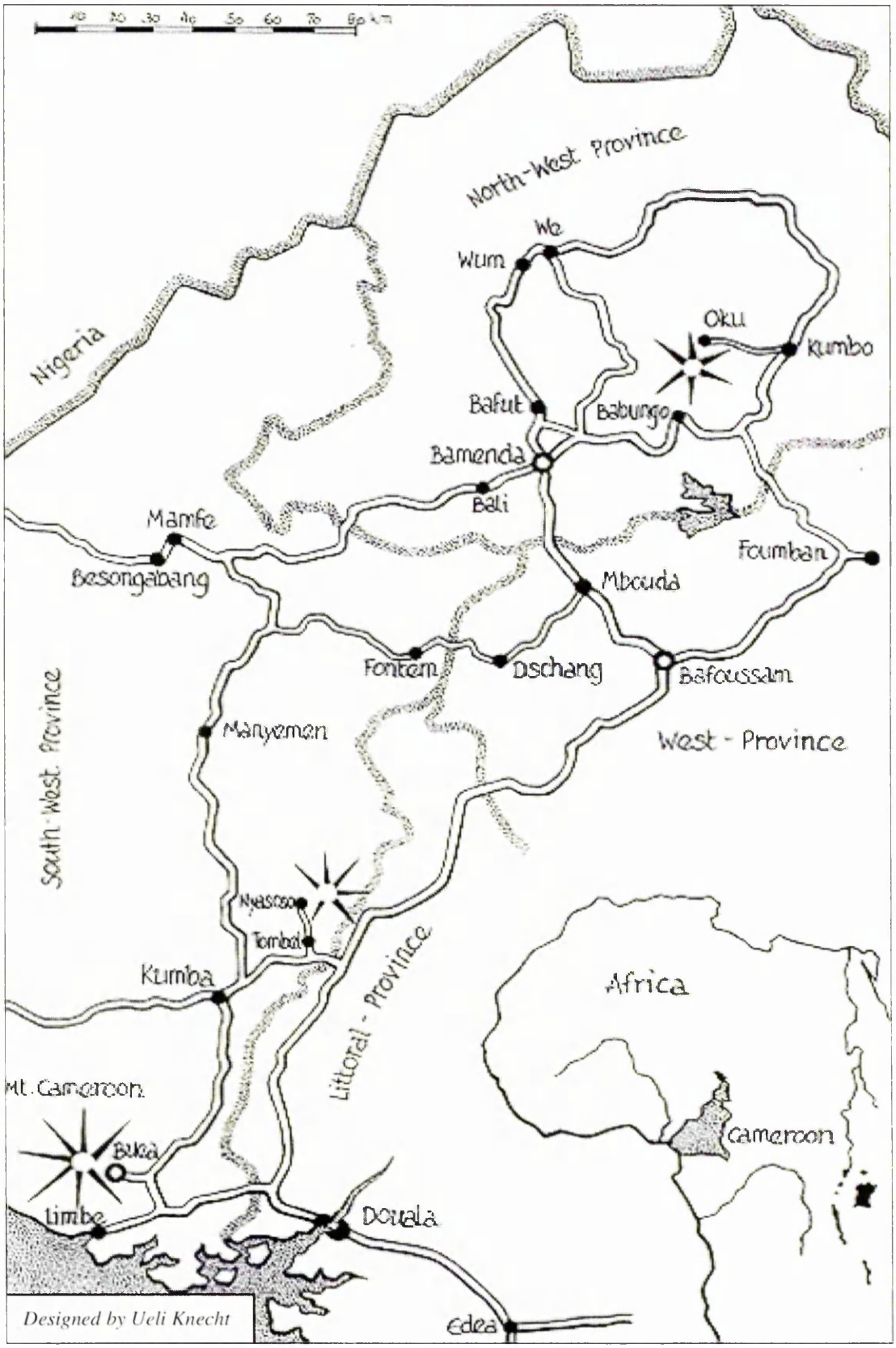
[18] David Maxwell. *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe. A Social History of the Hwesa People c. 1870s-1990s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 4.

[19] J. D. Y. Peel. *Aladura*, p. 18.

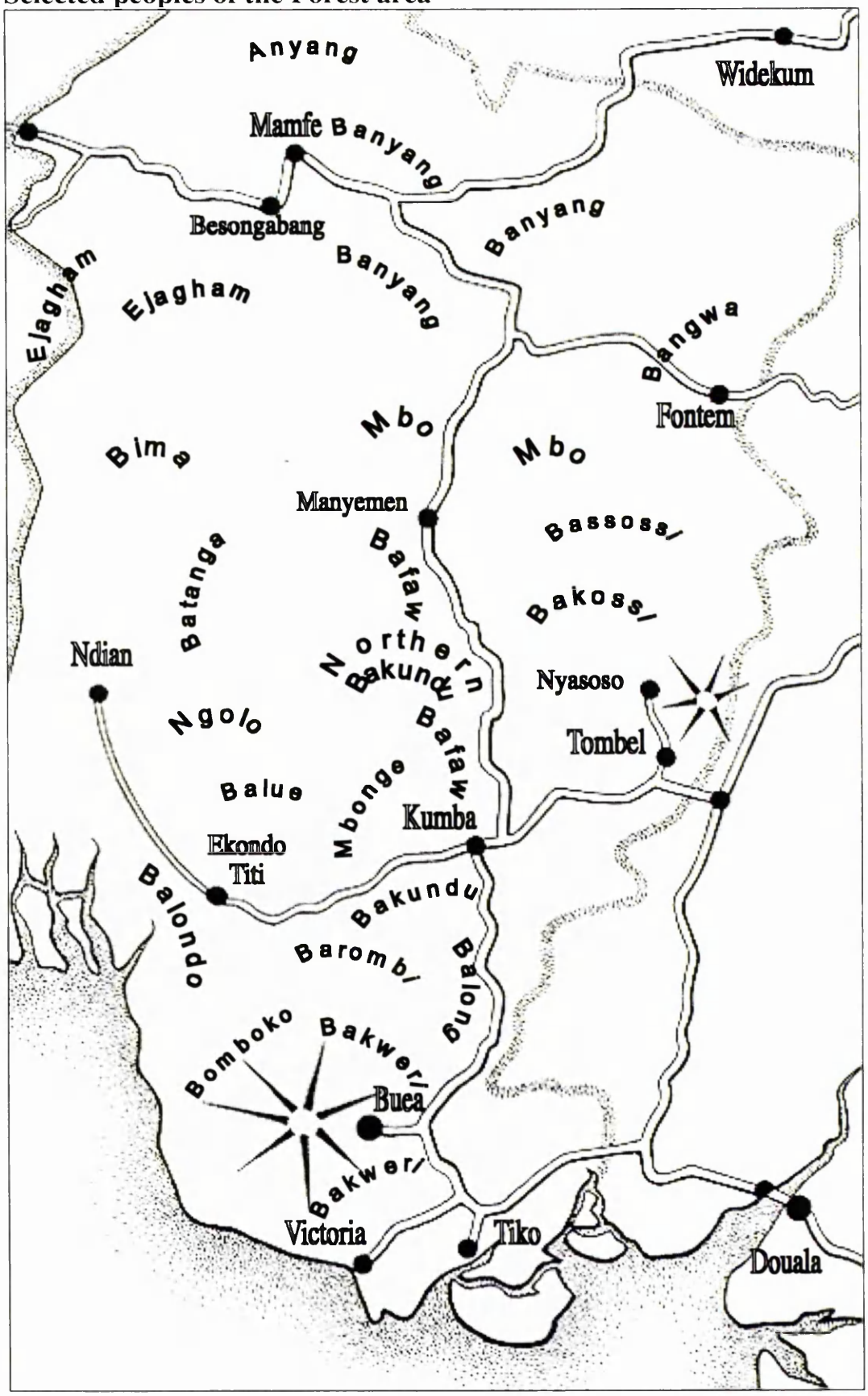
[20] Elizabeth Isichei. *Entirely for God. The Life of Michael Iwene Tansi*. London: Macmillan, 1980, p.1.

[21] Paul Jenkins. 'The Roots of African Church History: Some Polemic Thoughts', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10(2), 1986, p. 67. (Author's italics)

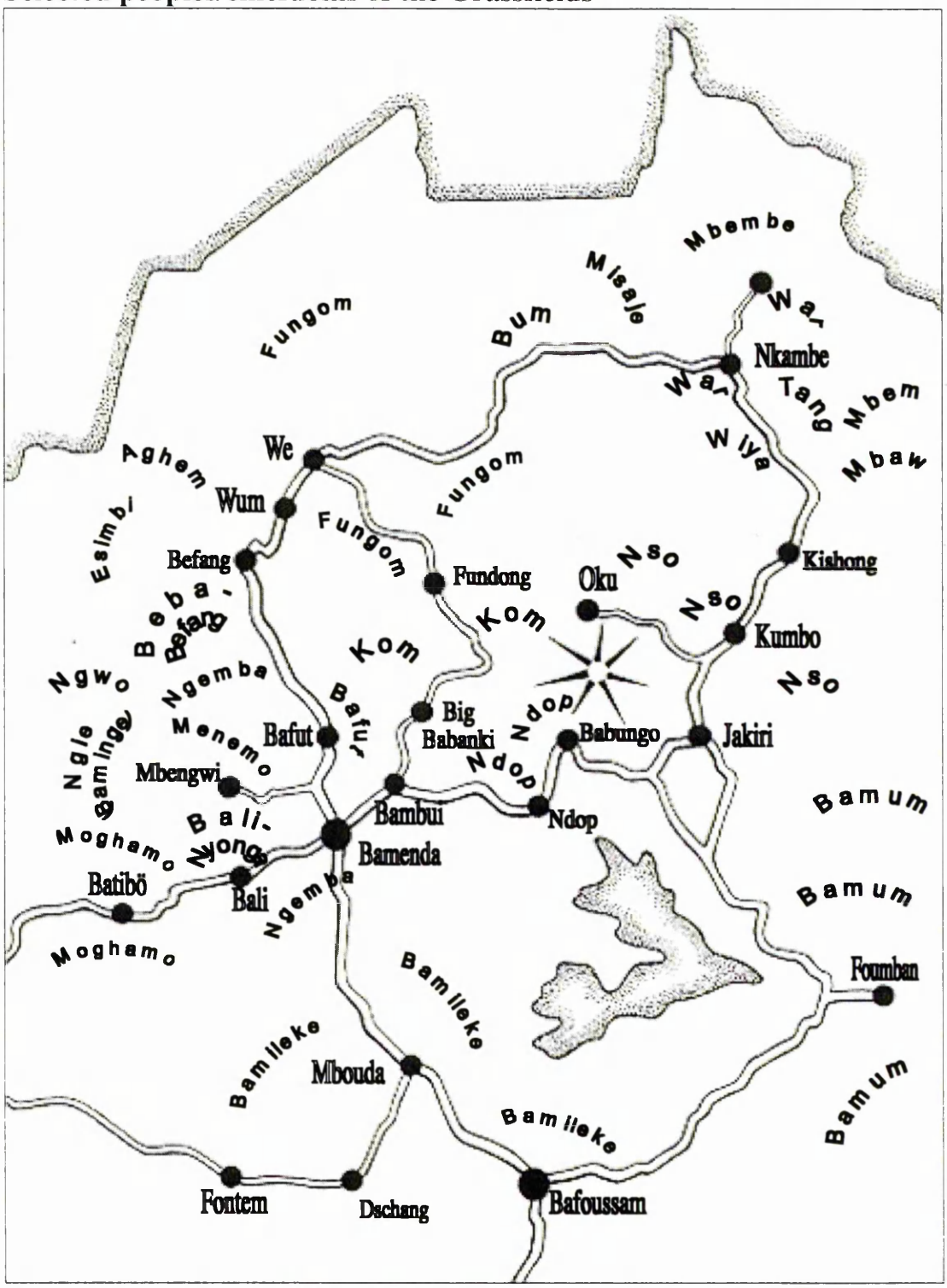
Grassfields and Forest area (North West and South West Province)



Selected peoples of the Forest area



Selected peoples/chiefdoms of the Grassfields



These sketch maps show the complex territorial divisions between peoples and chiefdoms. The selection of peoples/chiefdoms follows historical, political, and cartographic criteria and priorities.

Peoples/chiefdoms: Moghamo

Towns: Batibö

Revisiting the Mission Field

Jogging and comparing memories of living witnesses turned out to be as compelling as collating records and other historical evidence. Both tasks influenced this research in many ways. Coupled with rich experiences in West Central Africa, they bolstered my conviction to embark on the project; they prescribed the methodological underpinnings of the study; they nurtured sensitivity *vis-à-vis* the nuances of narratives about religious encounters as well as the discourse on missionary Christianity; they created a seedbed for constructive rapports in the course of fieldwork; and, most importantly, they generated personal, local and regional data which served to continuously refine the scope of the entire investigation through a comparative approach. It has been particularly rewarding to delve into individual informants' accounts with a view to laying a solid foundation for the analysis of religious reorientation in an exceptionally complex African setting.

Towards a Reappraisal of the Basel Mission in Cameroon

British Southern Cameroons constitutes the north-western portion of the BM's original mission field in West-Central Africa. After arriving in Douala in 1886 and placing stations along the coast (Bethel, Victoria) and in the adjacent hinterland (Mangamba), the pioneer missionaries set off in opposite directions. The first itineraries led southwards to the Bassa (Lobetal, Edea, Sakbayeme, Ndogbea) while the other routes ran northwards through the Forest area (Buea, Nyasoso, Bombe, Ossing) into the Grassfields (Bali, Foumban, Bagam, Bana, Bandjoun, Bangwa). The mission field reached its full expanse in 1914. Following the outbreak of the First World War, the Germans were repatriated from Kamerun, leaving the colony at the mercy of the British and French forces. It is here, as the BM's enterprise seemed to be on the verge of collapsing, that my investigation begins. However, the sense of confusion which the political upheaval instilled among African Christians proved short-lived. Instead, indigenised movements rapidly sprung up from the apparent carcass of the BM. My intention is to demonstrate how this reinvigoration set in and became enmeshed with subsequent developments under the influence of colonialism and decolonisation.

The complexity of the chosen area can be shown by stressing the cultural and linguistic plurality of its population. British Southern Cameroons, which includes the contemporary North West and South West Provinces and delineated the BM's sphere of activity during the period under review, appears microscopic on the map of Africa. Couched between the much larger francophone zone to the east and populous Igboland to the west, it resembles a negligible territorial appendage under either of its neighbours' political influence. Closer inspection, though, reveals intriguing patterns of organisation. The landscape is carved up into numerous small and fewer large units, inhabited by a remarkable diversity of peoples who are linguistically distinguished by nearly 100 vernaculars. The North West and South West Provinces delimit the BM's division between the Grassfields (North West) and the

Forest area (South West). This is somewhat questionably aligned with the prevalence of 'segmentary' societies in the Grassfields and 'acephalous' groups in the Forest area. Put crudely, the latter usually had nominal chiefs and were governed by councils of elders as opposed to the structures of autocratic rule through strong chiefdoms in the Grassfields.[22] There are deviations from this oversimplification as illustrated in the following chapters.

Given its cultural, linguistic, topographical and climatic diversity, anglophone Cameroon provides an ideal setting for micro-studies while broader surveys remain scarce.[23] Edwin and Shirley Ardener have made a profound impact on scholarship dealing with the coastal area, notably the Kpe (Bakweri) and their neighbours.[24] Few other peoples in the South West Province roused similar interest other than the Banyang in Malcolm Ruel's detailed work.[25] By contrast, the Grassfields have attracted greater attention. Amongst the literature worth mentioning are the studies by Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry,[26] Paul Nkwi and Jean-Pierre Warnier's contributions on the western Grassfields,[27] and an important literature on Bali/Chamba.[28] This research is relevant to the present analysis because of the relationships between social and political institutions, cultural expression and Christianity. It constitutes the basis for a comparative approach.

Christian movements must be analysed within their micro- and macro-frameworks. The English and German versions of Werner Keller's studies, especially the latter, are the most substantial overviews of the BM's enterprise in Cameroon.[29] Along with Jonas Dah, Erik Halldèn and Jaap van Slageren, his work offers detailed coverage of the late 19th and early 20th centuries but then thins out.[30] The sketchy picture of the PCC's formative stages from

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[22] Anthony Ndi. 'Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons, 1922-1962.' London, Ph.D., 1983, p. 41.

[23] Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.). *Perspectives on the State. From Political History to Ethnography in Cameroon. Essays for Sally Chilver*. Stutttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995, and *African Crossroads. Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996.

[24] Edwin Ardener. *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*. London: International African Institute, 1956; Edwin and Shirley Ardener. *Plantation and Village in the Cameroons*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960; Edwin Ardener. *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon. Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast 1500-1970*. (Ed. Shirley Ardener) Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996.

[25] Malcolm Ruel. *Leopards and Leaders. Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1969.

[26] Elizabeth M. Chilver and Phyllis M. Kaberry. 'An Outline of the Traditional System of Bali-Nyonga', in *Africa* 31, 1961, pp. 355-371; Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Traditional Bamenda. The Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Government Printer, 1967.

[27] Paul N. Nkwi and Jean-Pierre Warnier. *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*. Yaounde: University of Yaounde, 1982; Paul Nkwi. *Traditional Diplomacy. A Study of Inter Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields. North West Province of Cameroon*. Yaounde: University of Yaounde, 1987.

[28] Notably Richard Fardon. *Raiders and Refugees: Trends in Chamba Political Development, 1750-1950*. Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988; Ndifontah B. Nyamndi. *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon. A Political History*. Paris: CAPE, 1988; Vincent Titanji et al. *An Introduction to the Study of Bali-Nyonga*. Yaounde: Stardust Press, 1988.

[29] Werner Keller. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon*. Victoria: Presbook, 1969, 154pp.; Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, 652pp.

[30] Jonas N. Dah. *Missionary Motivations and Methods. A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, 1886-1914*. Basel: Basileia, 1983; Erik Halldén. *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in*

1914-1957 was partly filled out by Elias Cheng.[31] Like Keller, however, Cheng's concern is with institutional structures rather than agency. Major processes such as Africanisation are thus linked to organisational policies and not to the discourse on Christianity in Africa.

Despite all omissions, these authors have built a foundation upon which to reconstruct local (congregational or village) and life histories. It is in such local contexts that Christian movements were initially conceived and social changes were set in motion. A noteworthy analysis of this sort is Heinrich Balz's survey on religious change and continuity among the Bakossi, a web of predominantly rural Cameroonian communities.[32] Balz treads new ground in his pursuit of fundamental questions about the reciprocity between traditional beliefs and Christianity. The core of his work lies in explicating the exchange of religious symbols as a process of mutual grafting. In a similar vein Kwame Bediako holds that

> we avoid speaking of Christianity as an African religion and speak instead, of Christianity as an African's religion; the point being, not that historical circumstances have made Christianity an unavoidable factor in African life, but rather that the African experience of the Christian faith can be seen to be fully coherent with the religious quests in African life.[33]

Two key questions now loom: To what extent were Christianity's claims for universal reverence applicable to distinct traditional belief systems and social institutions? And why, when and where did Christianity matter to Africans? Here lies the point of departure from which African theologians embarked 'upon a policy of cultural and ideological autonomy' to steer their churches clear of western influence.[34] V. Y. Mudimbe evokes this opposition to euro- and ethnocentrism in theological writings by Africans who set out an ecclesiology designed to meet the need of African church leaders for a new self-identification in the so-called 'post-missionary' era. Referring to a 'post-missionary' era seems to be misleading, though, since, in Peel's words, 'Ecclesiastical decolonization, if one can call it that, began much earlier [than political decolonization] and has continued longer. The whole process of transformation is far from complete and its outcome is not to be predicted.'[35]

As the gnostic equation of the Church with the soul of society reveals, Peel's point also applies to the BM and the PCC.[36] Jonas Dah, the author of *In Search of a Soul,* notes that his title 'is...understood as the process by which the Mission, and now, the Church, has

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the Cameroons, 1886-1905. Lund : University of Uppsala Press, 1968; Jaap van Slageren. *Les origines de L'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun. Missions Européennes et christianisme autochtone*. Yaounde: Editions CLE, 1972, pp. 38-124.

[31] Elias N. G. Cheng. 'The Growth and Development of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon 1886-1976.' Fuller School of World Mission, M.A. thesis, 1976.

[32] Heinrich Balz. *Where the Faith has to Live. Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion. Part I: Living Together*. Basel: Basel Mission, 1984.

[33] Kwame Bediako. *Christianity in Africa. The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p. 60.

[34] V. Y. Mudimbe. 'An African Criticism of Christianity', *Genève-Afrique,* 21(2), 1983, p. 92.

[35] J. D. Y. Peel. 'The Christianization of African society: some possible models', in Edward Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings & Godwin Tasie (eds.). *Op. cit.*, p. 454.

[36] G. C. Oosthuizen. *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

sought to render foreign biblical concepts into intelligible contemporary language.'[37] The search for a soul is therefore the search for a sense of spiritual belonging, for a congenial African *and* Christian identity. This, not organisational transitions from missionary control to autonomous leadership, permits us to periodise religious change in 20th century sub-Saharan Africa since the search for a soul is an ongoing process that began at the outset of missionary activity. Given that this itinerary is defined by individual life and local histories, the period of my research from 1914-1968 is approximate. The dates represent markers of heightened change in the study. The starting point designates the beginning of a new era of initiative among "native" agents in forming Christian movements from the beginning of the First World War. The cut-off year saw the final handing-over procedures from the BM to the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon (PCWC). Thus it falls in line with the gradual process of transforming "native" agency in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Currents on Religious Reorientation

Focusing on "native" agency, the fundamental premise of this study is that missionary enterprise is not a chapter of European hegemony and the curbing of African authority. Rather, it yielded opportunities for fresh African initiative.[38] Catholic missionary activity in British Southern Cameroons shows how African Christians engaged with self-reliance and political activism from the First World War.[39] And Richard Joseph writes: 'the individuals who emerged to challenge both Church and State were often the very ones who were most committed to the teachings and principles of these same institutions.'[40] So the shadow of oppressed African agents is cast aside. We must view the practices of colonialism 'without assuming that they have robbed African peoples of their capacity to act on the world.'[41]

I chose a broad framework for the analysis of the roles, initiatives, actions and struggles of African Christians. Marie Louise Pirouet's research on the Christianisation of Uganda takes a similar direction, demonstrating great variability of experiences with evangelism.[42] Variability is a key feature of African approaches to appropriating or rebuffing the Gospel. Edward Lekunze brings out this point in a sound comparative survey of four chieftaincies in the Grassfields. He discusses the varying degrees of selectivity among traditional rulers

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[37] Jonas N. Dah. *In Search of a Soul.* Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press, 1989, p. iii.

[38] For an elegant *tour d'horizon* on this argument, see V. Y. Mudimbe. *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 44-47.

[39] See particularly Verkijika Fanso. 'The First World War and the Survival of Christianity in the British Southern Cameroons – the Role of Local Catechists and Visiting Missionaries', *Cameroon Panorama*, 346-348, October-December 1990; Anthony Ndi. 'Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons, 1922-1962.' London, Ph.D., 1983; Jacqueline de Vries. *Catholic Mission, Colonial Government and Indigenous Response in Kom (Cameroon).* Leiden: Africa Studies Centre, 1998.

[40] Richard A. Joseph. 'Church, State and Society in Colonial Cameroun', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 13(1), 1980, p. 5.

[41] Jean and John Comaroff (eds.). *Modernity and its Malcontents. Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. xiv.

[42] Marie Louise Pirouet. *Black Evangelists. The Spread of Christianity in Uganda.* London: Rex Collings, 1978.

who faced the decision of either accepting or turning down missionaries and their plans.[43] Variability is perhaps most evident in the essays submitted for diplomas or BA degrees at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kumba, Cameroon. It is there that considerable ground-work for a comprehensive comparative survey of local Christian experience has been achieved.[44] In spite of the methodological constraints imposed by the limited access to literature and sources, the passages on local histories can be read as a testimony of the vital roles assumed by Africans in Christian advance. An African vanguard composed of founder-members and teacher-catechists of individual congregations appears on the set.

Leading up to, through and beyond the transition from the BM Church to the PCC, the authors of these studies also make proposals for the indigenisation of Christianity.[45] They address central questions about the ways in which Christianity and modernity are linked to 'tradition'. In the Comaroffs' judgment, 'Such binary contrasts...are a widespread trope of ideology-in-the-making; they reduce complex continuities and contradictions to the aesthetics of nice oppositions.'[46] This criticism is particularly relevant to the post-colonial era. By contrast, missionary attitudes can frequently be characterised as overtly dualistic in colonial times.[47] Therefore it appears reasonable to maintain the juxtaposition in that 'nice oppositions' offer useful models to deal with baffling questions about religious change.[48] Such models illustrate the interplay between two realms of ideological values, given that

> Without doubt, the master metaphor used by the missionaries for their project was of bringing light into darkness, so the black/white opposition could also stand as a color-coding of heathenism/Christianity, African/*oyinbo* [white man, European], tradition/modernity, past/future, a typological contrast projected onto the course of real cultural change.[49]

The impact of religious encounters has given rise to a protracted debate on syncretism among anthropologists and theologians alike. The scope ranges from Bruno Gutmann's proposition of the *Selbstbewegung der Gemeinde* (spontaneous expansion of Christian congregations) to Oosthuizen's reproof: 'How can the Church belong to African society while so evidently giving the impression that it is part of the Western way of life?'[50] Lamin

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[43] Edward F. Lekunze. *Chieftaincy and Christianity in Cameroon. A Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Evangelistic Strategy of the Basel Mission.* Chicago, Th.D., 1987.
[44] An extensive list of these essays is included in the 'References' under unpublished material.
[45] A simple formula for indigenisation suggests that African churches must take root in African culture and that their structures, liturgies and spirituality must reflect their African religious heritage. See for example J. N. K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds.). *The Church in African Christianity. Innovative Essays in Ecclesiology.* Nairobi: Initiatives, 1990, p. 2; V. Y. Mudimbe. *The Invention of Africa*, p. 59.
[46] Jean and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa.* Vol. 1. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991, p. xii.
[47] Paul S. Landau. *Op. cit.*, 1995, p. xxi.
[48] Aylward Shorter. *African Culture and the Christian Church. An Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973, p. 23.
[49] J. D. Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter*, p. 169.
[50] G. C. Oosthuizen. *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

Sanneh, by contrast, insists that the exaggeration of Western pre-eminence in missionary activity calls for a radical reappraisal from an African viewpoint.[51]

The main issue about appraising Christian movements in Africa seems, however, not to lie in differences between European and African premises. It is to recognise the distinction between control and 'Africanisation' from above and the appropriation and synthesis from below, at the grassroots.[52] This approach throws light on the transmission and translation of Christian discourse by way of communication between missionaries, African clergy or sub-clergy and the missionised. The emphasis is on rapports and conflicts in the mission field.[53] It was the masses at the receiving end of the transmission process who attempted to bring Christian principles to bear on their lives through distinct degrees of hybridity.

If 'syncretism' expresses the result of this process, it fails to account for the historicity and plurality of religious reorientation.[54] Criticism can also be mounted against the labels Africanisation, incarnation and adaptation. Steven Kaplan stipulates that the relationships between Christianity and African culture ought to be reconstructed through 'what appear to be six different modes of adaptation: toleration, translation, assimilation, christianization, acculturation, and incorporation.'[55] His typology could be diversified, simplified or partly substituted according to the criteria of varied case studies. What it brings out clearly is the transformation of Christian discourse over time, in conjunction with changing institutional and hierarchical structures. Earlier, Lloyd Kwast exemplified this by suggesting a three-phase transition of the Cameroon Baptist Convention from missionary control to selfhood through the stages of gradualism, parallelism and integration.[56] Ostensibly, several Baptist missionaries aimed 'to encourage significant autonomy and to retain little sense of control themselves' and to 'accentuate and rejuvenate the cultural integrity of African societies.'[57] The problem with 'cultural integrity' is its inherent claim for authenticity while syncretism implies linkages between different traditions and belief systems. Oosthuizen's notion of 'Post-Christianity' can therefore be attacked for 'forfeiting the essence of Christianity.'[58]

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[51] Lamin Sanneh. *West African Christianity. The Religious Impact.* London: C. Hurst & Co., 1983, p. xvii. On similar views, see also V. Y. Mudimbe. *The Invention of Africa*, pp. 56f.; V. Y. Mudimbe. 'An African Criticism of Christianity', pp. 91ff.

[52] For a useful analysis, see Robin Horton. 'African Conversion', *Africa* 41(2), 1971, pp. 85-108.

[53] For a more detailed discussion, see Birgit Meyer. 'Beyond Syncretism: Translation and diabolization in the appropriation of Protestantism in Africa', in Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (eds.). *Syncretism / Anti-Syncretism. The politics of religious synthesis.* London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 45-68.

[54] On the 'lack of explanatory power' of syncretism, see J. D. Y. Peel. 'The Pastor and the *Babalawo*: The Interaction of religions in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland', *Africa* 60(3), 1990, p. 338.

[55] Steven Kaplan. 'The Africanization of Missionary Christianity: History and Typology', *Journal of Religion in Africa* XVI, 3 (1986), p. 167.

[56] Llyod Kwast. *The Discipling of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, pp. 93, 95, 143f.

[57] Charles W. Weber. *International Influences and the Baptist Mission in West Cameroon: German American Missionary Endeavour under International Mandate and British Colonialism.* Leiden: Brill, 1993, pp. 153f.

[58] Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw. 'Introduction', in *op. cit.*, pp. 10f.

Ascribing syncretism in a neutral or positive sense to the PCC membership is a way of attesting to manifest connections between African cosmology and Christian doctrine. As regards the BM Church, Gutmann's idea of 'spontaneous expansion' evokes the transient nature of experimental congregational cells. Spiritual affinity to Christianity grew through unintended syncretism, based on the observation that 'Translation...can be understood as interpreting and transforming the original statement, and thereby creating something of a new quality.'[59] Just as translation conditioned the conversation between missionaries and Ewe Christians in the Gold Coast,[60] it determined the interaction of BM missionaries with Cameroonian Christians. Unintended syncretism can therefore be understood as a variable that entails multiple local perceptions and practices of Christian faith. But 'translation' in itself, Peel argues, may not account for the nature and outcome of religious encounters; the rationalisation of the encounters through attempts at revival or survival was equally – if not more – relevant.[61] Viewing Meyer's judicious use of syncretism and Kaplan's historicised typology in the long run brings us to what Peel dubs 'leaf becomes soap,' whereby leaves wrapped around bars of black soap eventually blend with the latter.[62] Analogously, then, Christianity is gradually soaked up by the social fabric into which it is persistently woven.

Context, Focus and Partition

My contribution to research on religious encounters in sub-Saharan Africa can best be described as a contextual analysis of conversion and adherence to, and the domestication of, Christianity. The term 'contextual' refers both to exegetical interpretations of religious encounters and to the varying circumstances in which they occurred.[63] In this attempt to identify spiritual and secular impulses for the appropriation of Christianity I have defined a broad context so as to shun the one-sided approach that caught Terence Ranger's critical eye: 'An oddity of much recent historiography of early mission Christianity is that it has greatly overplayed the manifest political and economic factors in its expansion and has greatly underplayed the cultural and religious.'[64] As Ranger exposes elsewhere, situational realities are shaped by inward and outward factors. The former include ideals and symbols of Christianity and African religions while the latter comprise churches' involvement with politics, the state, economic order, protest, social change etc.[65] These factors conditioned African responses to myths, rituals, symbolism and other techniques used by missionaries.

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[59] Birgit Meyer. *Op. cit.*, p. 62.
[60] Birgit Meyer. *Translating the Devil*, pp. 94ff.
[61] J. D. Y. Peel. 'The Pastor and the *Babalawo*', p. 361.
[62] J. D. Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter*, p. 248.
[63] 'Contextual' is not employed here strictly on a par with the characteristics of contextual theology by making systematic reference to theories on inculturation and Africanisation. See for example David Burnett. Op. cit., pp. 8-13.
[64] Terence O. Ranger. 'Religious Movements and Politics', p. 32.
[65] Terence O. Ranger and John Weller (eds.). *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1975, pp. 3ff.

A valued analytical tool designed to reconstruct communication links between European missionaries and African target groups is Jean and John Comaroff's 'long conversation'. Their method is intended to pursue the formation of ideologies and consciousness at three levels of interaction: the physical environment of religious orientation ('politics of space'), endeavours to control material and symbolic values, and the application of specific media (language and representation).[66] The 'long conversation' rests on the position that African responses to evangelisation cannot be discerned through African voices alone. Rather, they ought to be examined on the basis of dialogues between Africans and missionaries. Much as the Comaroffs offer a viable theoretical approach to this end, they tend to overcolour the British side of the missionary project.[67]

In defining the present context, I attach considerable importance to missionary frontiers, the contact zones where the Christian discourse became a predominantly local affair. The majority of African Christians in the extensive hinterlands of the mission stations had few encounters with European missionaries since they were beyond their immediate reach.[68] All outstations of the BM, the market places, chiefs' palaces, trade routes and plantations were largely catered for by the African BM workers. In addition to the different venues of religious encounters in the mission field, the changing political and economic climate of Bristish Southern Cameroons are taken into account. Finally, I give heed to the diversity of local social institutions and belief systems without, however, claiming to afford systematic, detailed coverage of diverse characteristics. Where generalisations occur, they either draw on established conventions about common cultural and religious features or reflect drifts of the narratives about Christianisation, both in European and African perspectives.

The additional themes in the given context – conversion, adherence and domestication – define the movement of Christianity over time. The 'Christian movement' employed in the title must not be mistaken for evoking a sense of linear progress through successive stages of increasing missionary influence. It is used to stress the dynamics of religious and social change in a process that was shaped by hesitation, reorientation, trial, fluctuation and varied degrees of affiliation to Christianity. Although conversion, adherence and domestication are discussed separately in the last chapter, they mark out the direction of the entire thesis.

Set against the backdrop of large-scale Christian penetration into African societies, the study is concerned with scenarios, motives and practices that influenced the formation of the BM's Christian movement. Perhaps the most pertinent criterion for many in the light of its historical and contemporary relevance is the level of the BM Church's success, both

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[66] Jean and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution* (vol. 1), p. 199.

[67] David Maxwell. *Op. cit.*, p. 3; J. D. Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter*, p. 23.

[68] This is not to deny that some missionaries deserve special mention for having 'lived *among* Africans' as stressed elsewhere by V. Y. Mudimbe. *The Invention of Africa*, p. 65. Of the European missionaries who forged strong links with the local population in Cameroon, F. Ernst, one of the pioneers in Bali, or A. Vielhauer and J. W. Zürcher, two remarkable personalities in the period under study, come to mind.

in African and European perspectives. For African Christians, the fundamental question is whether the reconfiguration of their beliefs brought about fulfilment, whether they found a convincing compromise between the newly acquired faith and their aspirations. Moreover, we can ask whether Christianity is considered as having had a constructive, positive impact on social change and the evolution of traditions. Before attempting to formulate an answer, however, we must equally reflect on how and why the missionary enterprise 'functioned' altogether. One approach within its metropolitan, colonial and institutional framework is to show how the set-up was put in place, staffed, operated and controlled.[69] The problem with this angle lies in its emphasis on growth, policies and structures rather than upon qualities of faith and individual experience. This is the reason why I resort to local participation in, response to, and interpretations of missionary encounters as the focal points of interest. I raise a set of questions which are contextualised in brief introductions to each chapter:

To what extent did Cameroonians abide by or modify the aims, policies and strategies of the BM's programme of evangelisation and social reform? Why, when and where did Africans accept and appropriate the BM's brand of Christianity? How did external factors such as political activism, economic incentives and increasing human mobility influence religious reorientation? How was the problem of compatibility between Christian values and the precepts of traditional authority resolved? Which African features were reflected in local Christian identities? How does the formation of the Christian movement fit into the wider dimension of African local histories? Furthermore, I am concerned with the origins, backgrounds and roles of African agents as well as their motives for becoming Christians.

Four levels of interaction are analysed: between a) African and European BM agents; b) BM agents and colonial officials, traders and planters; c) BM agents and local authorities; d) BM agents and other African Christians and non-Christians. The African contingent is partly introduced through biographical sketches while European personalities await closer attention in future research that chooses this as a relevant focus.[70]

The main body of the thesis is composed of seven chapters following a thematic order. In turn, each chapter has a distinct chronological weighting, depending on the pertinence of the selected themes at any one time during the period under review. By way of introducing the setting, the scope of missionisation, and the British colonial apparatus, chapters one and two deal with the impact of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. I argue that this was an important phase of local initiative which challenged missionary strategies. Nevertheless, the survival of the Christian movement through a stretch of 'mission without

[69] For a useful example, see Jon Miller. *The Social Control of Religious Zeal. A Study of Organizational Contradictions*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994; on the PCC, see Nyansako-ni-Nku (ed.). *Journey in Faith. The Story of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*. Yaounde: Buma Kor, 1982.
[70] There is some indication of this approach in Hermann Witschi. *Geschichte der Basler Mission, 1920-1940*. Vol. 5. Basel: Basileia Verlag, 1970. For a comparison with the BM enterprise in the Gold Coast, see Noel Smith. *The Presbyterian Church in Ghana, 1835-1960*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966.

missionaries' provided evidence of loyalty and commitment to the BM's long-term cause. The taste of premature autonomy was an index for the future key parts of "native" agents.

The third chapter centres upon the expansion of missionary frontiers through the rise of village Christianity, trade, and labour migration. In mobilising the Gospel, the African agents occupied the frontline along the itinerary of evangelisation, manning the outstations, engaging in the promotion of trade and following the routes of migration. The missionary enterprise is viewed here as a force that penetrated society at many levels to become tightly interwoven with Cameroon's colonial economy. I hold that economic activity was the most important vehicle for the dissemination of Christianity in the BM's sphere of influence.

Wherever it was being transported to, the new faith had to be legitimised and approved. The fourth chapter is concerned with the realm of customary authority and social control. Apart from their decisive role in sanctioning missionary activity, chiefs and secret societies were the local arbiters of attempts at social reform. This is where the exchange of symbols and the dynamics of the Christian discourse entered with full force into the missionisation process. Accepting Christianity implied access to the white man's technological advantage and visible wealth but also demanded that traditional authorities relinquish their supreme social and religious powers. Pressure was exerted by either side, evoking the premise that evangelism could only yield success once it met African standards of adequacy and faith, and religious reorientation began to accelerate the transformation of African 'traditions'.

The variety of African traditions is coupled with linguistic diversity. Chapter five deals with the target of forging a unified Christian movement by way of employing two church vernaculars, Duala and Mungaka. This cultural policy was faced with the problem whether or not the BM's vernaculars would satisfy all peoples in the Forest area and Grassfields. The language question is tackled from the vantage points of its aims and political impact. Moreover, I examine whether the division of the mission field into two halves reflects the historical build-up of the BM Church. I test the hypothesis that the vernacularisation of Christianity was a misguided effort to lay the foundation for a pluri-ethnic unity in faith.

Chapter six discusses the question of unity in faith in connection with rising political awareness and activism directed against the imagined *conditio sine qua non* of European tutelage. It was under the influence of the nationalist *Zeitgeist* during and after the Second World War that African agents began to make serious demands on the BM to hand over some responsibilities of the missionary enterprise. The ensuing controversies are exposed for the purpose of demonstrating how cells of Christianity at the grassroots evolved into a collective Christian movement. This is when the transformation of "native" agency set in.

Chapter seven focuses on the mainspring of the Christian discourse, conversion, and on its implications for the BM's Cameroonian target groups. Touching on arguably the most widely investigated theme in the history of Christianity in Africa, I illuminate the idioms of religious reorientation. Here lies the crux of missionary encounters and the path towards answering the opening question of this research: Why do we need the white man's God?

Conversion leads to adherence to Christianity and the formation of an African leadership. Such indicators of social change and properties of Christian identities are analysed as vital criteria for integration. They are principally addressed in relation to individual experiences.

Integration as well as adequate measures to ensure success need to be linked to recent developments of the PCC. One part of the conclusion has been reserved to this end while the other steers onto a wider plane. This last section investigates how the combination of biographical evidence and reflections on political, economic and social change feed into the broader dimension of the social history of religious encounters in Africa. It rounds off by laying claim to providing one of the most detailed accounts of African agency in a 20th century missionary enterprise.

Methodology as *Rites de Passage*: The Three-Pronged Approach

My research is methodologically grounded in three sources, including written, oral and photographic evidence. The three main archival repositories I used fortunately have decent guides. No guide, though, whatever its level of user-friendliness, can substitute individual criteria for selection. Each choice therefore resembles a *rite de passage* in the universe of knowledge, the two most significant of which mark the entry into and exit from this thesis.

At another level, the feeling of passing through *rites de passage*, associated by Arnold van Gennep with critical stages in life, is presumably a sensation that many travellers take back from trips to Africa. I am certainly one of them. Having variously criss-crossed parts of South, North and West Africa, I travelled to Cameroon in early January 1996 and found plenty to do and think about for the next two-and-a-half years: The BM and the PCC had employed me to set up a centralised local church archive.[71] Working in close collaboration with a Cameroonian counterpart who was trained 'on-the-job' as my eventual successor, Stanley Ngum, and with other part-timers, more than 10,000 items have been collected and classified over the years. One of the most fascinating aspects of the task was taking off to carry out 'fieldwork', to trace remnants of the mission and church records in many hidden corners of old and new stations, institutions and offices. What made these expeditions so exciting was the chance to recover a large legacy from being doomed. There was of course need to explain why the material was important, and in many cases the sense of attaching historical value to aged and brittle paper provoked an inspiring, at times embarrassing and challenging response. Recognising the significance of the accumulated record, after it had remained dormant and largely neglected over several decades, raised widespread curiosity about the plans of the new church archivist and his Cameroonian partner. I was inclined to believe that I was on an unusual awareness-raising mission. And it proved to be just that.

[71] For a more detailed account, see Guy Thomas. 'Retrieving Hidden Traces of the Intercultural Past. An Introduction to Archival Resources in Cameroon, with Special Reference to the Central Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)', *History in Africa* 25, 1998, pp. 427-440.

Meanwhile, the archival repository has been diligently filled with stacks, documented on a comprehensive database. A lingering problem, however, is that the initial local excitement and curiosity has ebbed, leaving all the more weight to be placed on the awareness-raising side of the project. This has remained a major preoccupation of mine during the past three years whenever I returned to Cameroon. One of the most promising sparks of hope lit up quite unexpectedly at a meeting with the Executive Committee of the Retired Pastors of the North West Province in June 1999. It was there that Rev. Aaron Su and his ex-colleagues advocated the collection of local histories in order to generate new details on the history of Christianity in the Grassfields. This was a tremendous inspiration to me and I promised to submit a relevant proposal for the South West Province to the PCC. To date, it is unclear what has happened to the projects. In any case, I hope this contribution will animate others to carry out further local history surveys and diversify my findings – and *rites de passage*.

Local Histories, Biographical Fragments, and Personal Reminiscences

In retrospect, the most cherished moments in the course of conducting fieldwork – both for the archive and this study – derive from a wide range of enriching personal encounters. If the proverbial African hospitality was the most common quality worth recalling, another attribute that has left an indelible mark on the itinerary of my research is the multi-stranded string of personal reminiscences I was able to invigorate. They constitute the lifeline of my work. Indeed, they are the indispensable pillars of sensitive ventures into local histories of Christianity. As such, I also envisaged a social history of the 'ordinary' people who have not gone down in the annals of big men but fully merit an honourable rank-and-file status. Among over 50 informants from different areas in anglophone Cameroon, 11 sent written testimonies. 37 were interviewed with a recording device, and others with the help of pencil and paper. I conducted most of the interviews with one of two research assistants.

Questionnaires were at hand, but usually just to subtly redirect statements that started to falter and veered off into other areas. I tried not to prod too much, anticipating that aberrant trains of thought would automatically return to the relevant issues. Basically, therefore, the two questionnaires I drew up constituted a starting point for open recapitulations as well as a catalogue of criteria for the transcription and evaluation of oral evidence. Admittedly, the interview technique was far from consistent in that each session provided a lesson on its own. Indeed, I believe that interview techniques simply cannot remain truly consistent in a series of encounters with a mixed group of informants in very diverse circumstances. It is precisely in the changing features of every interview situation that the combined thread of narrative obtains its rich texture of individuality and collectivity.

Much of what came up in the interviews fits into a broad theme captioned 'Christianity and Tradition' which was designed to establish detailed linkages between life histories and local histories. Both terms – however contentious 'tradition' might seem – appealed to the

informants who usually related to them with ease. The topics which were subsequently put forward produced an array of minutiae. The combined profile of flashbacks, stories, event history on personal and wider planes, and interpretations of Christian advance conveys an idea of frequent tendencies to fuse facts and perceptions. Following Elizabeth Tonkin, the problem is that of decoding 'interconnections between memory, cognition and history.'[72] Chronology was often a weak point in the accounts as opposed to their varied vivid, lucid and graphic descriptions. There was occasionally an element of drama involved in reviving memories. I wondered whether this had to do with the nature of the interview situation and topic or with an urge for chances to roll back time in alluring tales for keen listeners.

The task of engaging the informants in interviews and spontaneous conversations was facilitated by the largely apolitical – or at least politically unbiased – context of the general topic. Opportunities were envisaged for free trains of reconstruction, appraisal and speech. All the same, the path of enquiry was not as unambiguous as it might appear at face value. Asking the informants to talk about their backgrounds and identities as Christians was an intrusive approach. I found myself in a world of God-given beliefs and self-identification. Driving at answers to my 'why' felt like penetrating intimate spheres where the individual secrets of faith are kept. However, my intrusion was usually taken kindly, and it opened up inroads into extraordinary biographies and highly perceptive reflections about commitment to Christian and African beliefs. The informants commanded great respect and admiration for letting me in on how they cope with life and what is to follow – through faith. Sharing a remarkable degree of intimacy, I was granted the privilege of exploring the very sensitive area of affiliation to Christianity and/or traditional beliefs. My questions had to be flexible to avoid causing perplexity and landing both the informants and myself in a *cul-de-sac*.

Personal reminiscences, Joseph Miller notes, reflect details of individual experience. As such, 'They resemble oral tradition in that they are already highly complex products of the human memory interacting with a culture but they differ in being relatively straightforward representations of events, relying less on clichés and episodes than do oral traditions.'[73] This distinction reveals proximity of personal testimonies, the conveyance of raw material – which is influenced by present livelihoods – and priorities to expose or conceal evidence. Here lies a crucial predicament for historians: Informants are mines of revelations that do not always clearly reveal the kernel of their historical reconstruction. A way out is to detect what informants recount both in and between the lines of their inputs by way of judicious comparisons. I have placed an emphasis on personal reminiscences because they underlay

[72] Elizabeth Tonkin. *Narrating our pasts. The social construction of oral history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 1; also pp. 117ff. On cognition and orality, see Jack Goody. *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 148-155.

[73] Joseph C. Miller (ed.). 'Introduction: Listening for the African Past', in *The African Past Speaks. Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Folkestone: Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980, p. 9.

local histories and for their value as insiders' views on the individual and wider impact of evangelisation. This tenet has permitted a multicoloured narrative on religious encounters.

Personal reminiscences must be properly scrutinised, recalling, in Jan Vansina's words:

> Given the ambiguities of life histories, the time it takes to collect them, the rapport that has to be established between informant and inquirer, and the resulting psychological complications that may arise, it usually is wise not to collect a whole life history. But portions of such life histories will be desirable. To probe for specific reminiscences in order to complement data from other sources (including other informants), or to find answers to questions for which only scarce data are otherwise available, is an extremely fruitful way of tapping people's memories.[74]

It is on this argument that preoccupations with what Elizabeth Tonkin calls 'historiacy' (to supplement historiography) are founded. The biographical fragments that I have brought together correspond to Tonkin's 'representations', the products of transmission through a multitude of conventions ('genres') between speakers and listeners.[75] Thus the evaluation of oral evidence revolves around how its objective, nature and content were fashioned. In other words, the problem of formulating a critique on interviews includes both an appraisal of the rapport between 'self' (listener) and 'other' (speaker) and the validation of collated information. Since interviews are two-way processes involving reciprocal interests between inquirers and informants, the dilemma of choosing to 'live as a human being among other human beings yet also having to act as an objective researcher' demands to be resolved.[76] However, some degree of familiarity between both sides seemed to enhance the worthiness of, and interest in, my undertaking. Having worked for the PCC, I received a *carte-blanche* and was frequently made to feel that I was 'one of them' – an eager student who was to be initiated into the guild of those who shaped history in their own ways by confronting God. I cannot deny a sense of unintentionally manipulating the interviews at times and partially obtaining the inputs I was looking for. But the true architects of the narrative are of course the informants themselves whose tales of the unexpected exceeded the expected. I tried to grant them sufficient openings in this study to identify themselves with my interpretations.

A Voyage through the Archives: Written and Photographic Sources

Sources on the BM and the PCC abound in the BM Cameroon Archive (BMCA)[77] and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archives and Library (PCCCAL). The BM also has a collection of historic photographs dating from the 1850s to 1945.[78] Additional

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[74] Jan Vansina. 'Memory and Oral Tradition', in Joseph C. Miller (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 266.
[75] Elizabeth Tonkin. *Op. cit.*, p. 2; on 'historioracy', see pp. 4, 6-17.
[76] David Burnett. Op. cit., pp. 22f.
[77] See Paul Jenkins and Waltraud Haas. *Guide to the Basel Mission's Cameroon Archive*. Basel, 1988.
[78] See Barbara Frey Näf and Paul Jenkins. *Arresting Entropy. Enabling New Synthesis: Conservation, Access and the Photographic Record of the Basel Mission 1850-1945*. Basel: Basel Mission, 1999.

research venues include the Buea National Archives (BNA), the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS) in Kumba, Cameroon, the Faculté de Théologie Protestante in Yaounde, Cameroon, the archive of the Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun in Douala, Cameroon, and the Public Record Office (PRO) in London. Along with unpublished records, one of the two main mission reviews, *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, constitutes a valuable source of references, often culled from missionaries' reports, minutes, correspondence and *exposés*.

The BMCA and the PCCCAL each afford extensive coverage of two partly overlapping phases of the missionary enterprise in Cameroon. While the years from 1886 to the late 1940s are well documented in the BMCA, the bulk of the PCCCAL's record ranges from the early 1930s to the present. My focus in the BMCA was on the two series E-4 and E-5. I combed through all seven sub-groups of the series E-4 (E-4,1-E-4,7) containing reports, articles and correspondence from and about Cameroon during the period 1914-1925. The large series E-5 is composed of reports, minutes, correspondence and circulars from 1925-1948(1950). Priority was given to the sub-series E-5,1 (E-5,1.1, E-5,1.2, E-5,1.3, E-5,1.4), E-5-2 and E-5-8. Census data was taken from the series E-8 and from the BM's annual reports. I also consulted the series E-9 comprising mission and church regulations and the series E-10, a category of miscellaneous documents on Cameroon in European languages. The PCCCAL's contents are divided into 15 file groups which are coded from I-XV. The main file group for the period before the PCC attained autonomy in 1957 is file group XII. The file group bears the caption 'Church history'. It is divided into five sub-groups which are defined by geographical, administrative and personnel-related criteria. Another salient file group is 'I/Education'. The odd useful piece was located under some of the remaining 13 headings which reflect the entire set-up of the PCC, her presbyteries, departments and institutions. The material comprises synod, committee, conference and workshop minutes at national, district, presbyterial and congregational levels, various reports, miscellaneous correspondence including circulars and petitions, personnel files and station records.

The emphasis in the BNA was on the A series (Intelligence and Assessment Reports), the C series (Annual Reports), the D series (Half-yearly and Quarterly Reports) and the S series (Social Service and Welfare), which were all compiled under British administration. The colonial record in Cameroon was supplemented with the CO 649, 750, 751 and 763 series of the PRO, covering miscellaneous correspondence, Annual Reports, Blue Book Reports and legislation concerning the British Mandate under the League of Nations/UN. The other three venues in Douala, Kumba and Yaounde, Cameroon, were visited to collect comparative unpublished material both on the BM/PCC and on other denominations.

Reflecting on the nature of the record, we must recall that missionaries were instructed to satisfy the expectations of leaders and readers in missionary circles at home.[79] However,

[79] See Thomas Beidelman. *Op. cit.*, p. xviii; Jean and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution. The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 37.

this contention should not be overblown. There is, especially in many pre-Second World War BM sources, a remarkable knack for detail which gives us the most insightful ideas of the discernible challenges and developments shared by Europeans and Africans. If the narrative appears biased and self-directed at times, it logically mirrors the interests which the missionaries had committed themselves to pursue on behalf of the BM. This of course also characterised the accounts of British officials who acted according to the codes of the colonial administration. At the same time, this record often opens windows on the African populace through stories, events and examples of local encounters and personalities, all of which prompted further important questions. Bias is, in short, a relative term that does not go beyond rubbing in the evident: We are all biased, informants, officials, missionaries and researchers alike, depending on the way we were or are conditioned to perceive otherness. In order to reduce the *degree* of bias, we must endeavour to compare the existing accounts.

The task of comparison can be taken one step further by making use of photographs as historical evidence. Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton stress that collections of mission photographs have been 'grossly underutilised.' 'Indeed,' they add, 'missionary societies ...used all the tools of the market and of newly developing forms of mass media to further their aims and garner support, both financial and human.'[80] Among the leading advocates, partially in joint ventures, of mission photographs are Christraud Geary and Paul Jenkins. After Geary's book on the Bamum appeared in 1988, Jenkins relentlessly made mission photography a top priority on the BM's 21st century records management agenda.[81] There is need for caution in the usage of mission photographs. Notably, as Geary points out in concurrence with the later observation by Bickers and Seton, photographic images can be tinged with particular interests that tend to popularise fragments of a larger picture.[82] Apart from their technical and artistic features, photographs rely on relevant documentation so as to render them useful to historians and anthropologists. Once this requirement is fulfilled, they can stimulate chains of cognitive and associative reflection, providing both details that are absent in written and oral evidence as well as a fertile seedbed for more comprehensive dialogues with the latter. Important as it is to recognise the limitations of selected subjects and framed images, photographs must be analysed through specific techniques of reading, comparative inferences and interpretations, along with the standard methods of critique.[83]

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[80] Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds.). *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Isssues*. London: Curzon Press, 1996, p. 8.

[81] Jenkins has published numerous articles dealing with mission photography during the 1990s. His most recent piece is 'Sources of Unexpected Light. Experiences with Old Mission Photographs in Research on Overseas History', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte* 1, 2001, pp. 157-167.

[82] Christraud Geary. *Images from Bamum. German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988, pp. 30, 63ff.

[83] See for example Adam Jones. *Zur Quellenproblematik der Geschichte Westafrikas*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990, pp. 17-54, 163-172; Willam C. Sturtevant. 'Anthropology, History and Ethnohistory', *Ethnohistory* 13, 1966, pp. 1-44; Miklos Szalay. *Ethnologie und Geschichte. Zur Grundlegung einer ethnologischen Geschichtsschreibung*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983, pp. 67-140.

On one of the occasions when I browsed through the Cameroon collection of the BM's photographic archive I decided to sample the material relating to my wife's area of origin in the Grassfields, the present-day Moghamo Division. Three photographs were selected by the search engine of the large database, each depicting a chief to whom was ascribed the common attribute of cannibalism. This stereoptype provokes frowns or smiles today as it fits nicely with the assumption that missionary vocabulary frequently overemphasises the dualistic nature of the discourse between Christians and non-Christians.[84] But it is surely more than that. Such stereotypes are valuable indices of missionary mindsets, perceptions and constructed realities, of the means used to condition religious encounters. How, then, can these indices be corroborated? One way that can yield unexpected reactions is to take the photographs to the 'field', to reinsert them into their original setting and conversations, either spontaneous or structured, with Africans. This experiment has not only successfully been tested in Ghana.[85] I had an insightful experience with a photograph of the queens of Baba I, the 'mothers' of the Meya congregation, flanked by two African clerics, which has turned out to be a revealing piece in the local puzzle of religious encounters (Chapter 4).

The photographs which I selected for this study can be categorised under the caption 'representations of people'. Notwithstanding the abundance of visual information on the material and spatial dimensions of the missionary enterprise, I decided to assemble a small collection on the encounter itself, involving European missionaries, African agents, chiefs, dignitaries and various groups representing village communities and the populace at large. The construction of, and distinction between, the 'Self' and the 'Other' are the underlying themes which run through the investigation on distinct processes of mutual approximation. As we can see, the voyage through the archives does not end there but takes us back to the roots of the research in Africa. It is a joint venture that, much like the missionary enterprise itself, was shaped, guided and reshaped in an exchange of ideas between all those involved.

Limitations and New Openings

No study on agency and 'ordinary people' can incorporate enough material to suggest comprehensive coverage unless a particular group is singled out and examined thoroughly in a monograph. Having refrained from the systematic analysis of social stratification and ethnicity, I am obliged to raise questions about the representativeness of the study for the entire area and all the peoples it deals with. I try to demonstrate that society was modelled on the grounds of cultural and linguistic exclusiveness and religious inclusion at once. The sphere of religious encounters was a domain where dualisms were often merged: tradition and modernity, rural and urban, literacy and illiteracy, wage labour and subsistence, power

[84] Birgit Meyer. *Translating the Devil*, pp. 24ff., 115ff.
[85] Paul Jenkins. 'Sources of Unexpected Light', pp. 164-166.

and subservience, polytheism and monotheism, and others. Although I view local histories as the foundation for the formation of a larger Christian movement, I restricted myself to a limited amount of illustrative detail when introducing individual case studies. A closer look at specific congregations, villages, areas or presbyteries would throw additional light on the peculiar dynamics of religious sub-cultures beneath the unifying mantle of the missionary undertaking. Thus the impact and appropriation of Christianity ought to be differentiated not only from locality to locality, but also from person to person and period to period.

There are two broad themes which affected the BM's Christian movement in important ways but have not received much attention in the study. The first theme encompasses the BM Church's and PCC's movements involving women and youths, and medical services. These branches played a vital part in integrating the Church into society, clans and separate households and might be seen as a sheer necessity for the survival of Christianity in many areas. Each branch therefore deserves to be investigated at considerable length in order to reinforce the foundation of African contributions to the formation of Christian movements. The second theme embraces the broad developments of material culture and the transfer of technological know-how which occurred at the interface of missionary encounters. There are several dimensions worth bearing in mind to fill this wide lacuna. One approach could explore the modernising impact of the cohabitation between Europeans or 'Europeanised' Africans and non-'Europeanised' Africans both at the grassroots and in a broader context. Another angle is to focus on specifically defined areas such as 'architecture', 'handicraft', 'industrial production', 'agriculture' etc. Indeed, some aspects of these themes are already being considered as avenues that will lead on from this research. It would be encouraging to see others share such interests and contribute in their own ways to their dissemination.

1. The First World War and its Aftermath: African Initiatives and the Christian Movement, 1914-1925

28 years of arduous Christian expansion – for Africans and Europeans alike – into Cameroon's western interior were soon thwarted when early news of the First World War began to seep into the German plantation colony. A burst of military mobilisation followed after 5 August 1914 with British and French forces piercing the German defense lines and dismantling their enemy's administrative and economic power-bases.[1] Resistance was mounted, yet it lacked coherence and failed to echo the loyalty and rally the support the Germans required from their African subjects to withstand the onslaught. Instead, the tide turned against them. A signal for the people of Cameroon's coastal hinterlands came from the Duala who had just suffered a barrage of persecution and prosecution by the German administration and were intent on siding with the Allied forces.[2] The impact of the British-French invasion was probably felt most dramatically in Douala. Meanwhile, the colony's interior witnessed a more gradual advance of the Allies before the last German bastion in Mora, in Cameroon's far north, fell in February 1916. German captives of all walks of life were brought together principally in Douala, then shipped back to Europe and interned. According to an agreement between the opposing parties, medical staff and clergy were exempt from POW treatment and were to be repatriated to their homes.[3] Almost the entire senior mission personnel of the BM – including Swiss staff – returned to Europe before 1916, leaving one missionary of Australian origin, Reinhold Rohde, in charge of her local Christian community. Finally, Rohde's turn came to leave the West African coast in 1917.

Not only did all the European missionaries of the BM vanish from the scene, but it was feared that they would be accompanied by an alarming exodus of Christian doctrine and discipline from missionised circles in Cameroon. But while the British were preoccupied with establishing a new administration, the BM's African adherents set about developing and implementing a survival strategy. This was both critical to the return of the BM to an active and expanding Cameroonian mission field later in 1925 and a challenge to various patterns of indigenous social order. Evidently, the pioneer phase of missionary penetration from 1886 had already put African societies to the test, but it was in the period of 'mission without missionaries' that problems with cohabitation and assimilation came to the fore

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[1] On the Allies' invasion and partition of Cameroon, see Tambi Eyongetah Mbuagbaw, Robert Brain and Robin Palmer. *A History of Cameroon*. Burnt Mill: Longman, 1987 (2nd ed.), pp. 78-81; Engelbert Mveng. *Histoire du Cameroun*. Yaounde: CEPER, 1985, vol. II, pp. 102-119; V. J. Ngoh. *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*. Yaounde: Navi-Group Publications, 1987, pp. 79-87.

[2] The stance of the Duala's neighbours was more ambivalent. On the Bassa, for example, see Engelbert Mveng. *Op. cit.*, p. 111. Mveng refutes the view that the Bassa collaborated with the Allies. Instead, 'le mystère de cette guerre où le Blanc poursuit le Blanc leur impose un silence plein de méfiance' ('The mystery of this war where whites turn against whites has induced a silence full of distrust among them').

[3] 'Neue Nachrichten vom grossen Missionsfelde', Julius Richter (ed.). *Die Evangelischen Missionen. Illustriertes Familienblatt*, 4, 1915, pp. 95-96. 280 of the BM's European staff had been interned since the outbreak of the First World War: 152 in India, 77 in Cameroon, and 43 in the Gold Coast.

most vehemently. Could local Christians demonstrate sufficient authority and commitment to withstand or check the opposing forces and remain within the realm of their evangelistic and educational objectives and aspirations? Which strategies did they adopt or develop themselves and apply? Who were those involved in promoting the Christian cause?

This chapter focuses on the processes and participants who were involved in promoting a rather unorthodox and fragmentary African Christian movement. It opens with the events and perceptions surrounding the early operations of the Allied forces in Cameroon that led to the collapse of European control in the missionary enterprise. It then probes new levels at which missionisation was sustained. Moreover, the evolving organisation and practices of evangelisation are analysed against the war-ridden background. Finally, problems in the broader context of this unique period of orphanage of African Christians are illuminated.[4]

1.1 Repatriating Missionaries: Causes, Local Impact, and Indigenous Response

The repatriation of the BM's European staff bore profound marks of bellicose hostility that emanated from the logic of war and the divisions it created between the enemy camps. *De iure*, missionaries might have enjoyed immunity as clergy, but *de facto* they ended up with few – if any – prerogatives. Clergy or not, the BM employed 58 staff in the field who were Germans or – as in the case of the Swiss – at least to some extent germanised.[5] As such, they mirrored the *Feindbild* (image of the enemy). This was buttressed by patriotic behaviour, which provoked a political argument in favour of harsh treatment by the British. The missionaries were purportedly operating as undercover agents, supplying arms to the Germans. Some joined the German *Schutztruppe*. According to one eye-witness in 1915,

> The Germans have not attacked us here for a long while, but they are not far off, and almost daily we get unarmed natives in cut to bits by the Germans, both men and women – this is all I suppose "Kultur"! They <u>are</u> swine and [make] no mistake. One German came in some time ago. He came by canoe as hard as he could, and was pursued by 40 or 50 canoes full of infuriated natives – we protected him. It appears that he used to sit on his verandah overlooking the river...and every native he saw either on land or on the river he used to shoot – a most "kultured" pastime and sport – shooting at harmless unarmed natives! I could give you many instances of their brutality which I have seen with my own eyes. Those old priests of the Basler Mission, whose mission houses are all over the country, are the most awful swine in every way, but to tell you all their vices etc., all under the cloak of religion, would fill a volume.[6]

Missionary involvement in the colony's defense, notably in the chaotic circumstances during the early phase of the war, is the prelude for further reflection on African responses to the interruption of the missionary enterprise. It is worth noting that the German troops

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[4] On the Catholics and the BM from 1914-1925, see Verkijika Fanso. 'The First World War and the Survival of Christianity in British Southern Cameroons: The Role of Local Catechists and Visiting Missionaries', *Cameroon Panorama*, October-December 1990(346-348), especially no. 347, pp. 9-17.
[5] See BM Annual Report, 1914. The total figure is 85, including 27 missionaries' wives.
[6] BMCA E-4.3,11, Eye-witness account published in the *Morning Post*, 4 May 1915, p. 10.

in Douala were not taken by surprise. When it was declared that the British forces planned to extend their operations to the colonies, expatriate Germans were brought together for training in the use of firearms. They founded the *Europäer-Kompagnie*, a garrison made up of 70-80 men, to prepare for any eventuality such as a local rebellion which was feared from the Duala. They distinguished themselves through black, white and red straps worn around the arm and a silver eagle attached to their topees. They were supported by African troops. A German missionary merchant, Johannes Kaufmann, a member of the *Europäer-Kompagnie*, recounted how they had blocked and mined the harbour of Douala in 1914. He explained that he was among those who launched two torpedo attacks against British ships, though without success. Kaufmann was stationed in Douala until the British took over on 27 September 1914. He subsequently ended up being imprisoned as a soldier.[7] A colleague of his, Jakob Bührer, a Swiss missionary merchant in charge of two BM stores in Douala, highlighted the extent to which attempts to torpedo British vessels presumably worsened the missionaries' reputation. He reported the case of a Catholic layman, Brother Alphons, who had volunteered to launch an attack. But Brother Alphons was discovered by watchposts, taken captive after an exchange of gunfire and allegedly executed, having seriously provoked the British by threatening the security of their battleships.[8]

The British had another reason why they thought that the missionaries had gone too far in demonstrating a pro-German stance. Having recovered a sizeable collection of firearms and ammunition in the yard of one of the mission trading stores in Douala, they charged the BM with keeping an arsenal of weapons.[9] This accusation was not met by the explanation that the arms had been deposited by Germans who were in Europe on furlough. Nor were the British to be persuaded that the mission store compound offered special safety for the arms after the outbreak of the war. Rather, it was viewed as a secret last resort, camouflaged under religious pretexts, from which the enemy could obtain fresh supplies, arms and ammunition if needed. Other evidence points to the BM missionaries Boger, Bonsack, Kühnle, Lewerenz and Weber joining the German *Schutztruppe* as volunteers at the western front in Ossidinge District.[10]

Although the hostile British attitude against the BM appears to have been reinforced by factual and alleged participation of missionaries in the enemy ranks alike, there was a more fundamental cause for concern: German national pride had manifested itself through the dissemination of mission Christianity. Both the missionaries and missionised engaged in the cause of the German *Vaterland*. Among the former were individuals such as F. Ebding

[7] BMCA E-4,1.29 b), Bericht von Johannes Kaufmann, Nellingen, 23 November 1916; PRO 649/4, American Embassy to the German Government and American Ambassador to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9, 24, 29 November 1915.
[8] BMCA E-4,1.13, Aus dem Bericht des Missionskaufmanns J. Bührer, November 1914, p. 10f.
[9] Ibid., p. 34.
[10] BMCA E-4,1.3, Karl Stolz, Kriegsnachrichten aus Europa und ihre Folgen auf einer Inlands-Missionsstation in Kamerun, Besongabang, August-October 1914; BMCA E-4,1.29 d), W. Oettli, An die Angehörigen und Freunde der Missionsgeschwister in Kamerun, Basel, 7 December 1914; BMCA E-4,3.3, W. Oettli. An die Angehörigen der Basler Missionare im Grasland von Kamerun, 5 August 1915.

who persistently displayed their patriotism by advocating Germany's unwavering intention of making something out of *K*amerun (with a k!) and its people; the latter were called upon to remain loyal to their first colonial masters. They supplied food, worked as bearers, road-builders and interpreters, joined the auxiliaries of the German *Schutztruppe* or, in the case of Bamum princesses, knitted socks for the servicemen.[11]

By and large, German colonial power was on the decline, but it would take more than a military victory for the British and the French to transform three decades of enculturation (*Kulturarbeit*). Since German influence was to be curbed, missionaries' contributions to the colonial programme were condemned to the same fate. They were considered as having generated hotbeds of pro-German elements and potential anti-Allied agitators. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Blue Book of 1915 quoted a British officer emphasising that he had never heard of a quest for missionaries or of a desire for their return to Cameroon.[12] Effacing traits of protracted sympathy among Africans towards Cameroon's first chapter of imperialism, it appears, called for missionaries to be expelled for good.

Most of the European BM staff continued working in late 1914 on the assumption that they would be treated fairly by the advancing Allied troops. This is reflected by the relative calm that prevailed in missionary circles until the arrrival of the enemy's military units. An example of the BM stations in the Grassfields is Foumban, the capital of the kingdom of Bamum. The legendary ruler of the Bamum, King – later Sultan – Njoya, assured the BM of his people's sympathy and support. He rejected an offer by the German Governor to be escorted to safety in Yaounde and decided to protect his town.[13] The BM boys' and girls' schools were kept open, offered classes and supplied the Germans with produce from the school farm and handiwork. Foumban was also targeted by refugees – African employees of the German administration, traders, women, children – who flocked together and sought shelter provided through the benevolence of Njoya's court. But on 2 December 1915 this bastion fell under enemy control at the end of a series of advances in the Grassfields.[14]

The repatriation of missionaries followed in stages. Generally, the closer stations were either to the coast or to the Nigerian border, the sooner they were occupied by the Allies. Buea and Besongabang rapidly changed hands on 15 November 1914 and 1 January 1915 respectively.[15] By contrast, the more remote stations in the Grassfields survived for almost another year. Whether British occupation occurred at an earlier or at a later stage, it usually

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[11] BMCA E-4,1.3, Karl Stolz, Kriegsnachrichten aus Europa und ihre Folgen auf einer Inlands-Missionsstation in Kamerun, Besongabang, August-October 1914; BMCA E-4,1.29, F. Ebding, Einiges über die Gründe der Unzufriedenheit der Duala-Bevölkerung mit der deutschen Regierung, Basel, 11 March 1915; BMCA E-4,2.42, Bericht von Anna Wuhrmann (Foumban), 22 February 1916, p. 3.

[12] BMCA E-4,2.63, Jakob Stutz, Die Basler Mission in Kamerun. Unsere Gehilfen, Christen und Schüler während der Kriegszeit, Sakbayeme, n.d., p. 7.

[13] BMCA E-4,2.42, Bericht von Anna Wuhrmann (Foumban), 22 February 1916, p. 6.

[14] Ibid., p. 7. The sequence of conquests in late 1915 is reported as follows: Bali, 21 October; Bamenda, 22 October; Dschang, 5 November; Banyo, 9 November.

[15] BMCA E-4,1.32, G. Lorch, An das werte Komitee der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft in Basel, Korntal, 6 February 1915; BMCA E-4,1.5, Karl Stolz, Bericht über die englische Kriegsgefangenschaft, December 1915.

provoked similar responses: Throughout the mission field the arrival of African troops, led by British officers who were in charge of clearing the stations, disillusioned the European clergy and left a bitter aftertaste among the scores of the BM's local adherents.

The onset began in Douala and spread within what became the French sphere of control under the mandate of the League of Nations in 1922 before extending into the northern portion of the mission field. The invasion of Douala dealt an especially devastating blow to the BM as this coastal town was the seedbed of her activities in Cameroon and the gateway into the interior. Lower and higher education, professional training, health service facilities, congregations and the flourishing trading company with outlets in the quarters of Bonanjo (Bell Town) and Bonaku (Akwa) were all affected.[16] Jakob Bührer, one of the managers of the trading company, exclaimed: 'The material damage we are suffering is tremendous; but it is especially the unjust and brutal individual treatment we received that resulted in the virtually irretrievable loss of our reputation among the Cameroonian population.'[17]

In order to understand what this meant in the broader context, it is worth keeping track here of how the Duala's major grievances against the German colonial administration were perceived at the time. According to F. Ebding, the key points can be summed up under five headings.[18] First, the Germans had prohibited the Duala from engaging in very profitable liquor trade. Second, they imposed harsh poll- and hut-taxes without offering anything in return (it was ostensibly assumed that British colonial authorities would not exact taxes). Third, the burial of deceased kin in family compounds was prohibited in favour of setting up and using public town and village cemeteries. Fourth and most importantly, the Duala were dispossessed of their ancestral lands.[19] Fifth, the reputable Duala ruler Paramount Chief Rudolf Duala Manga Bell was charged with high treason and executed together with his secretary Ngoso Din on 8 August 1914. This incident led the fragmented Duala clans to form a coalition against the Germans. Thus a sense of 'receiving the liberators' appears to have prevailed when the Allied forces arrived.[20] The Germans, Karl Stolz and Gottfried Schwarz noted, retaliated with threats of further persecution, driven by vengeance against all Africans who decamped. Duala refugees, who commonly sought hideouts in outlying areas around Nyasoso in Bakossi, remained their principle target until late 1914.[21]

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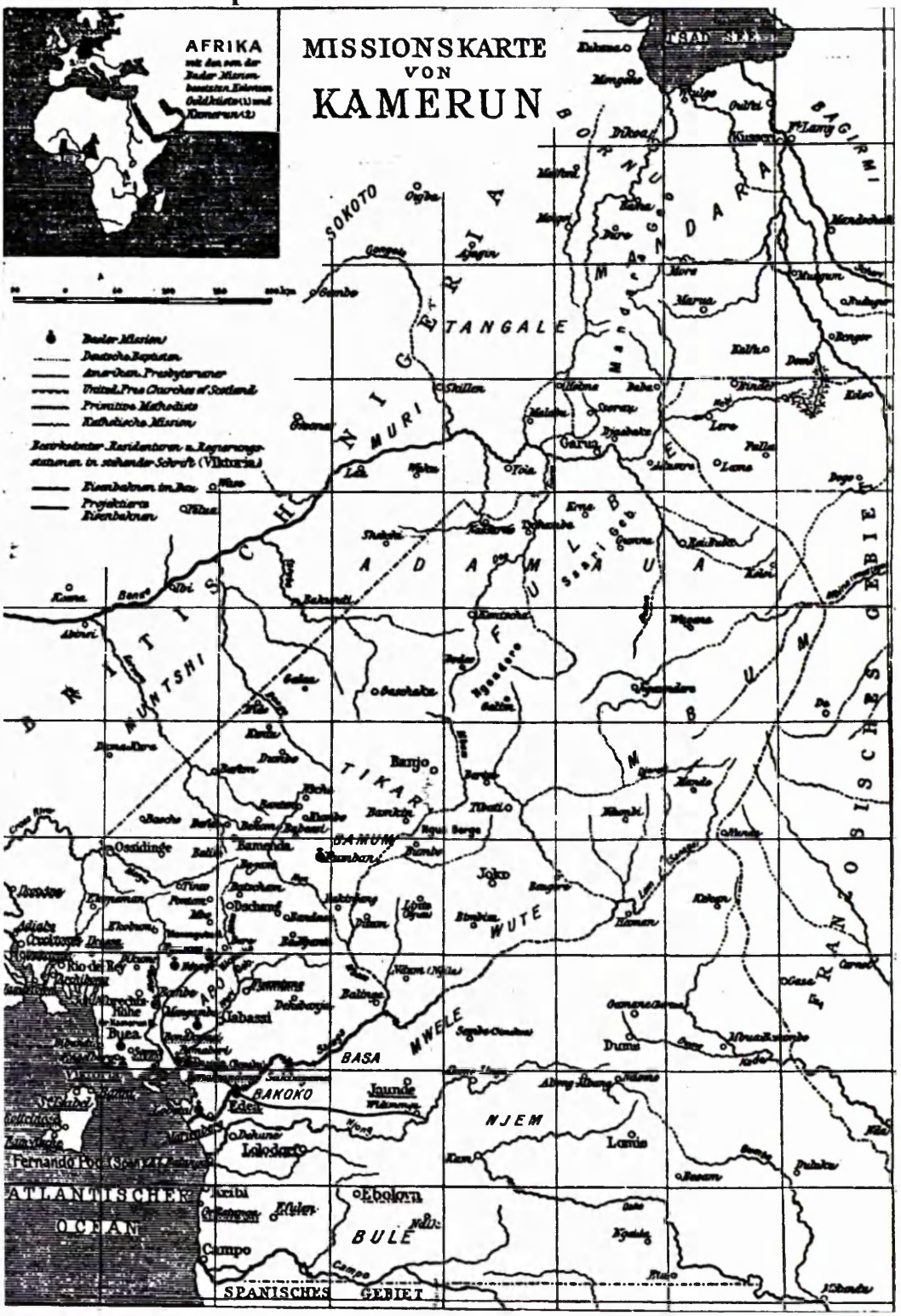
[16] BMCA E-4,1.20, Bericht von Missionar Ph. Hecklinger, Bonaku (Akwa), n.d.
[17] BMCA E-4,1.14, Jakob Bührer, Bericht über die uns gewordene Behandlung seitens englischer und französischer Militärpersonen nach der Einnahme Dualas im September, Oktober 1914. (My translation)
[18] BMCA E-4,1.29, F. Ebding. Einiges über die Gründe der Unzufriedenheit der Duala-Bevölkerung mit der deutschen Regierung, Basel, 11 March 1915.
[19] Messrs Bärtschi, Scheibler, Stutz and Wittwer agreed that the expropriation of land and the execution of Duala Manga Bell by the Germans incited the Duala to side with the British. BMCA E-3,5 c), Gutachten [der] Basler Missionare zu dem Britischen "Blaubuch" über "German Atrocities...in Africa" (1917).
[20] BMCA E-4,3.14, W. Oettli, Bericht von Frau Missionarskaufmann Link über die Einnahme von Duala und ihre Folgen für unsere Kamerun-Mission, 27 November 1914.
[21] BMCA E-4,1.5, Karl Stolz, Bericht über die englische Kriegsgefangenschaft, December 1915; BMCA, E-4,1.11b, Gottfried Schwarz, Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft in Kamerun und England, 8 June 1918.

Basel Mission map of Cameroon



Source: Basel Mission Annual Report, 1916

Other cases illustrate how distortive and futile it is to attempt a generalised appraisal of attitudes towards the opposing European parties along local, regional or ethnic lines. E. Mveng's contention that the Bassa remained aloof from subscribing to a partisan attitude towards the Allies is balanced by an article of the German Evangelical Press Association culled from war correspondence in 1915. Schwarz and Gehr from the BM post in Lobetal and Erich Student of the *Deutsche Kamerun-Gesellschaft m.b.h.* in Edea observed that the British won over African collaborators in the Lower Sanaga region by offering rewards for German captives. British troops were said to have lured local inhabitants into targeting any officials of the enemy's colonial administration by offering bounties of 50 shillings.[22]

Such favouritism was likely to jeopardise local social organisation by driving a wedge between existing realms of authority and loyalty. This process was exemplified in reports on the region surrounding Sakbayeme on the Sanaga River. Chiefs in the district of West Babimbi and the area south of the Sanaga who could no longer count on being backed by German officials ostensibly found themselves at the mercy of their dissatisfied populace. Consequently, they were inclined to seek support from the Allies in order to restore their legitimacy and power.[23] Likewise, some of the teacher-catechists in the same region such as Mbwase and his colleague Museba were branded traitors who allegedly turned to the British to operate as spies against the Germans. Jakob Stutz noted: 'hostile elements came to the fore. The area became insecure. Some righteously inclined people saw the teacher as the last resort....But the hatred of the hostile elements turned against the [mission] station and the teachers.'[24] He added that Christians came under the increasing threat and fear of assaults – if they were not involved themselves. One teacher, Laps, who was robbed of his belongings, is cited as having claimed that, should he fail to retrieve his property, he would have lost it for God's cause. Others remained equally dedicated against all odds. Jakob Ngimbus continued school and catechism classes until a mob of armed 'pagans' raided the site. The Christians were driven away, but Ngimbus decided to return. One evening a young man who was discussing with him allegedly drew a knife and 'split open his skull.' Ngimbus died three days later. Petro Same was another teacher who remained firm when a captain and his subalterns turned his post into a military camp. Same offered his services to the captain as an interpreter while catering for a small congregation of 15 Christians.

Despite the deterioration of the social order and of the missionary enterprise, such war accounts often stress martyrdom, profound commitment and self-sacrifice among African agents. Praise radiates the ray of hope articulated by European missionaries, juxtaposing a deeper feeling of resignation under the burden of repatriation. Missionary self-motivation

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[22] BMCA E-4,3.10, Kriegs-Korrespondenz des Evangelischen Presseverbandes für Deutschland, no. 66, 19 February 1915.
[23] BMCA E-4,2.64, Paul Scheibler, Bericht über das Verhalten von Christen und Heiden während der Kriegszeit in Sakbayeme, Birsfelden, 5 July 1916, p. 4. Scheibler explained the outrage among the populace as a desire to liberate themselves from the oppressive power of their chiefs under the Germans.
[24] BMCA E-4,2.63, Jakob Stutz, Die Basler Mission in Kamerun: Unsere Gehilfen, Christen und Schüler während der Kriegszeit, Sakbayeme, n.d., pp. 2f. (My translation)

shows a remarkable degree of resilience in the ways Christian communities sought to cope with turmoil, recognition, alliances and safety. The accounts evoke notions of factionalism and banditry that drove the many cells of the Christian movement in different directions, away from the authority of the BM. A 'class war' was on the verge of being unleashed.

The nature and justification of hostility and partisanship that mark the Duala's reply to the warring European parties can arguably be applied to other peoples of the littoral. The complexity lies in the variation of the response itself, depending on the treatment received from either of the European camps. The common denominator generated by the confusion in Cameroon's colonial battle zone was not really cold-blooded hostility but frenzy. As the British advanced against Germans troops, they reportedly triggered a 'war-monger spirit' among African leaders, inviting Wouri-Bodimann and Bassa chiefs to loot German trading stores – including those of the BM.[25] Rohde wrote about the mission station in Bombe that the situation was out of hand since 'The [Duala] Natives spoil and plunder everything.'[26]

The evidence suggests that Duala resentment against the Germans evolved into a radical anti-BM disposition after the outbreak of the First World War. This observation demands caution. However, it seems safe to claim that the wave of grievances was powerful enough to severely undermine the collaborative spirit and – temporarily – almost drown respect towards the BM's European leadership.[27] The same can be said of several other mission posts. M. Hohner summarised his sceptical opinion of Bagam:

> The native tribes of Cameroon used to constantly engage in wars against one another - hence wars are nothing unusual for them. They were also aware that the task of the *Schutztruppe* of Cameroon is to confront hostile tribes. What was new to them was to see Whites waging a war against each other, for they had believed that all Whites considered themselves brothers.[28]

Hohner's remark is a good example for the recurring stereotype of the war-like nature of African peoples. Moreover, it throws light on the opposite stereotype of pacific features of the white race. This contrast underlines a sense of consternation among Africans about the objectives and practices of the parties involved in the First World War. Not surprisingly, the Fon of Bagam told Hohner that he did not know what to make of Whites anymore.

German public opinion at that time portrays this rising scepticism on the scale of the international conflict. It highlights the maltreatment of the German missionaries and the damaging impact of British and French practices on the reputation of the white race as a whole. Reviewing the Christian cause, the basic problem was how to restore the confidence previously established between Africans and Europeans through missionary activity.[29]

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[25] BMCA E-4,2.53, Bericht nach dem Tagebuch des Missionars Johannes Ittmann stationiert zu Mangamba, Basel, 8 February 1915.
[26] BMCA E-4,1.6, R. Rohde to W. Oettli, 4 February 1915.
[27] See W. Oettli. 'Neuestes aus Afrika', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, December 1915(12), p. 248.
[28] BMCA E-4,1.16, M. Hohner, Die Eingeborenen und der Krieg, Chur, 13 December 1917. (My transl.)
[29] See BMCA E-4,3.11, Frankfurter Zeitung, no. 262, 21 September 1914, and no. 37, 6 February 1915; Reichsbote, no. 26, 13 January 1915 (supplement); Süddeutsche Zeitung, no. 40, 9 February 1915;

As shown above, a degrading aspect of the repatriation process for missionaries was the way they were removed from their stations and deported. They were occasionally exposed to mockery by Africans. J. Ittmann, who was based in Mangamba in Douala's hinterlands, explained such reactions as an outcome of the British prohibition to serve the Germans.[30] J. Köngeter reckoned that the missionaries would receive special treatment by the Allied troops: 'Had we assumed that we would be ridiculed under the eyes of the Blacks and led off like criminals, we would have fled a few hours earlier.'[31] Moreover, the European BM staff in Sakbayeme and Foumban, P. Scheibler and A. Wuhrmann, reported on the jeering elements in the crowds that gathered at their respective departures.[32]

There was every reason for European missionaries to express frustration in a collection of politically sensitive reports and correspondence. The latter were sources that served to inform the Home Board of the BM and both the Swiss and the German authorities. It was material that fed into the battlefront of media discourse. And given that even a major Swiss newspaper – *La Suisse* – challenged the integrity and purpose of the missionary enterprise in Cameroon, the BM was probably in dire need of restitution. The Inspector for African mission fields, W. Oettli, defused the mounting pressure in a position paper on the issues raised in the article.[33] He confirmed that the BM trading store in Douala had indeed been used to deposit arms and ammunition of European colonists who were travelling abroad. Although they had been hidden from the British, they were not intended for usage by the missionaries. He denied the allegation that the BM was involved in a flourishing business drawn by the vehicle of evangelism. He distinguished the trading company, whose profits flowed back into missionary activities, from the missionary society itself. He also rebuffed the argument that BM missionaries endeavoured to promote a German God and German propaganda. Finally, he repudiated the claim that the BM was involved in political affairs.

The growing exposure of the BM at varied synchronised levels was like a barometer of the ongoing crisis. If Oettli, the German press, and others tried to protect the BM's image in Europe, India, the Gold Coast and Cameroon, local reactions had to determine the BM's immediate future in the mission fields. The Cameroonian responses cannot be reduced to their derisive traits. Rather, they revolved around the challenge of – at least temporarily – indigenising church leadership. It was of course precisely this goal which was of cardinal importance to the successful pursuit of missionary activity in the absence of the European personnel. Among the determined proponents of Africanising Christianity were the Native Baptists who attained autonomy in the late 19th century. They drew upon the impact of the

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Deutsche Tageszeitung, no. 284, 6 June 1915; Kriegskorrespondenz des Evangelischen Presseverbandes für Deutschland, no. 66, 19 February 1915.

[30] BMCA E-4,2.53, Bericht nach dem Tagebuch des Missionars Johannes Ittmann stationiert zu Mangamba, Basel, 8 February 1915.

[31] BMCA E-4,2.54, Bericht von Johannes Köngeter (Yabassi), 8 February 1915. (My translation)

[32] BMCA E-4,2.64, P. Scheibler, Bericht über das Verhalten von Christen und Heiden während der Kriegszeit in Sakbayeme, Birsfelden, 5 July 1916, p. 4; BMCA E-4,2.43, 2. Bericht v. A. Wuhrmann, Foumban, 4 March 1916.

[33] BMCA E-4,3.1, W. Oettli to Octavie Carrel, Basel, 1 February 1916.

First World War to rally new members, and as T. Burnier, Interim Secretary of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), observed:

> Some of them [the Baptists] even attempted to win over the pastors and evangelists of Basel by telling them that they would regress from being important personalities to becoming children once more if they accepted the leadership of the Whites.... I dream of organising a kind of union of all the Baptists, using the firmest among them to form, under our presidency, a permanent committee which would exercise the authority to restore order and discipline in the churches.... The Basel Christians show much more understanding for the necessity of a superior union for the reorganisation and progress of the [missionary] task.[34]

F. Bärtschi of the BM added that the Native Baptists had declared themselves the new leaders among all Christian denominations. Looking down upon the German Baptists and BM Christians, he added, they might have been assuming that the German Baptists would never return. If pro-Allied partisanship arose in church circles, then the Native Baptists set a striking precedent. They ostensibly adopted a leading position in advocating the 'liberal attitude of the British' and the advantages of British missionary societies as opposed to the 'mean Basler who did not care for the people.'[35]

The turbulent situation in Douala became the forerunner to big changes in Cameroon's missionary and political landscape. The chronology of this process was marked out by the itinerary of the Allied invasion, starting from the coastal zone. The bellicose frenzy stirred by the ensuing conflict shook the Christian movement and reverberated throughout the territory. Yet, although the BM's fate was effectively sealed at an early stage of the Allies' advance, islands of European missionary activity survived until well into 1915. In several areas such as Foumban the war was said to have met with widespread indifference so long as the enemy was invisible.[36] Elsewhere, in Buea, the missionaries attempted to persuade and comfort local Christians by claiming they – Africans and missionaries alike – were not targeted by the war and that the Allies would be well-disposed towards them. The local Bakweri were disillusioned when the British troops who arrived in Buea on 15 November 1914 resorted to 'rough treatment'. Mission property was seized, occupied and looted.[37]

Missionary attitudes, as reports repeatedly illustrate, disclose a combination of naïvety and courage. They display a remarkable level of perseverance among European staff and their African agents. It should also be borne in mind that many missionaries, expecially those in the Grassfields, were cut off from the vital channels of information. Not only did it prove to be extremely difficult to pursue the general course of events, but it was also problematic to disseminate news to the outside world. As Oettli pointed out in a circular in

[34] BMCA E-4,3.1, T. Burnier, Interim Secretary of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), to the Director of the BM, Paris, 4 May 1917.
[35] BMCA E-4,1.12, F. Bärtschi, Unsere Kriegserlebnisse in Bonebela-Duala und unsere Heimreise, Basel, 16 December 1914.
[36] BMCA E-4,2.42, Bericht von Anna Wuhrmann, Foumban, 22 February 1916, p. 2.
[37] BMCA E-4,1.3, Bericht des Missionars Christlieb Schmidt von Buea, Singen, 20 January 1915.

December 1914, little was known at that time about the situation in the Grassfields.[38] A more efficient communication system would not have entirely alleviated the deficiencies, but it might have facilitated the preparations for the handing-over of responsibilities to the African agents. Thus the major wave of repatriation of missionaries from the ranks of the BM, covering approximately one year between late 1914 and late 1915, left the abandoned African Christians in a state of deep uncertainty about their future. It was left to this young community to find out how to cope with the immediate challenges of further developing, manifesting and propagating religious authority and conviction. The focus now shifts to the religious encounter itself, to the strategies, struggles and aspirations of local agents.

1.2 Early Experiments with Selfhood: "Native" Agents and Local Custodians

One of the critical aims for the Basel missionaries before their repatriation was to hold together and prepare the Christian communities for what lay ahead. The mission field bore unpredictable features as the pockets of missionary adherents turned into a fluctuating mass in the face of the military onslaught and economic effects of the War. In spite of the sequestration, pillaging and partial destruction of mission property, and confusion amidst the Christian community, Douala remained the nexus of the missionary enterprise. This colonial port and economic hub became the seat of the BM's successor's – the PEMS – headquarters in 1917. Moreover, Douala was also home to the first three ordained African pastors in the ranks of the BM, Josef Ekolo, Isedu Kuo and Jacob Modi Din, who joined the PEMS in 1917. At the time of the Allies' invasion, Modi Din was serving a four-year prison sentence, having been accused by the Germans in 1912 of holding secret political meetings in the BM Church of Bonaduma, Douala.[39] Prior to his acquittal in 1916, Ekolo and Kuo shared responsibilities for the south-eastern region of the mission field, including Douala. The remainder of the BM's sphere covering Southern Cameroons was a complex mosaic of outstations and congregations run by the African sub-clergy.

Although the separation of the two territories isolated the British portion of the mission field, the foundation for Christian advance and the emergence of new religious identities had already been laid. This inference arose most conspicuously from the coastal contact zone with close to 90% of the BM's 1,768 affiliates in British Southern Cameroons on 1 January 1914.[40] Victoria and Buea claimed the highest figures with 826 and 656 members respectively, followed by Bombe with 113. The other c. 10% (173) were thinly distributed throughout the Forest area and the western Grassfields over the districts of Nyasoso (57), Besongabang (43) and Bali (73). The question here is how to interpret the data. There are

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[38] BMCA E-4,1.29 d), F. Ebding, Einiges über die Gründe der Unzufriedenheit der Duala-Bevölkerung mit der deutschen Regierung, Basel, 11 March 1915.

[39] BMCA E-4,3.14, W. Oettli, Bericht von Frau Missionarskaufmann Link über die Einnahme von Duala und ihre Folgen für unsere Kamerun-Mission (report presented to the Home Board of the BM), 27 November 1914.

[40] Werner Keller. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon*. Limbe: Presbook, 1969, p. 59.

no detailed indications of how these groups of Christians were constituted. A decisive factor discussed in Chapter 3 is the influence of returning labour migrants from the coastal plantations on the Christian communities further inland. Reviewing the 'stranger element' which made the coastal region critical to evangelisation, P. Dieterle was convinced that

> All these workers are willing to receive the Gospel and we face a unique opportunity to reach out to all these tribes. For instance, precisely in the Grassfields we are not in the position to really organise our work as we lack the necessary personnel.... What an opportunity to spread God's word in the plantations. And being far away from home they are particularly receptive for this message. All over the plantations one finds small chapels where people assemble for church service.[41]

Statistical trends do not override the assumption that the propensity towards Christian affiliation relied on other – strategic, organisational, and even psychological – elements. It must be remembered that an intense relationship had been established over close to three decades prior to 1914. Undoubtedly, missionary paternalism manifested itself in Christian conviction, coupled with evangelistic zeal. But the Christian seed had to be tested, accepted and cultivated locally. Two categories of African actors appeared at the forefront of those who provided the missionary enterprise with the level of support required to penetrate the indigenous societies: traditional rulers as well as local teacher-catechists and assistants.

1.2.1 Legitimising the Missionary Enterprise: Chiefs and their Retinues

Accounts by European missionaries testify to a largely favourable attitude of traditional rulers and dignitaries towards the BM's aims prior to repatriation. From the inception of the BM stations in Bali and Foumban, the local rulers Fonyonga and Njoya demonstrated remarkable loyalty to the Christian cause.[42] They afforded their assent and amenities, such as land, infrastructure, manpower and protection, and assumed a leading role in assuring success for the BM's targets. They acted as touts and overseers, rallying pupils and co-supervising regular school attendance. E. F. Lekunze suggests that the opening of a school lay at the core of Fonyonga's interest: 'Above all, he himself became a pupil in the school in order to show a good example for the children.'[43] When the boom in mission education in Bali failed to evoke equally impressive trends towards baptism, disappointment grew in BM circles in 1915. During the years to follow, the situation in Bali began to deteriorate.[44] However, the outreach of the BM in the western Grassfields was not confined to Bali. The larger picture of missionisation can be likened to an earthquake: Here lay the epicentre of Christian tremors that were soon felt further afield among Bali's neighbours.

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[41] BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 15 September 1923, p. 2. (My translation)
[42] Edward F. Lekunze. 'Chieftaincy and Christianity in Cameroon, 1886-1926: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Evangelistic Strategy of the Basel Mission.' Chicago, D.Th., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1987, pp. 95-137.
[43] Ibid., p. 116.
[44] For an analysis of the pre-1915 encounter between the BM and Fonyonga of Bali, see ibid., pp. 120f.

As for the conditions among the Bamum in Foumban, the BM drew on the enormously creative and curious mind of Njoya who approved and attended both regular school and catechism classes. His concern, however, was that the brand of Christianity introduced by the BM lacked cultural adaptability. A major bone of contention was polygamy which was strictly prohibited by the BM. The problem proved to be intransigent. As Claude Tardits observes astutely, 'Knowledge of Christianity remained, for the King, a purely intellectual pursuit.'[45] All the same, judging by Anna Wuhrmann's account of what Njoya assured her – 'The Bamum people have more compassion with you than with their own people and would never commit any evil towards you'[46] –, he decided to tolerate Christianity.

While touching on the key theme of Lekunze's study, the role of chiefs in legitimising missionary Christianity, we are confronted with the question whether such encounters gave rise to a diverse 'people's movement' Christianity. Although the author does not maintain a singular stance, he is basically inclined towards a negative response for the period of his research (1886-1926).[47] Looking ahead into the post-war era, the evidence suggests that the situation altered in favour of a more affirmative response to the same question. By the time the First World War had started and appeared to be jeopardising all efforts to realise evangelistic objectives, the process of opening up new areas and defining corresponding target groups for the BM had at least been properly initiated.[48]

Missionaries' allegiance to chiefs was presumably to some extent a question of mutual consent, and the outcome relied on the level of sympathy or friendship that resulted from such encounters. Consequently, the legitimacy of the missionary presence often relied on traditional authorities' interest and approval. Furthermore, the repatriation of missionaries indicates that close allegiances were considered a priority for the survival of the Christian community in the absence of European leadership. Besides Bali and Foumban, missionary activities met with the favourable disposition of some traditional rulers in other parts of the Grassfields such as the chiefdoms of Bagam and Bana. The Fon of Bagam also made sure that school classes were attended regularly. Moreover, he pledged to continue marking his presence at church services in the absence of the missionaries. However, Hohner, having abundantly praised his host, believed most chiefs made empty promises.[49]

Optimism also prevailed in Bana. H. Billmann placed the mission property under royal custody before leaving for Foumban from where he was taken to Douala and repatriated.[50]

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[45] Claude Tardits. '*Pursue to Attain*: A Royal Religion', in Ian Fowler & David Zeitlyn (eds.). *African Crossroads. Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996, p. 146.

[46] BMCA E-4,2.42, Bericht von Anna Wuhrmann, Foumban, 22 February 1916, p. 6.

[47] Edward F. Lekunze. Op. cit., pp. 136, 153.

[48] The more supportive stance is reviewed in the light of the relaunch of the BM in 1925. It is paramount from the early 1930s but needs to be mentioned here as an underlying factor of Cameroonian initiatives to promote Christianity during and immediately after the First World War. See also Chapter 4, pp. 131-141.

[49] BMCA E-4,1.1 b), Gottfried Schwarz, Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft in Kamerun und England, 8 June 1918.

[50] BMCA E-4,2.44 b), Heinrich Billmann, Bericht über die Kriegstage und die Missionsarbeit auf der Station Bana, Kamerun, während des Krieges in Kamerun, Mannheim, 1 June 1919, p. 4.

This might simply seem like the most straightforward decision to take in the threatening circumstances at that time. Alternatively, though, it was about weighing the odds in favour of the lesser risk and in respect of the existing social order: Leaving all responsibilities in the hands of a single teacher-catechist might have been seen as contradicting the traditional understanding of custodianship, thus implying an insult to the chief and his retinue.

The positive influence of chiefs was felt elsewhere. The supportive stance of the Fon of Bangwa made that area one of the true Christian strongholds.[51] Billmann also attributed this trait to the neighbouring chiefdoms of Bangangte and Fotzi where the local authorities offered their assistance to the BM. Again, he stressed, the importance of their contribution lay in recruiting pupils and rallying audiences to listen to the propagation of the Gospel.

The role of chiefs from the Forest area in the missionary enterprise is more ambivalent. A key point was to determine whether the decentralised power and authority of acephalous societies – in contrast to the segmentary social and political structures in the Grassfields – demanded an alternative approach.[52] It can be argued that the BM relied more heavily on government support in the Forest area, notably within the coastal zone and its hinterlands. The stations in Buea, Douala and Victoria were surrounded by much larger contingents of German colonial officials than the Grassfield locations. It was in the southern regions that vast tracts of land had been expropriated by the Germans and became the powerhouse of the Cameroonian plantation economy.[53] Priority was given to a *modus vivendi* between the BM, the German administration and planters. Indeed, the correspondence and reports from Buea, Douala and Victoria at the onset of the war neglect the position and role of chiefs.

Among the remote BM stations in the Forest area, Nyasoso was one village where the chief did play an important part in helping the Christian community. As G. Schwarz wrote,

> The village was filled with illness and misery. We had the impression that paganism was still a powerful force here. The church services were badly attended, even though we personally invited the people to come. However, Chief [N]toko as well as our pupils and own people [= teacher-catechists, assistants] were always present. Moreover, this chief was a friendly person who helped us in whatever respect he could.[54]

When the British reached Nyasoso, Ntoko was urged to submit to the British Crown. And should he resist, he was warned, he would be executed. Such orders commanded a degree of attention that ruled out preferences. If Ntoko was to become a truly loyal subject under British rule, his leanings towards the BM had to be – at least temporarily – suspended.[55]

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[51] Ibid., p. 20. On missionary activity among the Bangwa, see also Fiona Bowie. 'A Social and Historical Study of Christian Missions among the Bangwa of South West Cameroon.' Oxford, PhD, 1985.
[52] See Chapter 4, pp. 123-125.
[53] See Chapter 3, pp. 111-114; Chapter 4, p. 125.
[54] BMCA E-4,1.11 b), Gottfried Schwarz, Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft in Kamerun und England, n.pl., 8 June 1918, p. 4. (My translation)
[55] See Heinrich Balz, *Where the Faith has to Live: Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion, Part I: Living Together*, Basel: Basel Mission, 1984, pp. 119-121, 170-174; Anthony Ndi. 'Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons, 1922-1962.' London, Ph.D., 1983, p. 40; Chapter 4, pp. 139f.

1.2.2 Reorienting the Missionary Enterprise: The Role of "Native" Agents

The prime heirs to the legacy of the BM were not traditional rulers but a host of African agents who had – in varied circumstances – come into the fold of those to be groomed for the Christian cause. Some of these devotees emerged as products of higher education from the middle schools of Douala and Buea respectively as well as the Catechists' Training Centre in Buea. But the increasing demand called for scores of additional African mission workers who were recruited among the ex-pupils of the BM's boys' schools.[56]

Even Douala with three ordained pastors relied on this largely informal sub-clergy to tend to individual congregations. At a mere glance, the overall picture suggests: Countless were the Africans who steered the vehicle of Christianity along a new course in Cameroon. What follows is an attempt to define the levels at which they were invested with authority while exploring their achievements. Various themes, problems and strategies employed by "native" agents are exposed with a view to illuminating diverse strands of missionisation.

After the outbreak of the First World War, most contacts between the BM Home Board and the mission field were soon cut off. Due to dwindling financial support from Europe during the war, the BM schools in Cameroon suffered a setback. Higher education west of the River Mungo, a portion of the boundary between the British and French spheres, came to a halt as the middle school and the Catechist's Training Centre in Buea closed and the BM station was cleared in November 1914.[57] The boys' school in Besongabang emptied rapidly when funding was suspended.[58] A related cause for the deterioration of schools, as in Bonebela where the number of pupils dropped from 125 to 15, was rising poverty.[59]

Such disorientation could lead to a massive influx of pupils from outstations to a main station. In Bali more than 700 pupils from other schools gradually converged during the first war year.[60] The state of disarray was rarely delayed as in Foumban. Billmann's report on Bana offers further evidence of a functioning educational network including 550 pupils in 10 schools with 11 teachers. And Bana even boasted a new middle school at that time. Moreover, each school cultivated its own crops which the pupils were entitled to harvest.[61]

These examples show how small-scale subsistence was developed and became critical to the survival of the missionary enterprise. The effect of the war on the school programme could suggest that the backbone of the missionisation process was broken. Schools were both a bait for winning over new adherents and a breeding-ground for Christians-to-be.[62]

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[56] W. Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
[57] BMCA E-4,1.32, G. Lorch, An das werte Komitee der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft in Basel, Korntal, 6 February 1915, p. 1.
[58] BMCA E-4,1.3, Karl Stolz, Kriegsnachrichten aus Europa und ihre Folgen auf einer Inlands-Missionsstation in Kamerun, Besongabang, August-October 1914.
[59] BMCA E-4,3.1, Andreas Etia to Friedrich Bärtschi, Bonebela, Douala, 15 September 1915, p. 4.
[60] BMCA E-4,3.3, W. Oettli, An die Angehörigen der Basler Missionare im Grasland von Kamerun, Basel, 5 August 1915.
[61] BMCA E-4,2.44 b), Heinrich Billmann, Bericht über die Kriegstage und die Missionsarbeit auf der Station Bana, Kamerun, während des Krieges in Kamerun, Mannheim, 1 June 1919, p. 21f.
[62] See Chapter 7, pp. 217-224.

Bearing this crux of evangelism in mind, missionaries were keen to see teacher-catechists carry on the task. Handing over responsibilities to Africans was problematic, though, given the brief interval between the arrival of the Allies and the repatriation of the BM personnel.

It must be borne in mind that the missionary enterprise was far from planned autonomy at this stage. Instead, it was confronted with an emergency situation. Missionaries usually relied on solemn declarations by their African counterparts to carry on their task. The way this was witnessed according to reports discloses a widespread consent to continue even without remuneration. Hohner, for instance, rallied the group of teacher-catechists under his supervision in the Bagam area to elucidate the devastating impact of the war upon the financial situation of the BM. Adding that their salaries could no longer be paid and would henceforth simply be booked and filed until further notice, he inquired whether they would still be prepared to perform their duties. He reported a unanimously determined response from the teacher-catechists who said they were not working for the money's sake but for Christ's cause.[63] Other missionaries occasionally recorded similar levels of commitment.[64]

Teacher-catechists, qualified or not, were desperately needed for the aim of weaving the thread of Christianity into the extremely diverse social fabric spread over the landscape of British Southern Cameroons. It is too early to dilate upon what inspired them to undertake relentless efforts to single-handedly take over the task of spreading the Gospel. Conviction and vocation were obviously essential qualities – qualities, for that matter, that were firmly rooted in the missionary vocabulary. Moreover, notions of popularity, prestige and a quest for power appear to have been of importance to the African vanguard of Christianity.

A shared feature was some degree of authority, the link between the inwardness of the former traits and the outwardness of the latter. Attained through the recognition of ability and approval of personality, authority was a fundamental tool for persistent evangelisation. It was considered a yardstick of Christian righteousness and dignity, intended to enthrall society. It was used to propel the Christian offensive and to protect those imbued with it. A vital goal of teacher-catechists and other BM adherents was to avoid being stripped of the religious and social values instilled through the institutionalisation of mission Christianity. Anxiety about seeing earlier endeavours disintegrate not only prevailed among European missionaries; African agents were presumably equally anxious to retain and improve their positions. Resigning or backsliding was not a self-evident step for them to take, for it was likely to bear negative social consequences. Indeed, the BM's "native" agents interacted with society at all levels, which, in this particular setting, was a considerable privilege.[65]

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[63] BMCA E-4,1.1b), Gottfried Schwarz, Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft in Kamerun und England, 8 June 1918.

[64] African expressions of commitment towards Christianity are particularly vivid in reports on Sakbayeme and, more generally, the Sanaga region which fall outside the later geographical scope of the study; see BMCA E-4,2.63, Jakob Stutz, Die Basler Mission in Kamerun. Unsere Gehilfen, Christen und Schüler während der Kriegszeit, Sakbayeme, n.d., p. 1, and E-4,2.64, Paul Scheibler, Bericht über das Verhalten von Christen und Heiden während der Kriegszeit in Sakbayeme, Birsfelden, 5 July 1916, pp. 3f.

[65] On the social status of teacher-catechists, see Chapter 6, pp. 182f., 187f., 201, Chapter 7, pp. 229-232.

The case of Andreas Etia in Douala illustrates the tension surrounding the transfer from missionary to local control of Christian communities. Etia catered for the congregation in Bonebela once the BM missionaries had been repatriated. An account of his in early 1915 depicts a distraught group of Duala Christians and backsliders challenging the purpose of sustaining European faith, which was pitched against his ambition to remain their leader. He tried to convince them to stick together when they forwarded their claims for individual shares of the BM's heritage. While some of them apparently agreed to continue following the BM, several backsliders succeeded in winning over a number of Christians in a plot to set up a new leadership. Reasons for secession were explained in terms of their refusal to pay church contributions without being guaranteed baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This dispute reveals a theme that often emerged in Christian circles.[66] During the years to come it became a catalyst for change in the areas of church discipline and leadership. At the time, Etia replied defensively that he merely wanted to find out whether his competitors would be able to create a functional order before leaving. At another meeting Etia's role as the leader of the congregation was once more scrutinised. Again he was challenged by the appeal to forge a new order with the target of making polygamous marriages permissible, 'For the Whites pronounced this commandment (or prohibition) and not God.'[67]

The spirit of change emanated from the view that the German mission had come to an end, implying that a new initiative should be taken. Criticism was increasingly also directed at the elders in charge of collecting the church contributions.[68] In order to consolidate his position, Etia passed a request to Rohde to be ordained. Rohde answered that he could not decide for himself.[69] His reply in the given circumstances is characteristic of the rigidity of the BM's policies and decision-making processes at that time. Rohde was, after all, just as aware as Etia of the wolf prowling around the corner: the Native Baptists who, by then, had ordained six of their own ministers.[70] And a response to this threat appeared to be urgent.

It was clear that there was no question of mass-ordination within the ranks of the BM's African agents. Even the destiny of the First World War was not meant to alter this policy. But that did not hinder another ordination alongside Ekolo, Kuo and Modi Din; Johannes Litumbe Ekese's turn was to come before Rohde left Cameroon in 1917. Rohde's target in the meantime was to co-ordinate the cells of the BM between Victoria and Douala and pay occasional visits to congregations further inland. This was an extensive circuit for one individual to cover and depended on a local back-up to oversee the activity in Victoria and

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[66] BMCA E-4,1.12, F. Bärtschi, Unsere Kriegserlebnisse in Bonebela-Duala und unsere Heimreise, Basel, 16 December 1914, p. 34. Bärtschi also reported a certain degree of reluctance among BM Church members in Douala to pay church contributions as they had not received the Lord's Supper.
[67] BMCA E-4,3.1, Andreas Etia to Friedrich Bärtschi, Bonebela, Douala, 15 September 1915, p. 3.
[68] Ibid., p. 4. Etia and his colleague Ebumbu received monthly wages of 35 and 25 shillings respectively from these revenues. To Etia this was meagre during the war as one day's food supply cost 2-4 shillings.
[69] BMCA E-4,3.14, R. J. Rohde to W. Oettli, Buea, 27 July 1915, p. 4. Rohde decided not to authorise Etia to offer the sacraments so long as Ekolo and Kuo were posted in neighbouring congregations.
[70] Ibid., p. 4 and BMCA E-4,3.1, Andreas Etia to Friedrich Bärtschi, Bonebela, Douala, 15 September 1915, p. 6.

Buea during Rohde's tours.[71] The villages surrounding Buea and Victoria were organised into quarters under the responsibility of teachers, catechists and assistants in that order. Ekese was appointed assistant missionary by Rohde and also became the overseer in the Buea district while Isaak Mukongo assumed the same responsibility in Victoria.

The patterns of evangelistic outreach bore a strong resemblance with the characteristics of earlier missionary advance: Douala was the prime focus of attention, particularly when it became the base of the PEMS headquarters in 1917. Away from the coast the intensity of pastoral presence and guidance decreased. All the same, itinerant local clergy maintained a vital level of contact with more remote Christian communities which manifested themselves as pillars of survival and growth. Before the arrival of the PEMS, Duala congregations of the BM relied on Ekolo, Kuo and Modi Din to sustain and reinforce loyalty among their adherents. Rohde viewed their position as a kind of shield against Baptists and Catholics.[72] As ordained pastors they enjoyed the exclusive right to offer the sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper). They conferred elements of Christian identity, defined by the catechism, preaching, exegesis and liturgy taught and practised in BM circles, upon supplicants.

Taking into account these three pastors' strategic importance during this critical period for the missionary enterprise, Rohde, intent on strengthening their support base, remarked:

> The watchword of my staff of teachers is: No more seminary educated teachers for our work, they only hinder and ruin it; – I would not say that much, but: no more unconverted teachers who do not know anything about a true conversion, nor nothing about the main object of the Christian Mission, viz. to save soals (sic) and to teach them to live and work for Christ.[73]

It was a question of reinvigorating the spirit which, as Andreas Etia had earlier stated, was challenged by resignation. In the same vein Rohde noted that Bonaku's outstations were suffering from indifference. The viewpoint was ostensibly spreading that God's work had collapsed after the missionaries left. Thus there was no point in seeking salvation as well as being taught and baptised.[74] In order to stem this tide of decline, teacher-catechists and elders, the congregational delegates, were occasionally drawn together for reunions. Such gatherings could assemble 50-60 participants. Their aim was to consolidate fellowship and reiterate the essential ways of approaching Christian faith, particularly when dealing with new adherents. Rohde set out the following priorities for the latter: First, they were to be instructed how to pray to Christ and communicate with God. Second, they should learn to listen to and read the Word of God earnestly by attending church service regularly. Third, they should set an example of good behaviour. Fourth, they should work for their saviour

[71] The Christian spirit among the Bakweri on the lower slopes of Mt. Cameroon appears to have been particularly low due to the rumours of the First World War and the rough treatment of indigenes by British troops. BMCA E-4,1.32, G. Lorch, An das werte Komitee der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft in Basel, Korntal, 6 February 1915, p. 1; Bericht des Missionars Christlieb Schmidt von Buea, Singen, 20 January 1915, pp. 1ff.
[72] BMCA E-4,3.14, R. Rohde to W. Oettli, Buea, 27 July 1915, p. 4.
[73] BMCA E-4,4.16, R. Rohde to W. Oettli, Soppo, Buea, 17 March 1917.
[74] BMCA E-4,3.14, R. Rohde to W. Oettli, Buea, 27 July 1915, p. 5.

by confessing their faith to others and inviting them to the Lord Jesus. Fifth, they should visit the sick and needy. Sixth, they should volunteer to pay church contributions.[75] Rohde thus demonstrated how appropriate guidelines sought to combine the introspective element of Christian devotion with evangelistic zeal, embedded in the ideals of the Good Samaritan, redemption and forgiveness.

Hatching the egg of a new convert led on to the complex test of time and commitment which depended on a church structure through which to operate. The ranks of indigenous clergy constituted the administrative hierarchy in the absence of European missionaries. African agents in the Douala district as elsewhere were paid from the newly established local church treasury. Despite existing salary scales, money matters were often reason for suspicion or dispute. African church workers were clearly keen on proving their innocence as in the case of Kuo who renounced his salary for some time so as to deflect allegations directed at him for conducting baptisms to make extra money.[76] It was also reported that some teachers had raised the price of school books to top up their wages.[77] Such incidents probably occurred more frequently than was officially disclosed. This assumption is based on the notion that African agents who had previously pursued their duties under the BM's tight system of control were exposed to the suddenness of autonomy in individual ways.

As hinted above, teacher-catechists' salaries were at stake due to the withdrawal of BM funds. Occasional mention of devotees who decided to commit themselves to God's cause either with or without a salary leaves room for doubt. Notably, such selflessness does not override the widely held opinion that rising costs had increased the necessity of monetary sources of income in addition to the produce derived from subsistence economy.[78] Modi Din's list of problems affecting the church in 1916 is representative of a lasting state of instability. He mentioned the scarcity of employment, which prevented Christians from paying their church contributions regularly, scarcity of food, an increasing crime rate and rising prices 'owing to the war which has spoilt everything.'[79]

Monetary and materialistic prosperity represented a stark counterweight to spirituality, humility and commitment of Christian teachings and values. Yet the formula was similar to that of Modi Din's regarding "pagan" circles where sacrifices were performed in honour of ancestors. It was frequently held, as K. Koloto, Headmaster of the BM school in Tiko, complained to F. Lutz in 1923, that the *Basango Bapenza*, the new masters of the PEMS, were extracting money everywhere.[80] Christians were continuously urged to submit regular church contributions and weekly offerings, thus requiring a similar form of sacrifice. Such sacrifices underwent a phase of devaluation with negative repercussions on the church

[75] Ibid., p. 6f.
[76] Ibid., p. 7.
[77] Ibid., p. 6.
[78] Teacher-catechists were often catered for by the villagers where they were posted. See Chapter 6, p. 187.
[79] BMCA E-4,4.2, Transcript of a Report by Pastor Modi Din about the work of God at Njonjo, New Bell, Duala, in the year 1916, p. 1. (Translation from Duala)
[80] BMCA E-4,4.9, K. M. Koloto to F. Lutz, 8 January 1923, p. 1.

treasury and teacher-catechists' remunerations. Rohde described how money was used and converted during the period of transition throughout the war years. Commenting on the value of church offerings, he explained:

> For a better understanding I wish to add that we have here a total amount of 800-1000 German Marks in nickel coins of 5, 10 and 20 Pfennige which were offered during church services at the beginning of the war, especially during the first 2-3 years. However, in terms of their currency exchange value and in trade they [the coins] weren't worth anything in coastal areas, only in the hinterland where the negroes are tougher, more conservative; but even there they weren't considered in terms of their real value. Hausa brokers who came to the coast bought them for 5 pence when the silver Mark was perhaps worth 8 or 9 pence, i.e. they would offer 5 pence for 100 Pfennige worth of nickel coins.... Thus, who could take it [the German Mark] to the hinterland himself, received the full [correct] amount in exchange because it was used to buy market goods.[81]

The reorganisation of church leadership and funds during the First World War was rooted in an experimental approach that tended to foster competition between the church workers. Rohde found African teacher-catechists he dealt with unreliable with few exceptions.[82]

As in Douala, Rohde convened meetings with the local personnel and elders in Buea to discuss matters arising from outstations along with new plans. Ekese used this platform to launch an interesting initiative entailing the necessity for a practical approach to the spread of Christianity: 'Litumbe [Ekese] thought it insufficient for them, the teachers, to pay visits to the sick and pray for them; instead, we or the teachers should also be instructed on the use of medicine so that the people would gain confidence in us Basler.'[83] Confidence was a key term for the uprooted BM movement; it represented an asset for Christian affiliation that had to be reinstated in the course of turning the BM enterprise into an African venture.

1.3 'Mission without Missionaries' in British Southern Cameroons

While the coastal zone between Douala and Victoria, including Buea, received much attention and adherence to Christian faith saw a veritable boom of growth,[84] the northern interior was virtually left to itself. Profound concern for this was expressed by Modi Din following his return from exile in 1916.[85] On the one hand, the destitute state of Christian congregations in Douala alarmed him; on the other, he was just as worried as Rohde about the abandoned communities in the interior: Bagam, Bali and Bamum in the Grassfields as well as Essing, Ndogbea and Sakbayeme in the area stretching southwards from the mouth of the Dibamba River towards the Sanaga and beyond. But once he had been acquitted and

[81] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 16 April 1920, pp. 5f.
[82] BMCA E-4,3.1, R. Rohde to Family Hecklinger, Great Soppo, Buea, 16 July 1917.
[83] Ibid. (My translation)
[84] See ibid., where Rohde recalls an explosive growth of Christianity in late 1915. He mentions several mass-baptism ceremonies, two of which involved over 100 candidates each in Bota and Victoria respectively. He counted 1268 Christians in Buea and Victoria and 112 in Bombe at that time.
[85] BMCA E-4,3.1, Pastor Modi Din to Fritz Lutz, Douala - New Bell, 3 August 1916.

returned to his station in Douala, he was met by a spirit of reserve among the 'local tribal elders' who invoked:

> Sango Pastor Din: Most thankful we are to God that He has saved you out of such an immense distress which was brought over you and as you have returned we have much joy. Moreso, as you are known to be very handy in leading God's work well.
> Now so, if you want to carry on your work, then we would have (sic) you not to do it in the name of the Basel Mission, because the Europeans of Basel did us bad, so bad that we of the whole of our land said in a gathering we had in 1913: We must not join ourselves with such people of God who do not help us, and that's why we would like you not to do your work in the name of the Basel Mission amongst us. We have several reasons for this, beginning with the trouble of the removal from our tribal land until the time of the commencement of the war.[86]

Modi Din responded to this view which reflected the mood during the earliest phase of the War by adopting a firm pro-BM stance. He was supported by the resilient congregation of New Bell, Douala, and assigned to leave Douala and the south to Ekolo and Kuo and travel further afield to the 'bereft mission places' in the Grassfields. His position was reaffirmed on 31 December 1916 following a celebration of baptisms and confirmations. The tide of support culminated in an announcement by the prominent church elder David Mandese Bell to provide for his maintenance and travels to remote areas of the mission field.[87]

Modi Din went down as an untiring optimist who did not bow down before hazardous conditions or indifference encountered in numerous congregations. His was the motto of the well-attended missionary conference held in Bonaku in 1919: 'We are surviving and will continue to survive.'[88] The crux of his message and key for admission to the Lord's Supper, derived from a tour to Mangamba and neighbouring Fiko on the River Wouri, was unequivocal: 'But everybody felt animated so that it was easy for us to talk with the people admonishing them to live real godly lives in truth and all indurance (sic) as it behoves all who are Christians.'[89] Mass-baptisms following this kind of admonition became the order of the day when Modi Din visited remote outstations. Such events could feature anything between 15 and 235 baptisms.[90] Although Bärtschi expressed admiration for Modi Din's most spectacular mass-baptism which took place in the absence of Europeans, the general tenor was more critical. Reflecting on what could be gained from the growing number of inquirers, C. Frey of the PEMS wrote: 'figures for statistical purposes, not much more.'[91]

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[86] BMCA E-4,4.2, Some passages out of Pastor Modi's Report, Douala, 29 February 1916, p. 1.
[87] BMCA E-4,4.2, Report by Pastor Modi Din, New Bell, Duala, 1916, p. 5. (Translated from Duala)
[88] BMCA E-4,4.2, J. Modi Din to Vöhringer, Douala, 5 May 1919.
[89] BMCA E-4,4.2, Report by Pastor Modi. His visit to Mangamba on the 4th of January 1917, Soppo, Buea, 5 March 1917, p. 1. (Translated from Duala)
[90] The latter figure, 235, is by far the highest. It was recorded by Modi Din on a trip to the Grassfields in 1920. See BMCA E-4,7.7, Extract from a report by Fr. Bärtschi, Ndounge, 11 November 1920.
[91] BMCA E-4,7.122, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 8 August 1921, p. 4; see BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division, Mamfe, 16 April 1923, p. 3. Rutherfoord claimed PEMS pastors estimated 'progress solely by the numbers of converts.'

BM QS-30.023.0047, photographer unknown, "Pastor Modi Din, Cameroon, in Basel, 1928/929." 1928.

Modi Din and Ekese prided themselves of statistical growth. This should not, however, overshadow the deeper experiences and meaning of their encounters. Modi Din exclaimed in 1919: 'The participation in church services is immense, and it can be considered a kind of awakening. The entire mission areas have been made accessible to God's Word with the exception of Bali.'[92] Summing up his visit to Southern Cameroons in 1924, P. Dieterle of the PEMS concurred: 'The Gospel represents...a great liberation.... The light that was brought to the villages by pupils of the mission schools during the War has flooded the country, and we are experiencing an enormous mass-movement from everywhere towards this light. A real *mouvement indigène* in a positive sense.'[93]

Modi Din's conviction for the pursuit of the divine commission is reflected in the way he thought the Gospel was understood by the indigenes:

> I often ask myself the same question. But I know one thing: These Christians can see the fruits of their faith. They are prepared for anything for God's sake and suffer frequent persecution because of their faith. Chiefs all despise Christians because they believe their position of power could be undermined by Christianity.... Consequently, many Christians have to accept humiliation while standing firm.... Another inidication of their faith is joy. All these songs, all this drumming, it's the expression of their joy about the Gospel.'[94]

Modi Din's sceptical opinion of the chiefs' positions towards Christianity appears in the same light as accounts of the situation in and around Sakbayeme at the beginning of the war.[95] He tended to project the much more volatile conditions of chieftaincy prevailing in the southern region onto all areas, including the chiefdoms of the Grassfields. An image is created of weak, unreliable chiefs whose inclinations were more susceptible to cults such as the *Mengu* cult in the Balimba area between Douala and Lobetal in the southern mission field.[96] Modi Din did not consider himself subjected to chiefly authority and esteem when urged to comply with special requests. On one occasion, Bärtschi reported, an unnamed Fon in the Grassfields asked the pastor to baptise all his wives. When Modi Din refused, the Fon turned against him and threatened to mobilise the local military garrison. As Modi Din remained unimpressed and infuriated the Fon, the episode ended as could be expected with God's servant keeping the upper hand and the angry chief eventually giving way.[97] This is an example of the remarkable sense of empowerment that transpires from accounts

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[92] BMCA E-4,4.2, J. Modi Din to Vöhringer, Douala, 5 May 1919. (My translation)
[93] BMCA E-4,7.69, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala 7 June 1924, p. 2. (My translation)
[94] Ibid. (My translation)
[95] For more detail, see BMCA E-4,2.63, Jakob Stutz, Die Basler Mission in Kamerun. Unsere Gehilfen, Christen und Schüler während der Kriegszeit, Sakbayeme, n.d., and BMCA E-4,2.64, Paul Scheibler, Bericht über das Verhalten von Christen und Heiden während der Kriegszeit in Sakbayeme, Birsfelden, 5 July 1916.
[96] Balimba presumably corresponds to the region Paul Scheibler calls Balimbi. The *Mengu* cult consisted in offering sacrifices of fish and other produce to ancestral spirits under the command of a 'sorcerer'. Modi Din portrayed the *liaison* between 'sorcerers' and chiefs as a key obstacle to the advance of Christianity. BMCA E-4,4.2, Transcript of Pastor Modi's visit to Lobetal in company with Pastor Kuo Isedu, 11 January 1917.
[97] BMCA E-4,7.7, Extract from a report by F. Bärtschi, Ndounge, 11 November 1920.

by and about Modi Din. His approach to chiefs, however, was widely challenged, notably when it came to the Grassfields which proved to be extremely promising in the opinion of numerous European missionaries. Yet there was one important exception: Bali, the pioneer mission station of the BM in the Grassfields. This will be examined more closely below.[98]

Despite all criticism, Modi Din is portrayed as a popular personality whose 'unselfish and valuable services are still remembered by many.'[99] Prior to the return of the European missionaries from 1925 he arguably assumed the most prominent role among the clergy in charge of dealing with the abandoned congregations in British Southern Cameroons. The European staff in the ranks of the PEMS merely paid occasional visits from their various stations on the other side of the colonial boundary in the francophone zone.[100] So long as Modi Din enjoyed the status of the only itinerant pastor frequently travelling throughout the BM's field, his contacts, achievements and views were deemed to be invaluable. He did, however, fall into disrespect with some of the PEMS missionaries for spearheading a *mouvement indigène*, coupled, it has been suggested, with a strong drive towards secession and autonomy.[101] By then the important chapter on his contribution to the formation of the BM's Christian movement in Cameroon had been closed.

The actual heir to the BM's operations and authority was Johannes Litumbe Ekese, the first ordained African BM pastor in British Southern Cameroons. Ekese was born of non-Christian parents in c. 1880 near the Bakweri village Likumbe. His father is remembered as a warrior and a war-monger by Ekese's fourth son, Mola Njoh Litumbe.[102] He allegedly provoked inter-village strife by fomenting trouble in Likumbe on market days and inciting neighbouring inhabitants of Buea and Bokwoango to take up arms against each other. On one of his escapades he reportedly received a severe blow on the head and died soon after, leaving behind a five-year old orphan, Ekese. Ekese became an outsider since he lacked the protection of his father and an introduction and initiation into local customs including the *Male* and *Nganya* cults.[103] Upon the arrival of missionaries from overseas in 1896, he was the only one who was sent to vernacular school by his kin. Meanwhile his contemporaries remained in the village. He was more convinced by what missionaries exposed to him than by local traditional cults, which drove a wedge between him and his relatives. Thus it was by accident that Ekese started education. On completing school in 1903, 'he started life as a catechist,' a teacher-catechist, serving in his area of origin.[104]

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[98] For other examples of contest and controversy, see Chapter 4, pp. 123-131.
[99] W. Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 57.
[100] These were F. Bärtschi, P. Dieterle, C. Frey and R. Maître, stationed between Douala and Foumban.
[101] Jaap van Slageren.. *Les Origines de L'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun*. Yaounde: Editions Clé, 1972, pp. 187-188.
[102] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.
[103] Ibid. Mola Njoh Litumbe considers this form of initiation into manhood an essential sequence in the process of becoming a fully acknowledged member of society among the Bakweri at the time.
[104] See ibid. and W. Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 53. Keller notes that Ekese found employment at the Sachsenhof plantation before receiving an offer to participate in missionary activities. Conversely, Njoh Litumbe recalls his father telling him that he had been dedicated to Christianity right from the beginning of his career. I follow Litumbe's observation here, albeit in inverted commas.

BMCA E-30.92.102, photographer unknown, "Johannes Litumbe Ekese, pastor of the congregations of the [Mission] Station in Buea, British Cameroons."

After the onset of the First World War Ekese was identified as the most intelligent – or at least most experienced and adept – candidate for ordination and the eventual supervision of the mission field. What followed on 9 April 1917 was an emergency ordination, given that Ekese had not undergone the required theological training. Rohde's move to appoint Ekese his deputy was well-timed, for he left Cameroon six months later in October 1917. How did Ekese go about his duties? Did he prove the right person to put in charge? Like Modi Din, he turned out to be an enormously devoted personality. He was, however, more controversial than his Duala counterpart who managed to conclude his term as an itinerant pastor in Southern Cameroons with a blank sheet. Ekese's was not the perceived success story of Modi Din's, though perhaps one of more resilience and realism.

Of the two major tours that Ekese undertook in 1918 and 1919, the latter had a decisive impact upon his career.[105] Before embarking on extensive treks further inland, he resolved to ordain another pastor, Josef Mukutu Mukongo,[106] in early 1918 to supervise activities in the coastal area during his absence. Mukongo, who accompanied Ekese on his second trip as far as Ikiliwindi before returning through Balondo country, died of influenza in 1920. Ekese's two circuits were intended to follow similar routes, starting in opposite directions. His second itinerary ran from Buea – Muyuka – Banga Bakundu – Kumba – Ikiliwindi – Kombone – Manyemen – Nguti – Eyang – Bachuo Ntai – Bisongabe (Besongabang) – Etuku – Widekum – Bali.[107] In normal circumstances Ekese would have continued through Bamenda to Santa in the Grassfields, then southwards through French territory to Douala before returning to Buea. An alternative was to branch off to Nyasoso in Bakossi which was otherwise circumvented. Nyasoso was more easily accessed from Ndounge where the PEMS had a station.[108] But Ekese's plan was forcibly altered about halfway.

From the onset, he met favourable conditions on the way. He was not pressured to offer gifts ('dashes') or any payment for requested services as he had been obliged to do on his previous trip. This is an interesting detail as contemporary travellers would be expected to show a gesture of reciprocation for various kinds of service. Evidently, this custom did not change during the short period between Ekese's first and second tours. Rather, Ekese was probably recognised as a reputable churchman on his second trip, attracting more support from the villages he passed through.[109] Should it be assumed, then, that Ekese was received more openly on account of a widespread rapid increase of Christian adherence or at least openness towards Christianity? Ekese, in contrast to Modi Din, tended to be more modest

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[105] For an account of the first tour, see W. Keller. *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

[106] W. Keller mentions Josef Mukutu Mukongo (*ibid.*, p. 54), whereas both R. Rohde and J. L. Ekese refer to Isaak Mukongo. It is not clear whether these are two versions of the same person or not. Following the contexts in which his name appears, all three authors seem to point at the same Mukongo. See BMCA E-4,3.1, R. Rohde to Family Hecklinger, Great Soppo, 16 July 1917 and BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 4 August 1919.

[107] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 4 August 1919.

[108] See BMCA E-4,7.27, Fr. Bärtschi, Rapport de Station, Ndoungué, 1 April 1922.

[109] Njoh Litumbe raises this point with regard to the shorter trips his father undertook later on. Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.

about the outcome of evangelisation tours. His accounts reveal a fairly well-manned string of outstations stretching through the Forest area to the western fringe of the Grassfields.[110] Considering the lack of other hints, a rising level of sympathy for the Christian cause can merely be inferred from the generally positive note in the first part of his report.

Once he reached Bali the tide changed dramatically against him. He was not allowed to continue beyond Bamedig (Meta') where he was received by Johannes Ashili, the BM's leading Grassfield catechist. After a ceremony involving the baptism of 60 candidates and preaching to a crowd of about 600, he returned to Buea and recalled: 'Only in Bale [Bali] I was absend (sic) to preach, for their ungodly Chief instructed his villages that he will not hear any word speaking about Godspell.'[111] Indeed, this was supposed to be his last trip to the Grassfields as he was denounced by the royal court in Bali, the reasons being unclear. Two strands can be detected from the evidence. On the one hand, as Ekese himself pointed out, he faced serious accusations, the contents of which are blurred. The account suggests that Chief Fonyonga was involved in a harsh dispute with BM teachers. Consequently, he seems to have adopted a vindictive stance towards his contenders and reported them to the D.O. in Bamenda. The latter, who was perturbed by the case, decided to resolve it in favour of the Fon.[112] Upon learning that Ekese was on his way to Bali, the D.O. at Ossidinge was alerted to charge him with a grievous offense if he proceeded to the Grassfields without permission, which he did. When Ekese was summoned by the Resident in Buea, he feared he would end up in prison. However, he was simply admonished to refrain from travelling to Bali via Kumba and Ossidinge until the missionaries returned from Europe. He clearly had no choice but to follow this instruction.

On the other hand, the British colonial authorities might have been intent on curbing Ekese's influence because of his strong affiliations with the Germans. Njoh Litumbe adds that his father believed in the Germans as they represented the only contact he had with the West. Whether Ekese was therefore considered a subversive element or a spy cannot be confirmed. The likeliness of an element of truth, Njoh Litumbe stresses, ought to be taken in a relative sense: 'Ekese somehow had to be suspected by virtue of his leanings towards the German culture which he probably sought to maintain once the Germans had been repatriated.'[113] The point was reiterated later on by Mission Inspector W. Oettli when he signalled to Ekese that he should avoid practising German songs with his congregations as this would certainly 'not meet with the approval of the government.'[114]

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[110] Ekese gave a total of 46 teacher-catechists posted between Buea and Bali in 1919. See BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 6 August 1919 and BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, 15 November 1919.

[111] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 17 February 1920.

[112] There is merely a clear indication of one similar case involving Thomas Fokum, presumably a BM teacher, who engaged in a dispute with the 'King' of Bamenda and was subsequently sentenced to six months in prison. See BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 4 August 1919. (Translated from Duala)

[113] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.

[114] BMCA E-4,4.1, W. Oettli to J. L. Ekese, Basel, 21 February 1922.

Ekese's sphere was subsequently confined to the district of Buea with few exceptions. In 1921 he obtained authorisation to visit congregations in Kumba, Nyasoso, Ossidinge and Victoria districts in line with an agreement between PEMS Director Allégret and the Resident.[115] When he was refused a travel permit the year before, he had invited Christians from Kumba to bring catechumens to see him in Membea. They accepted this option and apparently 'often' walked for several days from Kumba to receive baptism and the Lord's Supper.[116] Later in 1921, Ekese was again hoping to return to the Grassfields.[117] However, he appears not to have reached that destination again before 1925. The task of the itinerant pastor thus became the sole responsibility of Modi Din under the directives of the PEMS.

Finally, in 1923, Allégret informed Ekese that the PEMS was to extend her wing over the districts of Buea, Kumba and Victoria. A few months later Modi Din and Maître of the PEMS paid a visit in Buea to notify Ekese that they had been put in charge of Kumba and Victoria districts. Ekese retorted: 'Is it right Sir, that a house-master can breach his house rooms for stranger[s] without first applying [for] the keys from his servant?'[118] Deprived of the authority of an itinerant pastor, Ekese was left frustrated and isolated. Not only did he receive no news from BM quarters, but replies to his correspondence with the PEMS were equally meagre, short of – at least until 1920 – his contact with Modi Din.[119]

1.3.1 Christianity at the Grassroots: Emerging Strongholds

It cannot do justice to the many actors involved in evangelism to reduce local initiatives to Ekese and Modi Din. What occurred at the grassroots of individual congregations also deserves attention. The vitality of local self-sufficiency in the fragmented BM community was recorded by W. Lehman and J. McNeil who headed a commission of the International Mission Council. They were impressed by the Grassfields, notably by Meta' Christians:

> These people had seen little of a missionary since the Germans left and many were the product of these self-appointed evangelists as they preached and taught these last few years almost alone....
> They gave us an enthusiastic welcome as the seven evangelists and their congregations came out to meet us. The first company must have come at least four miles singing their greeting to the tinkling of a bell and the waving of palm branches.... We were a long procession as we came to the King Place in the town of Bamendu [Bamedu]. The afternoon meeting was attended by at least 1,000 people, mostly young people and children and the King himself was there. At the communion afterwards, 315 partook of the elements.... That center has seven evangelists and the other centers 2 each. The head evangelist is the son of the King and all of them seem to be earnest young fellows, some of whom have had good training under the German missionaries.[120]

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[115] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 16 May 1921.
[116] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 16 April 1920.
[117] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 15 August 1921.
[118] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 29 May 1923.
[119] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 16 April 1920.
[120] BMCA E-4,6, W. Lehman and J. McNeil, Report of Commission to British Cameroun, (extract from West Africa Missions Minutes - November 1922), p. 1.

BMCA E-30.86.206, J. W. Zürcher, "Rev. Ashili." 1932/1945.

The 'head evangelist' mentioned in the report is Johannes Ashili who deserves special attention in the annals of indigenous evangelisation in the Grassfields during and after the First World War.[121] Little can be deduced from various reports and correspondence about his biography. His origins from a royal lineage suggest that he was a figure to reckon with in Christian and non-Christian circles of the Meta'. His position exemplifies what seemed still to be a rare, but gradually evolving strategy among Grassfield rulers to appoint one of their sons as a candidate for thorough Christian education and theological training. He was ordained later on once the European missionaries had returned. The main point here is that he headed perhaps the most promising experiment in local missionisation which produced a leading Christian stronghold within the realm of emerging *mouvements indigènes*.

It must be noted that this wave of Christian popularity and affiliation rose on the fringes of Bali rule. By contrast, accounts on Bali proper unanimously reported deep regret about the deteriorating state of this former Christian flagship. The decline is surprising, given the good relations between the BM and the chiefdom of Bali from1903-1914 thanks to Chief Fonyonga's support. His disposition towards the BM changed radically after the outbreak of the First World War. This might have been connected with the occupation of Bali by British forces on 21 October 1915. According to W. Oettli, the missionaries had enjoyed an *entente cordiale* with Fonyonga two months earlier.[122] Before the war he had virtually occupied the position of an overlord among Bali's neighbours. His grip loosened during the war owing to the successful struggles for emancipation staged by the oppressed. In C. Frey's opinion, Christian advance in the Meta' area resulted from this challenge to strong, centralised power: 'Their leaders are mostly Christians. The British administration appears to express her sympathy for this attempt [to decentralise power around Bali]. This purely political affair would not have to interest us in the least if the rupture were not cutting right through our church.'[123]

To Ashili and the other Bameta Christians the question of an integral BM Church was presumably of lesser importance. Instead, the political climate suggests, what counted most was that the rapid rise of Christianity among the Bameta represented a powerful symbol of victory over Bali-Nyonga which was simultaneously witnessing a continuing decline of church affiliation. In 1924 P. Dieterle reported that everything had come to a standstill in Bali. He added that the Bali as well as their chief continued to be much disliked by their neighbours because of their brutality. He concluded by asking whether it would not be wiser to transfer the remains of the BM's mission station to Meta'.[124] The Meta' Christian conquest appeared to be very close to completion. Caught up in far-reaching diplomatic

[121] Johannes Ashili is commonly remembered as an early pillar of the BM Church. He is frequently mentioned in the interviews I conducted with informants from the North West Province (Grassfields).
[122] BMCA E-4,3.3, W. Oettli, An die Angehörigen der Basler Missionare im Grasland von Kamerun, Basel, 5 August 1915.
[123] BMCA E-4,7.122, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 8 August 1921, p. 4.
[124] BMCA E-4,7.69, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 7 June 1924, p. 2.

struggles, Bali constituted the epicentre of a movement that was beginning to diffuse into the numerous more remote localities of the Grassfields. This process is illustrated in the account of another evangelist, Johannes Nkösü from Babanki,[125] a chiefdom lying further to the east between Bambili and the large chiefdom of Kom in the heart of the Grassfields.

Like Ashili, Nkösü lives on in contemporary accounts as a legendary Christian pioneer. It appears that his initial contact with the BM occurred in 1912, the very year a first church house was built in Babanki.[126] He was one of five children who were selected for education in Bali by the traditional authorities at the request of J. Keller. This pioneer batch of pupils was neither picked from the royal lineage nor from the offspring of king-makers or other dignitaries. However, the strategy was obviously altered at a later stage as the case of Fon Newangse suggests. According to Jonas Tumban, Newangse decided himself to undertake the catechist's training course in Bali.[127] Already during the earlier phase of contact with the BM, Nkösü recalled, the Fon's support was instrumental to evangelisation once he had moved his dwellings 'on the high mountain' down into the valley. Nkösü was one of three students who were obliged to return to Babanki from Bali after the beginning of the First World War. Others dispersed in search of employment. Nkösü taught his fellow villagers and drew together a core group of catechumens, albeit without establishing congregational structures. What precipitated a firmer ecclesiastical set-up along Protestant lines was the arrival of Catholic missionaries who, in Nkösü's view, posed a major threat.[128] He recounts that they went to the Fon and informed him that the 'Basler Europeans' had disappeared for good. In an attempt to prevent them from 'sheep-stealing' Nkösü went to Dschang in search of a PEMS missionary who would come to Babanki to baptise the first Christians of the village. The ceremony took place on 21 June 1921.[129] Similarly to Meta', Babanki subsequently became one of the BM's new Christian strongholds in the Grassfields.

Both examples reveal not simply the key roles of local agents but rather the outcome of a collective effort. Selected to promote the missionisation process in their respective places of origin, Ashili and Nkösü became choreographers of a larger cast. The latter included assistants who were chiefly responsible for laying down the groundwork of evangelisation under proper guidance and in conducive circumstances. At this juncture of the principally self-propelling missionary project, there appears to have been no clear distinction between assistants and catechists. Once again, bearing in mind the controversies surrounding Bali, the disposition of traditional authorities was critical for evangelism. Unwittingly, this initial

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[125] Big Babanki is also known as Kedjom Keku, constituting one of two separately ruled segments of an earlier larger chiefdom.
[126] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[127] Ibid.
[128] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. Nkösü to J. Keller, Babanki, 21 December 1921, p. 1. (Translation from Mungaka; this letter has mistakenly been classified under correspondence relating to J. L. Ekese in the BMCA)
[129] Ibid., p. 2 and Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999. Interestingly, Rev. Tumban, who otherwise remains close to Nkösü's written narrative, does not mention the 'Catholic threat'. Instead, his account suggests that Nkösü travelled to Nkongsamba in order to discuss the 'general situation' with PEMS representatives.

process of religious encounters charted the itinerary for broader social transformation, for African mission workers themselves became important and influential agents who could challenge royal authority.[130] Irrespective of the fact that they did not feature prominently in the BM's hierarchy, they made up a remarkable force by virtue of their acquired skills and levels of brokerage. Thus Christian "native" agents at once depended on being sanctioned by those in power and could represent a considerable source of power themselves.

1.3.2 Between Quiet Reverence and Evangelistic Bolshevism: Perceptions of the 'Mission without Missionaries'

With the exception of Bali it was unanimously agreed that the BM Christian movement was on the advance in the western Grassfields during the first half of the 1920s. Glancing at the other areas, the views differed, especially with regard to the Mamfe district. Lehman and O'Neil continued their journey from the Grassfields westwards and encountered what they deemed to be an 'especially interesting and impressive' mission field in Mamfe 'in that since the war no missionary has visited the people.'[131] The work had evolved uniquely from African initiatives as the BM failed to lay a proper foundation between the opening of a station in Besongabang in 1912 and the repatriation of F. Stolz on 3 January 1915. A movement with three evangelists and 41 assistants emerged. Among the leaders, Immanuel Nsom Ashu seemed 'a very exceptional man,' while Manfred Ndifo displayed 'the finest spirit of quiet and reverent attention' among catechumens and Christians.[132]

Concluding from the commission's report, Mamfe district appears to have maintained the highest standards in the mission field. But this opinion is contrasted by the findings of J. W. C. Rutherfoord, the D.O. in Mamfe Division, in 1923. His survey suggested that the war and immediate post-war years had produced a rudimentary, disruptive and anarchic form of Protestantism. This, Rutherfoord added, was a clear break with the pre-war period:

> At the outbreak of war therefore the BM was a centralized organisation confined to a limited area strictly controlled and supervised, very exclusive and making a high standard of moral and intellectual education the test of admission.... Lapse of time, prestige and exclusiveness were the force employed by the BM against the passive conversion of the old social order.[133]

Rutherfoord viewed the BM's policy as a strategic masterstroke. In his mind it paralleled the exclusiveness of secret societies, offering a similar regulatory alternative as opposed to revolutionising society through more violent interventions. He therefore regretted that the

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[130] Events surrounding the early years (1919-26) of the Catholic Church in Njinikom provide a useful case study to underscore this point. See Jacqueline de Vries. *Catholic Mission, Colonial Government and Indigenous Response in Kom (Cameroon)*. Leiden: Afican Studies Centre, 1998, pp. 34-66. On tension between teachers of the Roman Catholic Mission and the Fon of Banso, see BNA Sd/1921/1, no. 487/21, Memorandum from the D.O., Bamenda, to the Resident, Buea, 20 December 1921.

[131] BMCA E-4,6, Report of Commission to British Cameroun, p. 2.

[132] Ibid.

[133] BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, D.O., Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division, Mamfe, 16 April 1923, pp. 2f.

BM's approach had fallen into oblivion since the spontaneous revival of Christianity from 1916 onwards. At the core of his criticism lay the problem of indiscriminate mass-baptism which was 'a serious blow to Christian prestige and the local future of Christianity.'[134] He accused Ekese and Modi Din of enhancing the state of deterioration. He quoted Ekese as having baptised ten 'popular preachers' in 1917 who replaced the qualified Duala teacher-catechists when they left during the early phase of the war. The next years saw a baptismal boom, notably under the auspices of Modi Din. As a result, tension rose between teacher-catechists and village elders. It was argued that youths were being drawn away from family and wider social bonds through Christianity, breaching respect for traditional authority.

Ekese and Modi Din were among those who had learnt to derive a good measure of authority from their positions. The fact that this was not much appreciated by officials like Rutherfoord is understandable because they were not contributing to creating or stabilising a colonial social order. On the contrary, they probed – perhaps unwittingly – hotbeds of transformation in African societies. There was every reason for British officials other than Rutherfoord to display deep concern.[135] Resident F. W. Ruxton expressed his view to the Secretary of the Southern Provinces, Lagos, that unchecked indigenous organisation could develop into the type of Ethiopianism that had emerged in South Africa and Nyasaland.[136] In another letter, to Rutherfoord, he wrote more moderately of Modi Din: 'He is not very wise but there is no touch of Ethiopianism about him and sympathetically treated, he may well render service to the administration.'[137] Control was essential, and much of what bore the imprint of the BM's legacy was out of control in the eyes of British colonial officials.

Ekese and Modi Din were not only scrutinised by the British but were also exposed to criticism from mission quarters. Modi Din usually got away with mild reproaches, though the Catholics discredited him for representing the Protestant movement as a 'madman'.[138] Ekese received more severe blows. In Dieterle's words, 'He certainly has not attained the level of the other pastors.... He is one of those many teachers around here who believes he is somebody and whose conceit testifies to minor intelligence.'[139] Ekese's relations with the PEMS deteriorated further when he decided to turn down an invitation by Modi Din to a mission feast in Victoria in 1924. Writing to W. Oettli, Dieterle said without reservation:

> I have told you several times in connection with Ekese that it almost appears impossible for me to acknowledge the man as a pastor. His money palavers have stripped him of the confidence of his community.... Furthermore, his authority has generally been undermined in numerous congregations. His work is very superficial, and he lacks spiritual strength.[140]

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[134] Ibid., p. 4.
[135] BNA Sd/1921/4, F. W. Ruxton to Elie Allégret (PEMS), Buea, 17 April 1924; Sd/1921/4, Extract from Provincial Annual Report, 1924, compiled by W. E. Hunt, Ag. Resident, Cameroons Province.
[136] BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120 c), F. W. Ruxton to The Secretary, Southern Provinces, Buea, n.d.
[137] BNA Sd/1921/4, F. W. Ruxton to the D. O., Mamfe, Buea, 1 September 1923.
[138] BMCA E-4,7.69, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 7 June 1924, p. 3.
[139] BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 15 September 1923, p. 3. (My translation)
[140] BMCA E-4,7.72, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 25 October 1924, pp. 1f. (My translation)

Dieterle proposed that Ekese should be substituted among the Bakweri, where he had exceeded the limits of his responsibilities, so as to receive further training. It was no secret that the rapport between the PEMS and Ekese had cooled down considerably since Modi Din was in charge of co-ordinating nearly the entire mission field in Southern Cameroons. Ekese received little assistance from the BM. Instead, Oettli urged him to maintain good contacts with the PEMS with a view to negotiations about the future of the BM Church.[141]

This speaks in favour of Ekese who persevered until the European missionaries of the BM returned. Despite his preoccupation with the many abandoned congregations further afield, his contributions could not remain narrowly focused on the wider dimension of an itinerant pastor's agenda. He was also involved in expanding and consolidating Christian communities among his own people, the Bakweri. He tried to supply the teacher-catechists with teaching materials and secure their wages. He repeatedly requested copies of the Old and New Testament, the Duala catechism, Duala hymnaries, and Christian correspondence books from the BM Home Board.[142] He included accessories for the Lord's Supper (wine, flour, communion vessels) and – given the economic hardship induced by the First World War and the repatriation of European missionaries – fundraising appeals. In 1919 he also sought Rohde's support, assuring him:

> You should just see the people who are working on the plantations of the Europeans. They place the Word of God before money.... They all thank God for granting you the wisdom to appoint us as pastors. If that had not happened, all our endeavours among the Bakwiri as well as in Bombe and Nyasoso would have been rendered futile.[143]

Even though antagonisms did arise between Ekese and Cameroon's colonial society of the early 1920s, he is fondly remembered as a clergyman who 'had a formidable, powerful personality' and 'who *actually* exercised authority.'[144] Recognised for his impartiality, he acted as a judge who settled local disputes. Njoh Litumbe recalls that his father resembled a D.O. as an 'all-purpose man, big in stature, known as *Sango Pastor,*' which also ties in with the multiple features ascribed to the colonial *jumbe* ("native" agent) in Tanzania.[145]

1.4 The Wind of Change: 'Churchianity' and Shifting Loyalties[146]

From what it appears, the task of fostering Christian coherence as envisaged by the BM was hampered by a spirit of 'churchianity' and shifting loyalties. 'Churchianity' relates to

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[141] BMCA E-4,4.1, W. Oettli to J. L. Ekese, Basel, 31 October 1923.
[142] The three main tools for teaching and evangelisation were the Duala catechism manual, the hymn book and the New Testament. See BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 10 November 1921.
[143] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 8 August 1919. (My translation). Further appeals for support appear in BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 6 August 1919; 3 October 1919; 1 September 1920; 16 May 1921; 10 November 1921; 15 April 1923; 21 February 1924.
[144] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.
[145] Ibid. On the role of the *jumbe,* see Marcia Wright. *German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891-1941: Lutherans and Moravians in the Southern Highlands*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 76.
[146] The terms 'churchianity' and 'shifting loyalties' emerged in the interviews I conducted with Mola Njoh Litumbe and in numerous informal discussions with Dr. Nicodemus Awasom respectively.

the divisions that ran along regional and interdenominational lines and were entrenched on the basis of ethnic and linguistic distinction. Mission church universality was contradicted by self-reliance in local congregations. Rutherfoord's 'spontaneous revival' of Protestant Christianity stirred social transformation through shifting loyalties. This occurred by dint of the BM's waning centralised structures and the fragmentation of the mission field.

1.4.1 Denominationalism and Vernacularisation

Apart from the itinerant African clergy, there was no form of overarching authority such as the directorate of the PEMS in the French sphere to co-ordinate the enterprise. Rather, individual congregations became quasi-self-reliant islands, each demonstrating its peculiar dynamics of survival, resilience and growth. In the early 1920s competition between the Native Baptists, the BM, the PEMS and Roman Catholic Mill Hill missionaries stiffened. The issue of 'belonging' to a specific brand of Christianity had already prompted Kuo to contemplate earlier in 1917 'whether these Masters [of the PEMS] are going to establish themselves with us for ever. For are we not and will we not remain the seed of the Basel Mission spiritually?'[147] The underlying idea is that turning to Christian faith was perceived as being tied to a single church or mission body through an initial and authentic affiliation.

This, however, was not a guarantee for loyalty as the rising concern about the expansion of Catholicism into Bakossi and Mamfe Divisions and into the Grassfields demonstrated. In 1923 Ekese repeatedly reported on BM congregations pressing for the return of 'their own' missionaries while threatening to let themselves be drawn into Catholicism, should their request remain unattended to.[148] His worries were echoed by Dieterle who explained to Inspector Oettli later on that year that Catholics used cunning strategies to win over BM Christians, for instance by boasting of their white missionaries.[149] Reiterating this point, K. Koloto suggested the only solution to counteract the presence of Catholics in the Bakossi area and the plantations was to rotate BM teacher-catechists on a six-monthly basis.[150] The frequent concern with Catholic expansionism in BM circles supports the view that it would become a key preoccupation in the context of inter-missionary competition from 1922.[151]

The language problem was aggravated by a widespread scarcity of published vernacular teaching and preaching manuals. The only way out until the re-introduction of missionary supervision, was to allow pupils at village "hedge schools" to be taught in their individual vernaculars. Grassroots vernacularisation, as opposed to the systematic spread of Duala and Mungaka which lay at the core of the BM's policy, also characterised church services and catechism classes. The emerging ecclesio-linguistic pattern met with support in PEMS

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[147] BMCA E-4,4.8, Isedu Kuo to W. Oettli, Douala, 25 March 1917, pp. 1f.
[148] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 5 April 1923 and 29 May 1923.
[149] BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 15 September 1923.
[150] BMCA E-4,4.9, K. M. Koloto to F. Lutz, 8 January 1923, p. 4.
[151] For more detail on the competition between the Roman Catholics and the BM, see Anthony Ndi. Op. cit., pp. 119ff. See also Chapter 3, p. 115.

circles as Robert's contribution at the annual missionary conference in Ndounge in 1924 partly reveals: 'Robert underscored that it is not our task to teach many pupils in French as he increasingly gained the impression that this would simply result in producing *des déclassés*.'[152] Thus, on the one hand, the particularistic trends of vernacularisation can be considered a vital feature of Africanising Christianity during the First World War and the post-war period until the mid-1920s. On the other hand, beyond feeding into and branding local forms of Christian identity, it stirred a quest for cultural self-assertion that opposed Christian fervour. The vernacularisation of Christianity provided a means of appropriating, penetrating and transforming cultural identities. Such avenues of transformation were not unanimously accepted. Here lay the problem of fusing Christianity with African beliefs.

1.4.2 Cultural Self-Assertion versus Christian Advance

Modi Din observed that non-Christians tended to prophesy: 'If people want prosperity as well as safety in their fields, they must return to the custom of old, viz. giving food to the spirits of ancesters (sic). If they fail to do that, they will have in 1917 a famine of food worse than what it was in 1916.'[153] This kind of threat fed into the propaganda of the spirit of secession and *liberté*, denoting the ideal of returning to a pre-Christian era. In the same vein, Heinrich Dibue, a catechist posted near Lobetal, enumerated traditional practices that remained pervasive in church circles in his area and elsewhere. They included the secret societies *Mungi*, *Mawum* and *Ko*, the soothsayers of the *Ngambi*, polygamy, the exchange of wives and the extensive commercialisation of talismans by Hausa traders.[154]

A sense of ordeal also transpires from the account of Koloto, who had returned to work among the Bakweri after several unsatisfactory years under the PEMS. The main difficulty surrounding the task at his new post in Mamu near Buea, he claimed, was the renewal of "pagan" customs. He highlighted two secret societies, the *Njo-Leozand* and the *Ngando*, both of which were ostensibly involved in dramatic atrocities.[155] While the victims of the *Njo-Leozand* were apparently torn into shreds and scattered about to imitate a leopard's feast, those of the *Ngando* were supposedly drowned in the rivers Mungo and Wouri. In Koloto's view, however, by far the worst enemy of the Gospel was magic, referred to as *Mala*, which translates into soothsayer. Both Christians and non-Christians were said to have been indiscriminately attracted to *Mala*, articulating common desires such as long life, happiness, children and wealth. Koloto added that *Mala* also represented a last resort for people seeking protection from much feared evil-doers.

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[152] BMCA E-4,7.66, P. Dieterle to P. Scheibler and F. Bärtschi, Douala, 15 February 1924, p. 1. (My translation). See also Marcia Wright. *Op. cit.*, p. 122 on the promotion of a synodical language and subsynodical vernaculars among Lutherans and Moravians in Tanzania.
[153] BMCA E-4,7.66, P. Dieterle to P. Scheibler and F. Bärtschi, Douala, 15 February 1924, pp. 1f.
[154] BMCA E-4,4.4, Heinrich Dibue to... (no addressee), Sang Mandeng Bajob, 24 February 1920.
[155] BMCA E-4,4.9, K. M. Koloto to F. Lutz, 8 January 1923, p. 2.

Concomitantly with the dualisms between good and evil in missionary narratives, such accounts show how African Christians revelled in their new faith. It served as an influential tool with which to advocate social reform. Dibue and Koloto were agents who understood their roles in stark contrast to articulations of cultural self-assertion that were tinged with an anti-Christian demeanour. This concern called for an agenda that was geared to defend their Christian adherence against seduction, temptation, fear and horror invoked through customary practices. They added their brush-strokes to the recurring image of martyrdom, notably among Christians who believed to be confronted with a "pagan" onslaught.

Besides offering alternative resorts for traditionalists and fortune-seekers in Christian circles, cultural self-assertion was occasionally intermingled with political undertones and erupted into instances of strife and persecution. The climate in Mamfe Division proved to be especially tense. On one occasion a complaint was lodged by Christians living between Kumba and Mamfe. They reported having been persecuted by bands of 'heathens', often led by chiefs, who destroyed church buildings in Tinkam, Akak, Eyang and Boku villages. Asked why they had not forwarded their complaints to the D.O., J. W. C. Rutherfoord, they explained their reluctance in terms of 'the misapprehension under which they were labouring.'[156] Thus they remained silent, believing that the colonial authorities were against them as they had been told by their chiefs. Such instances portray a weakened Christian community between Mamfe and Fontem in Lebialem Division. This was attributed to three influences: the popularity of the "juju" *Dingwa*, a new cult of 'immoral tendency' which claimed many followers among youths; the disappointment at vernacular "hedge school" education; and the widespread dislike of "the Mission" among the older generation.[157]

To whatever extent the BM Church appeared to be 'weakened', such opinions must be interpreted in the context of a temporary process of reorientation and assimilation. In the secluded region reaching from Mamfe to Bakossi, remnants of former BM congregations were prone to alter the experiment of Christian self-reliance by the day. Rutherfoord even went as far as pointing to the danger of locally organised Christianity turning into another "juju" as opposed to fostering a silent change of the old order of society.[158] Coming from a British colonial official, this perspective left its mark on future mission-state relations in favour of tightening missionary supervision. As concerns the leaders – teacher-catechists – of the potential "juju", though, Rutherfoord's view must not only have sounded as hostile as that of indigenous anti-Christian elements, but also largely misjudged. Indeed, the fact that the colonial administration initially benefited traditional authorities by granting them

[156] BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, Complaint by Christian Community, Ossidinge Division; 2. Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division by J. W. C. Rutherfoord, n.d.
[157] Further instances of persecution in Mamfe (Ossidinge) Division are reported in BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, Extract from Mamfe Division Annual Report, 1923.
[158] BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, D. O., Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division, Mamfe, 16 April 1923, p. 5. The period under review in this chapter is omitted in Balz's study on Bakossi society. Nevertheless, he provides important insights about a row of related events during the years to follow. See for example 'Appendix: Two Missionary Reports on Abolitions of Secret Societies in Nyasoso', in Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, pp. 214-221, especially from p. 217.

key positions in the Native Courts is not taken into account. Rather than emulating "juju" traits and practices, Christians probably found themselves closer to committing blasphemy when forced to swear an oath on the mighty *Mfam* during trials in Mamfe Division.[159]

1.4.3 Patterns and Problems of Conversion

Persecution, oppression, fear, and a general sense of confusion were juxtaposed by the climax of Christian victory: conversion. During the early phase of the period under review, accounts of spectacular mass-baptisms outnumber individual experiences by far. When the latter did come to the fore, they often displayed an emotional drama as demonstrated by Modi Din's description of two men who, on the occasion of a mass-baptism in 1916,

> were converted and baptised. The one is Abraham Bongongia Kinne, who was known to all of them [Christians] as a sorcerer of the wicked kind (*lemba*), menkiller, now he gave up his craft and received baptism. He himself confessing and bearing testimony with the words: 'The world and all that is in it is fraud!! -
> In the same way his friend who received baptism named Mose Ekoke confessed his sins and gave testimony that God is something real, yet people look in vain for help in all kinds of earthly physics which do not last.'[160]

Kinne and Ekoke were prize catches, embodying much of what Christian faith rejected and sought to eliminate. Both fraud and earthly physics are metaphors for money-making charlatanry as perceived from a Christian viewpoint. However, sorcerers and soothsayers were not widely considered harmless and brushed aside. Rather, it was clearly understood that they continued to exercise a strong influence despite – or on account of – Christian growth. Little wonder that mass-baptism was judged the most effective counterweight by Ekese and Modi Din in the absence of more selective European missionaries. However, conversion or adherence to the BM Church through mass-baptism also looked convenient from another angle. It offered a chance to win over labour migrants who flocked together in the coastal plantations from various parts of the interior. Upon returning to their homes, it was hoped, they would disseminate their newly acquired faith.[161]

Mass-baptisms in BM Church circles were not only criticised by PEMS missionaries and British officials but also by some of the BM Church agents. A cue for critique by the latter can once more be inferred from Koloto's account. The destructive elements of magic and violence were supplemented by additional unfavourable conditions which he compared to what the earlier missionaries had encountered: a volatile community and rapid baptisms succeeded by equally rapid expulsions, rendering his task a process of continuous to-and-fro.[162] With time, manpower and training opportunities against them, the abandoned and

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[159] See for example BNA Sd/1920/1, no. 90/120, Extract from Mamfe Division Annual Report, 1923. On *Mfam*, see also Ch. 4, pp. 143f.
[160] BMCA E-4,4.2, Transcript of a Report by Pastor Modi about the Work of God at Njonjo, New Bell, Duala, in the year 1916. (Translation from Duala)
[161] See Chapter 3, p. 116.
[162] BMCA E-4,4.9, K. M. Koloto to F. Lutz, Buea, 8 January 1923, p. 2.

fluctuating African agency as a whole could do little better than improvise in order to raise the standards among Christians. More appears to have been expected by the BM than was feasible. Notably, several personalities had set the pace for truly committed Christians who were supposed to set examples for others to follow. Johannes Nkösü was supposedly one of these model converts. As J. Keller concluded from a letter he had received from Nkösü,

> Dear Mr. Inspector, it is astonishing what the Lord achieves in and through these uneducated young people. This Nkösü spent some 3-4 years at school in Bali, came to us as an uncultivated, half-naked savage, and now he informs us that young people who were taught by him have attained a total victory and willfully entered the service of the Lord while others are in preparation.[163]

Drawing on this angle, conversion and converts symbolised the salvation, enlightenment and authority attained through the act of turning to Christian faith in God's name. Nkösü, like Ekese and Modi Din, also saw converts and conversion in the light of fellowship. This is a key theological, anthropological and political theme for Africans who saw themselves at the mercy of the missionary enterprise. All three African agents – and presumably many teacher-catechists – revered one or several European missionaries as father figures. Thus fabricated kinship bonds with missionaries could replace blood ties that had been severed or challenged because of the premature death of a parent, expulsion from the inner circle of the family on the grounds of disdain or both.[164]

Beyond this intimate contact, fellowship through conversion contained the essence of shaping a new and open society. The burdens of abandonment, colonial unpredictability, and cultural self-assertion perpetuated the dynamics of a diametrically opposed liberating motive for conversion. Evidently, mass-baptisms cannot simply be associated with a broad liberation movement. But the proposition of substituting the notion of an opposing force involved in emancipation for that of a suppressed Christian movement calls for attention. The BM Church was temporarily neither held together by organisational coherence nor by any other common denominator other than the sacraments. While the European mission stations were previously encompassed in a defensive psychological 'white man's fence', the African Christian advance in the 1920s reflected a more offensive trend. A process was underway that went beyond breaking up the hearth of early missionary endeavours to fuel it at alternative strategic points in order to cope with the ills of isolation. Colonial officials, PEMS missionaries and African BM agents like Koloto who recognised indiscriminate mass-baptism as a destabilising factor for the Christian community were keen proponents of centralised structures. However, their pervasive train of thought in the early 1920s fell short of feasibility owing to indecisiveness about an adequate policy of supervision and

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[163] Note by J. Keller in: BMCA E-4,4.1, J. Nkösü to J. Keller, Babanki, 21 December 1921, p. 4. Keller added that this letter would be particularly suited for publicity purposes in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote.*

[164] Modi Din and Ekese lost their fathers early on and met with opposition to their affiliation to the BM. On Modi Din, see Francis Grob. *Témoins camerounais de l'Evangile.* Yaounde: Editions CLE, 1967, pp. 9-46.; on Ekese, see Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.

control. Thus, the underlying reality of the impaired missionary enterprise was based upon the sheer necessity to decentralise it. This did not merely imply loosening up the pattern of co-ordination but also waiving strict disciplinary conditions for conversion and baptism.

1.5 Conclusion

Several paths of inquiry that have been set out in this chapter need further investigation in the course of the study. They include problems centred upon economic incentives with a focus on migratory labour, conversion, cultural self-assertion, and the triangular relations which emerged between colonial, missionary and traditional authorities. Such themes are explored in more detail in the next chapters along with issues of a more political texture.

A conspicuous set of questions arises now: What was to happen next with the project of 'mission without missionaries'? How could the BM's legacy be fused with the agenda of the British colonial administration? Which circumstances were to give rise to a solution for the future? In spite of conflicting attitudes about the progress of Christianity in British Southern Cameroons, African agents had fought a valiant battle to maintain and promote their adopted faith – and were keen to see it grow. Far from arguing categorically in favour of more autonomy, they continued to harbour hopes that 'their' BM missionaries would return one day. The BM had clearly left a profound mark on her Cameroonian adherents.

The notion of "native" agency turning the missionary enterprise into an autonomous church body visibly haunted colonial society in the early 1920s. For several years, though, little constructive thought was invested on how to establish a revised system of European missionary supervision. British and French contributions fell short of a powerful cultural impact on the destitute communities of the BM. Nor did Basel missionaries employed in the ranks of the PEMS exercise a significant influence at local and congregational levels. Instead, Adrian Hastings' phenomenon of 'the black advance'[165] provided a single source of survival and reconfiguration, much the same as it did among the Christian communities established under the German Lutherans and Moravians in colonial Tanganyika.[166]

A key problem from the point of missionary interests was the extreme fragmentation of the BM Church as a whole. In fact, the previously posited 'black movement' evolved into a series of black movements all taking different directions in line with regionally specific cultural features and vernaculars. The increase in black movements resulted from the need to reorient the BM's bi-vernacular and bi-regional approach in the field once her African agents were left to cope on their own. A seedbed evolved for what was often referred to in PEMS circles as *mouvements indigènes*. Such diversity was amplified by the expanding web of outstations that had grown out of the missionary enterprise. Each outstation relied on its congregational members and leaders who adopted varying strategies, depending on

[165] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, particularly pp. 421ff., 438, 490.
[166] Marcia Wright. *Op. cit.*, pp. 141ff.

the extent to which the respective traditional authorities legitimised their creed. Prompting distinct degrees of accommodation of Christian faith, the process of fragmentation offered evidence of resilience and adaptability instead of fostering alienation. Cultural assimilation facilitated the appropriation of teachings and preachings at the village level throughout a period that witnessed a widespread and enduring lack of useful manuals and literature for school instruction and evangelisation. Left on their own, these movements might well have continued to adapt to the local religious, social, cultural, political and economic needs of their followers. But as the next chapters will show, the outcome predominantly disfavoured this proposition.

2. Mission-State Relations: Negotiating a New Modus Vivendi

The previous chapter saw former German *K*amerun being reshaped and carved up into separate spheres of control under British and French rule. In the course of this process the practice of *divide et impera* was curbed through the intervention of an international arbiter, the League of Nations, from 1922.[1] Colonial rule in both the British and French spheres was henceforth mandatory. In 1946 the mandate was replaced by a trusteeship agreement, placing the administration of Cameroonian territory under the auspices of the UN.

The involvement of the BM's enterprise in early colonial *K*amerun initially rested upon a missionary policy geared to promote German values in the late nineteenth century. This might appear unusual for a Swiss and German missionary enterprise whose headquarters were in Switzerland. However, as Erik Halldén underlines, 'Through its participation in the Bremen Conference [where German missionary policies were debated] the Basel Mission became a recognized German mission having responsibility for Germany's new colonial situation.'[2] Thus the BM's take-over from the British Baptist Missionary Society in 1886 resulted from the logic of German interests. The targets of evangelisation were harnessed to the directives of harmonising missionary activities with the language, government and economic objectives of the first colonial administration in Cameroon.[3]

This strategy was flawed in the First World War by the British-French invasion. In the altered circumstances priority was intially given to an Anglo-Saxon missionary society to replace the BM. That would have been the solution if the United Free Church of Scotland (UFCS), which was operating in Iboland in south-eastern Nigeria at the time, had accepted to take over from the BM.[4] The most likely alternative was the French PEMS. Resident F. Ruxton was not alone in expressing his worries about this option, however, stating plainly that the PEMS had previously failed to exert efficient control over the orphaned Christian

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[1] Verkijika G. Fanso. *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, vol. 2: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods*, London: Macmillan, 1989, pp. 59-61; Engelbert Mveng. *Histoire du Cameroun*. Yaounde: CEPER, 1985, vol. II, pp. 123-128; V. J. Ngoh. *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*, Yaounde: Navi-Group Publications, 1987, pp. 163-167; Tambi Eyongetah Mbuagbaw, Robert Brain & Robin Palmer. *A History of the Cameroon*. Burnt Mill: Longman, 1990 (2nd ed.), pp. 81-98.

[2] Erik Halldén. *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons*, 1886-1905. Uppsala: Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensa xxxi, 1968, p. 30. For more detail on the Bremen Conference see *ibid.*, pp. 25-43; Jonas N. Dah. *Missionary Motivations and Methods. A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, 1886-1914*. Basel: Basileia, 1983, pp. 61-70.

[3] On this correlation, see Karin Hausen. *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika. Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914*. Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1970; Harry Rudin. *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914. A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1938; Helmuth Stoecker (ed.). *Kamerun unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols. Vol. I: Berlin: Rütten & Loewing, 1960; vol. 2: Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1968.

[4] PRO CO 750, no. 24, Gov. Clifford to Colonial Office, 19 February 1921; BNA Sd/1921/5, file no. 268/1921, W. A. I. Gardiner, Secretary, Mission Council of the United Free Church of Scotland (UFCS), to the Resident, Buea, 24 March 1924. The UFCS laid down a catalogue of conditions for a take-over from the BM including financial support which was expected from the American Presbyterians.

communities of the BM in British Southern Cameroons.[5] J. W. C. Rutherfoord, the D.O. of Mamfe Division, went even further and reproached the PEMS for 'not knowing where they are going' while 'The BM organisation recognized the need to cloak the subversion tendencies of Christianity towards native society and the calm of a waiting policy.'[6]

All the same, the PEMS played an instrumental role in attempting to mould a favourable disposition of the British authorities towards the BM. In addition, there is every indication that the long-standing partnership between the two missionary societies was consolidated in Europe during the early 1920s.[7] By contrast, the reports and correspondence from the ranks of African BM staff during the same period by no means suggest that they received sufficient attention from the ranks of the PEMS. Noteworthy exceptions were Jacob Modi Din, who embarked on several extensive evangelistic tours in British territory from Douala, and a handful of missionaries stationed in the eastern Grassfields in the French zone, who paid occasional cross-border visits to abandoned BM congregations. Furthermore, PEMS Director Elie Allégret engaged in various debates on the problems of Christian missions through intense correspondence with a host of addressees both in clerical and government circles.[8] Thus it does no justice to the PEMS to deduce that her interventions in the BM's mission field were generally to no avail. They certainly triggered a vivid exchange of views between the Resident in Buea, the Secretary, Southern Provinces (SSP) in Lagos, Nigeria, the International Mission Council, the Conference of Missionary Societies as well as the Colonial Office in London, and the BM Home Board in Switzerland.

This debate produced the material with which to explore various factors that shaped the destiny of the increasingly fragmented network of BM Church congregations. Along with opinions and suggestions put foward by the mixed officialdom from overseas, local voices were just as important. How far were African Christians prepared to tolerate the re-launch of European missionary activity? Or did they rather tend to strive towards independence? Were they intent on advocating adherence to their decentralised organisational patterns and peculiar brands of spiritual authority articulated in and right after the First World War?

The present chapter examines provisions introduced by the British colonial authorities for missionary activity to be resumed under their rule in Southern Cameroons. In the given context the BM's relationship with the PEMS is critical. Further, connections between the process of demarcating political spheres of administration and the fragmentation of the

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[5] BNA Sd/1920/1, file no. 90/120, The Resident, Cameroons Province, Buea, to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, Lagos, n.d. See also BNA Sd/1921/4, Extract from Provincial Annual Report, 1924, compiled by W. E. Hunt, Ag. Resident, Cameroons Province.

[6] BNA SD/1920/1, file no. 90/120 and BMCA E-4,6, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, D. O. Mamfe Division, Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division, 16 April 1923, p. 3.

[7] See miscellaneous correspondence between Friedrich Bärtschi, Paul Dieterle and Paul Scheibler and BM Inspector W. Oettli in BMCA, series E-4,7, especially W. Oettli to P. Dieterle, Basel, 8 October 1924.

[8] Elie Allégret was a vocal proponent of Protestant missionary activity in Cameroon. He was among the architects of the agreement between the British colonial authorities and the BM. See for example BNA Sd/1921/4, Elie Allégret to the Resident, F. H. Ruxton, Buea, 14 January 1925 and Archives of the EEC, Douala, Nouvelle Convention entre la Mission de Paris et la Mission de Bâle pour l'oeuvre missionaire au Cameroun, 6 January 1926, adopted by the PEMS on 8 February 1926, signed by E. Allégret.

BM's sphere are explored. Finally, the BM's return to Cameroon is investigated from the vantage point of African Christians in the mission field.

2.1 Christian Missions in the 1920s: "Valuable Plants" in the Colonial System?

Official reports and correspondence on the state of the Christian community in British Southern Cameroons in the early 1920s struck an increasingly alarming chord, lamenting a rising level of disorientation and disruption.[9] They stirred considerable concern among the British authorities. This called for a reassessment of European missionary supervision in the colonial context. Most importantly, appropriate measures had to be introduced to rule out the emergence and survival of a fully Africanised Christian movement – or rather a string of diversified Black Christian movements. There was a widely circulated notion of an 'uncontrolled, spontaneous, indigenous, continually growing organization.'[10] Resident Ruxton consequently urged the SSP in Lagos in the early 1920s to look for an appropriate mission body that would take over the 'valuable plant' of the BM without further delay.

The potential value of mission Christianity was brushed aside by the British authorities soon after the outbreak of the First World War. Conversely, the first half of the 1920s saw a growing necessity for European missionary supervision. This reorientation mirrors some degree of uncertainty among British officials at the prospect of African Christians getting poised to erode colonial authority. It was feared that Christianity, occasionally perceived as a 'politico-religious' element by British officials, would break up social cohesion within the extremely complex African population of Southern Cameroons.[11] This forecast was reiterated in PEMS circles by F. Bärtschi who added: 'In Bali the task [of evangelisation] is suffering because almost all the catechists are involved in political disputes with their chiefs. Therefore close European control is desperately required.'[12]

Bärtschi's recommendation found solid international support. Following their extensive visit of the territory in 1922, W. Lehman and J. McNeil, the delegates of the Commission to Southern Cameroons under the auspices of the International Mission Council, reported: 'The officials at Bamenda were very friendly and did everything possible for us. They seemed anxious for some one to take over the work that the Basel Mission had left and

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[9] BNA Sd/1920/1, file no. 90/120, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, D.O., Mamfe Division – Cameroons Province, Report on Protestant Christianity in the Mamfe Division, 16 April 1923; BNA Sd/1920/1, file no. 90/120, Extract from Mamfe Division Annual Report, 1923; BNA Sd/1921/1, file no. 487/21, Memorandum from the D.O., Bamenda Division, to the Resident, Buea, 20 December 1921; BNA Sd/1921/1, file no. 487/21, Memorandum from the D.O., Bamenda Division, to the Resident, Buea, 31 January 1921, BNA Sd/1921/1, Letter from the D.O., Bamenda Division, to Rev. Mgr. Plissoneau, 16 February 1922.

[10] BNA Sd/1920/1, file no. 90/120, The Resident, Cameroons Province, Buea, to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, Lagos, n.d. Ruxton associated the notion with Ethiopianism in South Africa and Nyassaland.

[11] BNA Sd/1921/1, file no. 487/21, Memorandum from the D.O., Bamenda Division, to the Resident, Buea, 31 January 1922; BNA Sd/1921/4, Extract from the Provincial Annual Report, 1924, compiled by W. E. Hunt, Ag. Resident, Cameroons Province.

[12] BMCA E-4,7.27, F. Bärtschi to the Central Committee of the BM, Douala, 8 June 1922. (My translation)

certainly they would do a great deal to help anyone who came.'[13] The authors drew similar conclusions from virtually everywhere on their tour.

Even though the mission field was reduced in size by the eastern and southern portions which had fallen to the French, it covered an expanse that was difficult to monitor owing to transport and communication problems. From the onset, British officials in Cameroon had to face this impediment. Their main problem was that they were few in number and widely dispersed throughout the newly created four divisions. British rule, Lloyd Kwast observes, contrasted the 'highly organized and aggressive policies of the German regime.'[14]

Reviewing criteria that determined the progress of Christian advance, Kwast holds that the colonial authorities in Cameroon remained favourably inclined towards missionary presence throughout the period from 1922-1960.[15] In Charles Weber's analysis, however, which affords a more ambivalent stance, this assertion appears to have been only partially valid for the Baptists. On the one hand, Weber highlights the important role of missions as acknowledged by the colonial administration. On the other, he suggests that the Permanent Mandates Commission, appointed to oversee the local government, remained 'distant' and 'insufficiently informed' about missions. The result was inefficient co-ordination between the League of Nations, colonial officials and missionaries. Crucially, Weber points to the lack of Cameroonian representatives in the Permanent Mandates Commission. After all,

> The Africans were a vital part of this changing [Cameroonian] environment and were not passive recipients or bystanders. It was these people who felt the impact and who responded to the influences introduced to them, however indirectly, by the international community, colonial administration, and mission involvement.[16]

This was a strong reason for the colonial authorities to draw upon missions. The latter were, in turn, expected to offer assistance in enhancing stability by preventing social unrest and disintegration. But the different bodies diffusing Christian faith were not all prepared to unconditionally surrender their aims and ideologies to such requirements. The Roman Catholic Mill Hill Fathers faced a conflict-ridden agenda almost from the moment they set foot in Cameroon in 1922. Anthony Ndi notes that the first decade of the Mandate (1922-1931) was one of 'tumultuous relations between administrators and missionaries.'[17]

The British colonial authorities forged alliances with local chiefs and village heads who held important posts in the newly constituted Native Authorities (NAs) and Native Courts

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[13] BMCA E-4,6, W. S. Lehman and J. McNeil, Report of Commission to British Cameroun (extract from West Africa Missions Minutes - November 1922), p. 1.
[14] Lloyd E. Kwast. *The Discipling of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth*. Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 59.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 60.
[16] Charles Weber. *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon. German-American Missionary Endeavour under International Mandate and British Colonialism*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993, p. 133; see also pp. 141-143.
[17] Anthony Ndi. 'Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons, 1922-1962.' London, PhD, 1983, p. 180.

(NCs). Roman Catholic missonaries, Ndi argues, felt antagonised by such non-Christian elements who were 'solidly backed by the Administration, and wielding enormous judicial and political power, consistently harass the converts.'[18] It was only in 1931, following Sir Donald Cameron's appointment as Governor General of Nigeria, that the two camps were instructed to reconcile by mutually pledging to settle their disputes. This initiative provided the basis for a growing spirit of co-operation between Catholics and the state from 1931-1945.[19] Thus disputes involving the Mill Hill Fathers in the 1920s were partially resolved to their advantage in that they consolidated their position within the colonial system.

The BM's approach to reviving a task forcibly abandoned nine years earlier necessarily called for greater caution than that of the Mill Hill Fathers. Juxtaposing the two societies' attitudes towards overseas and local brokers of indirect rule in Southern Cameroons, Ndi concludes that 'the Mill Hill approach tended to be confrontationist and dogmatic with the chiefs and the administration, while the BM pleaded, appealed, promised and cajoled.'[20] If such attributes can be subsumed under diplomacy, they were surely the proper ingredients to support the British authorities' stance towards the BM. Whether and to what extent the BM did so behave while dealing with the colonial administration throughout the years to follow needs to be investigated further. The emphasis is on the triangular relations between the BM, the British colonial authorities and other European bodies involved in deciding on the future of missionary Christianity in British Southern Cameroons.

2.2 The Basel Mission's Legacy in the Light of Transforming British Attitudes

The basic premises missionary societies had to bear in mind were summarised under Article 7 of the British Mandate for Cameroons. It stipulated freedom of conscience, free exercise of all forms of worship consonant with public order and morality and freedom for missionaries to evangelise and open schools throughout the territory, notwithstanding the Mandatory Authority's right to exercise control required for the maintenance of public order and good government.[21] As a result, each mission had to respect the other's spheres of influence. All efforts to enact such a package of stipulations, though, never hindered the different denominations from coveting each other's adherents. Indeed, the measures reflect a *laissez-faire* attitude of the colonial authorities to faith and religious practices. Not only did this approach tend to foster interdenominational rivalry; it unwittingly also afforded an opportunity for the values of Christian missions in Bismarck's cultural policy, emanating from the German precepts of *Reichskirche* and *Volksmission,* to be reasserted. The British were aware of their opponents' legacy but eventually decided to tackle the situation *in situ*

[18] Ibid., p. 55, p. 116. NAs and NCs were run by traditional rulers who conferred power upon 'puppet chiefs'. This was a blow to Christians who 'were easily victimized under trumped up charges in the courts and in the villages.'
[19] Ibid., p. 190.
[20] Ibid., p. 121.
[21] Ibid., pp. 140-141.

instead of admitting or eliminating missions according to preconceived criteria such as the question of origin. Nevertheless, the BM first had to endure the test of uncertainty brought about by the gradual change of British opinions in the aftermath of the First World War.

Between 1918, when military operations were dying down, and 1922 it seemed unlikely that the BM would be readmitted to the Cameroonian mission field. In 1918 the Resident of Yola Province in Nigeria forwarded a report by W. D. R. Mair to Parliament in London, aiming to supply evidence of the "natives'" pronounced desire to stay under British rule and influence.[22] As for all confiscated BM property, the Colonial Office was advised: 'if it [BM property] is to be vested in trustees submit that they should be allowed to take it over on the same terms as in the case of properties in the Gold Coast and India.'[23]

Already in 1918, Britain had laid down conditions for the BM to resume activity in her territories. It was suggested that an independent missionary society should be set up, free of any pro-German elements. The society would have to display a clear pro-*entente* stance. At the time, the BM refused to bow down to such stipulations as it was feared they would overshadow the origins and identity of the brand of Christianity she had propagated earlier on. The loyal stance towards Germans survived in the BM. How closely associated Swiss and Germans felt by dint of common affiliation to the BM is disclosed in a memorandum which held that 'The British government has failed to succeed in severing the hundred-year alliance that has united *Reichsdeutsche* and Swiss Germans in the Basel Mission.'[24]

When Governor Clifford, Lord Lugard's successor as chief administrator of Nigeria, declared in 1921 that the BM's work had virtually come to a standstill, it was up to another body to jump in as a substitute.[25] The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) was quick to the move, following the Governor's unsuccessful appeal to the Calabar representative of the UFCS, W. A. I. Gardiner. The BMS authorities reported that the German Baptist Mission (GBM) had requested their property to be taken over by them. They inquired whether BM property would be included.[26] The Conference of Missionary Societies in London rapidly chipped in with a favourable contribution, stating that a standing committee had approved the transfer of BM and GBM spheres to the BMS.[27] The BMS subsequently sent a two-man delegation, T. Lewis and L. C. Parkinson, to visit a number of the BM and GBM sites in Cameroon and soon decided in favour of the take-over.[28] The last problem to tackle was the question of occupying and administering mission property. Further negotiations ended with the BMS accepting the proposed terms. The new responsibilities would fall under the

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[22] PRO 763 (6), no. 4, The Resident, Yola Province, to the Colonial Office, 4 April 1918 and 3 July 1918.
[23] PRO 750, no. 23, Commonwealth Foundation to the Colonial Office, 26 September 1919. On BM property see also PRO 750, no. 30, Commonwealth Trust Ltd. to the Colonial Office, 19 April 1921.
[24] BMCA E-4,6, Die Englische Politik und die Basler Mission, 1918. (My translation)
[25] PRO 750, no. 24, Governor Clifford to the Colonial Office, 19 February 1921.
[26] PRO 750, no. 28, BMS to the Colonial Office, 19 March 1921.
[27] PRO 750, no. 29, Conference of Missionary Societies to the Colonial Office, n.d.
[28] PRO 750, nos. 31–32, BMS to the Colonial Office, 18 May 1921, 14 February 1922, and 14 March 1922.

authority of a trust to be instituted by the Conference of Missionary Societies.[29] The laws governing missionary activity in the British sphere seemed to be tightening up in the early 1920s, rendering the BM's chances of returning to Cameroon bleaker than ever. This was insinuated by a draft ordinance issued in late 1921 to 'impose restrictions on missionary work by people of alien nationality' in British Southern Cameroons.[30]

In 1923, the tide of recommended options began to ebb in favour of the BM returning to Cameroon. At the superior level of British officialdom the new attitude towards the BM is reflected in Governor Clifford's moves. After denying the BM all hope in the immediate post-war years, he started nudging open the doors in a second major attempt to resolve the tension arising from hostilities in the First World War. Finally, once the Baptists withdrew their plan to replace the BM and negotiations with the UFCS floundered, it was the PEMS which stepped forward.[31] This intervention was probably facilitated by the peculiar *entente cordiale* between PEMS Director Elie Allégret and Resident Ruxton in Buea.[32]

2.3 The Basel Mission and the PEMS: Towards a Missionary Protectorate

The PEMS, which set up her headquarters in Douala in 1917, appears to have been the appropriate body to champion the BM's cause. The position of the PEMS during the run-up to the BM's second take-off in Cameroon is made clear in the correspondence between W. Oettli, Inspector of African Mission Fields of the BM, and his colleagues both in Paris and Cameroon. The emphasis was on Elie Allégret's supportive moves which Oettli found portrayed in accounts by Swiss missionaries in the ranks of the PEMS, such as Friedrich Bärtschi, Paul Dieterle and Charles Frey. Others like Ekese, the key figure of the African constituent in British Southern Cameroons, remained sceptical about the PEMS. However, Ekese was one of those to benefit from Allégret's influence when he was authorised by Resident Ruxton in 1921 to visit congregations in Kumba, Nyasoso, Ossidinge (Mamfe) and Victoria District, having been temporarily confined to Buea.[33]

The prevailing opinion among the African BM staff, aptly reflected by Headmaster K. Makone Koloto, bore out the lack of support from the *basango bapenza* (new masters of the PEMS) in Douala to Christians in British Southern Cameroons.[34] BM congregations increasingly abandoned the sympathetic stance that had induced them to accept becoming affiliated to the PEMS in 1921.[35] By contrast, Oettli was reluctant to take complaints from

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[29] PRO 750, no. 34, BMS to the Colonial Office, 29 March 1922.
[30] PRO 763 (9), no. 2, Missionary work by people of alien nationality, draft ordinance to impose restrictions on -, 10 November 1921.
[31] In 1926 the Baptist World Alliance helped the German Baptists to resume work in British Southern Cameroons; see PRO 750, no. 46, Baptist World Alliance to the Colonial Office, 12 May 1926. Negotiations with the UFCS ended in 1924. See also BNA Sd/1921/5, file no. 268/1921.
[32] See for example BNA Sd/1921/5, file no. 268/1921, Elie Allégret, PEMS to the Resident, Buea, F. H. Ruxton, 1 February 1924; BNA Sd/1921/4, The Resident, Buea, F. H. Ruxton, to Elie Allégret, PEMS, 17 April 1924.
[33] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 16 May 1921. See also Chapter 1, pp. 54f.
[34] BMCA E-4,4.9, K. M. Koloto to Mrs. Fr. Lutz, Buea, 8 January 1923.
[35] BMCA E-4,7.49, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 8 May 1921.

the field any further, though, lest they upset the good relationship between the BM and the PEMS. This finally prompted the PEMS to reverse her prior decision in 1923 to renounce all responsibility in British Southern Cameroons, even with the BM's financial support.[36]

Resolving the problem of occupying the BM's mission field remained a controversial issue throughout 1923 and1924. To begin with, Governor Clifford sent a signal to the BM at the end of 1923 that he had no objection to the Swiss missionary F. Bärtschi proceeding to Cameroon.[37] A few months later, the Secretary of the International Missionary Council, J. H. Oldham, submitted an application for the take-over of the BM mission field by the PEMS to the Under Secretary of State in London.[38] But in April 1924 the concern of the British about resuming the activity carried out by the BM from 1886-1917 was once again brought to light in a letter from Resident Ruxton to Allégret.[39]

Confusion arose over the progress of the procedures which had to pass through various official channels. By contrast, the wording of the level of commitment expressed jointly by the BM and the PEMS at a meeting in Paris was clear. Section 7 of the draft agreement in particular highlights the provisional character of the proposed responsibility of the PEMS for the BM's activities in British Southern Cameroons. Financially, the BM would remain in charge of her missionaries' salaries and the maintenance of her property. Catechists and teachers as well as the construction of schools and teacher's houses were to be catered for by local congregations, supplemented by small subsidies from the BM in order 'to assure her influence.'[40] P. Dieterle reported satisfaction at the prospect of the PEMS Committee extending a 'missionary protectorate' over British Southern Cameroons.[41] Yet the degree of confidence radiated in mission circles was only cautiously echoed by British officials who continued to exercise restraint.

What remained to be agreed at this preliminary stage of arrangements was the problem of authorising European mission personnel to return to the Cameroons Province. In July 1924 J. H. Oldham informed the BM of the Colonial Office's decision to lift the ban on all German missionary societies. Nevertheless, the Governors heading the various colonies would have the final say in deciding which bodies to accept.[42] By the time this information arrived, the BM had received another letter from the Conference of Missionary Societies confirming the view of the colonial administration in Nigeria according to which

> that government [in Nigeria] has no objection to the proposal... that the Basel Missionary Society should send two Swiss missionaries to the British sphere

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[36] BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 15 September 1923.
[37] PRO 750, no. 36, Governor Clifford to the Colonial Office, 10 December 1924.
[38] BNA Sd/1921/4, J. H. Oldham to the Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, London, 12 March 1924.
[39] BNA Sd/1921/4, The Resident, Buea, to Elie Allégret, PEMS, 17 April 1924.
[40] BMCA E-4,6, Bericht an das Komitee über die Besprechung mit Herrn Allégret in Paris, 31 January – 1 February 1924. (My translation)
[41] BMCA E-4,7.66, P. Dieterle to P. Scheibler and F. Bärtschi, Douala, 15 February 1924.
[42] BMCA E-4,7.70, W. Oettli to P. Dieterle, 8 July 1924.

> of the Cameroons to undertake missionary work there under the supervision of the Paris Evangelical Missionary society.[43]

Resident Ruxton already hinted to Dieterle in 1923 that he had no objection to Germans resettling in Cameroon, providing they obtained a visa from the Governor in Lagos.[44]

Officially legitimising the re-launch of the BM represented one of two major steps in a drawn-out process. The other step involved the reorganisation of missionary activity. The BM faced the double task of linking up with the PEMS and penetrating their transformed missionised community. In early September 1924 Oettli wrote to Ekese that the two Swiss missionaries Hans Wildi and Edgar Wunderli were on their way to Cameroon, appealing for support from catechists, teachers and congregations in general.[45] Little else could be undertaken at this stage to ensure co-operation from the African Christians. More had to be achieved, though, at the level of specifying the terms of collaboration between the BM and the PEMS. Plans began to materialise in December 1924 following another meeting between the two bodies in Paris. The prime objective was set out clearly as envisaging a joint venture to restore missionary activity in British Southern Cameroons under the BM. The 'missionary protectorate' of the PEMS was about to be constituted. The headquarters of the BM were to be established in Buea where Ekese was requested to cede his place to the new missionary-in-charge, Hans Wildi. Bärtschi and Wunderli intended to proceed to Mamfe and Bali respectively in order to locate new sites for permanent BM stations. Two further missionaries were earmarked to reinforce the first group. Eventually, it was hoped, the German missionary Adolf Vielhauer would return to his former post in Bali. This vanguard was supposed to resume work under the auspices of the PEMS. It was reiterated that the BM would bear full responsibility for the financial side of the operation. A central treasury, sustained by regular contributions from individual congregations, was planned to fund the local church. Finally, indigenous catechists of the BM would be subject to the same rules applying to the African staff of the PEMS.[46] The re-launch, as Oettli pointed out earlier, would thus continue to rely on sustained ties between the BM and the PEMS.[47]

The partnership was subsequently elaborated and ratified by the Executive Committee of the PEMS on 5 January 1925 and by the Committee of the BM on 12 January 1925.[48] The PEMS retained her purely moral obligation for missionary activity in British Southern Cameroons. BM missionaries were henceforth affiliated to the Missionary Conference of the PEMS in Douala. The President of this supreme body of the PEMS was appointed as

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[43] BMCA E-4,6, The Secretary, Conference of Missionary Societies to the Director, BM, 29 April 1924.
[44] BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, 15 September 1923.
[45] BMCA E-4,4.1, W. Oettli to J. L. Ekese, 9 September 1924.
[46] BMCA E-4,6, Projet d'accord entre les Sociétés de Bâle et de Paris pour l'organisation de la reprise du Cameroun anglais. (Report of a meeting between the PEMS and the BM in Paris, 18-19 December 1924). This is a precursor to the proposal for the agreement ratified on 5 and 12 January 1925 by the PEMS and the BM respectively.
[47] BMCA E-4,7.71, W. Oettli to P. Dieterle, Basel, 8 October 1924.
[48] Archives of the EEC, Douala, Projet d'accord entre les Sociétés de Bâle et de Paris pour l'organisation et la reprise du Cameroun anglais, Paris, 5 January 1925.

the representative in charge of handling all administrative and political matters with the British authorities. Next, it was decided that government subsidies for schools could be accepted on the premise that education would concentrate upon teachings of the Gospel. Schools, it was stressed, should rely solely on funds from the government and the central church treasury. Further, the Committee for British Southern Cameroons (*Commission du Cameroun anglais*) was instituted as a subsidiary of the PEMS Missionary Conference in Douala. The congregations in British Southern Cameroons were to be grouped together in regional synods composed of local pastors, evangelists, catechists and elders who would send their delegates to the General Synod. Finally, the point was raised that all catechists would be stationed by approval of the Executive Committee of the General Synod.

In contrast to the spirit of consent that had governed the task of planning the re-launch, differences grew over diverging religious views, causing Dieterle to express doubts about his affiliation to the PEMS.[49] Although a vocal critic, his views were much appreciated by the BM Inspector for African Mission Fields, W. Oettli, notably in assessing the feasibilty of the joint venture between the two bodies. Another critical observer was Bärtschi who left the PEMS to rejoin the BM, having already complained in 1921: 'I am disappointed at the Europeans [of the PEMS], not at the indigenes, whom I of course knew before!'[50]

W. Oettli attempted to reduce the tension by informing Dieterle of a promising meeting with Resident Ruxton. Ruxton assured Oettli that there were no obstacles left to the BM's autonomy in Cameroon. He added that he preferred to work with a missionary stationed in Buea instead of Douala.[51] Soon after, the British Government acknowledged the BM as an independent missionary society operating in British territory on 8 October 1925.[52]

The agreement between the PEMS and the BM was once more modified before a final convention was endorsed on 6 January 1926.[53] Recognising each other's independence, the PEMS and the BM set out a plan for future co-operation. The common agenda was expected to foster spiritual unity among evangelical missions with a view to outstripping Catholic propaganda. The controversial fusion of Missionary Conferences and General Synods was superseded by reciprocal provisions for one or two delegates to participate in deliberations as floor members. Church regulations were to draw upon similar principles regarding baptism, church offerings and the status of Africans. The convention arranged for members of each body to be received as equals by the other. Other common objectives

[49] BMCA E-4,7.79, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 17 June 1925, BMCA E-4,7.81; W. Oettli to P. Dieterle, Basel, 16 July 1925; BMCA E-4,7.103, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Bagam, 19 May 1929; BMCA E-4,7.107, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Bafoussam, 14 August 1930.
[50] BMCA E-4,7.20, F. Bärtschi to W. Oettli, Ndounge, 24 April 1921. (My translation)
[51] BMCA E-4,7.80, W. Oettli to P. Dieterle, Basel, 30 June 1925.
[52] PRO CO 763 (12), no. 3, Basel Mission – Recognition in Cameroon, 8 October 1925. See also Archives of the EEC, Douala, Wilhelm Burckhardt on behalf of the Committee of the BM to the Committee of the PEMS, Basel, 6 January 1926. The BM was placed on the list of recognised missionary societies on 24 November 1925.
[53] Archives of the EEC, Douala, Nouvelle convention entre la Mission de Paris et la Mission de Bâle pour l'oeuvre missionaire au Cameroun, 6 January 1926.

included joint publications, further training of African BM clergy at the PEMS seminary in Ndounge which was already in progress, and a spirit of collaboration through the ranks.

The PEMS was presumably glad to relinquish the task of simultaneously conducting operations on two utterly distinct stages. The BM for her own part was relieved to finally receive support from the colonial authorities. The policy employed by the BM to attain this level of recognition appears more straightforward than Anthony Ndi suggests. Rather than cajoling and pleading, the BM decided on a tactical approach and perseverance. The key to success lay in the good relations with Resident Ruxton who relentlessly pursued a course in favour of the BM. Indeed, as Ndi implies, the BM sought goodwill among the latter to reinforce her position, aims and activities in the mission field. However, the outcome of all negotiations remained uncertain until they were sealed at the level of the Colonial Office and the Conference of Missionary Societies in London where the BM had little say.

Once reinstated, the BM confonted the task of internal reorganisation. This lingered on in the light of general rehabilitation as formerly confiscated property was claimed by the BM and additional European staff were drafted into the revitalised missionary enterprise. After initiating the transfer of title from the Basel Mission Trading Company (BMTC) to J. Holt & Co. between May and August 1922, Governor Clifford called the transaction to a halt, reporting the release of the property to the BM in early 1923.[54] Additional mission property was subsequently located and assessed as Governor Clifford continued making arrangements for the handing-over procedure.[55] The latter consisted in issuing certificates of occupancy that specified individual terms of lease before the proposal to insert a clause on land grants to missionary societies surfaced in 1930.[56]

European BM staff required 'No objection' certificates to proceed to British Southern Cameroons. These were issued by the Governor of the Southern Provinces following the approval of formal applications sent by the BM Home Board through the Conference of Missionary Societies. Most missionary candidates were accepted without hesitation by the British authorities after thorough assessments of their past records. Two exceptions were Heinrich Dorsch and Karl Bonsack. Bonsack's case in particular is not surprising, given his participation in the ranks of the German *Schutztruppe* in Cameroon at the outbreak of the First World War. Eventually both candidates were granted the same 'No objection' certificates as their fellow applicants who followed.[57] While European BM missionaries began to resume their activity and supervision, they confronted diverse African reactions to the re-establishment of their enterprise in the British sphere of control.

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[54] PRO CO 750, no. 26, Gov. Clifford to the Colonial Office, 12 May 1922; no. 27, Gov. Clifford to the Colonial Office, 17 August 1922; Gov. Clifford to the Colonial Office, 2 February 1923 and PRO CO 763 (10), no. 2, Gov. Clifford to the Colonial Office, 8 February 1923.
[55] PRO CO 751, Gov. Clifford to the Colonial Office, 18 April 1923 and 14 January 1924.
[56] PRO CO 763 (18), no. 9, Gov. Thomson to the Colonial Office (with reference to a proposal by J. H. Oldham, International Council on Missions, for an approriate clause), 14 December 1930.
[57] PRO CO 763 (14), no 5, Application by Heinrich Dorsch, 8 November 1927; PRO CO 763 (16), nos. 2/3, Applications by Karl and Martha Bonsack, 25 April 1928. See PRO CO 763 (11) and (16) – (19).

2.4 Opposition or Vindication? Missionaries, Missionised and Native Administration

Debates on the BM's work in Cameroon were not confined to European circles. Before conclusive decisions were taken, African BM Christians repeatedly expressed the plight of their orphanage that commenced in 1917. Until 1924, responses to their appeals fell short of a constructive solution. In spite – or perhaps because – of the custodianship the PEMS assumed over the BM's mission field, many destitute congregations in British Southern Cameroons took to quasi-autonomous forms of leadership. The emergence of local cells of Christianity defeated the missionary target of uniting targeted African societies under a common Christian faith. However, the two leading African figures in charge of spreading and entrenching Christianity in Cameroon on behalf of the BM, Johannes Litumbe Ekese and Jacob Modi Din, fought incessantly for the missionary cause. They were assisted by a handful of teacher-catechists and evangelists. The odds seemed to be turning against them as the British authorities instituted indirect rule which favoured African chiefs and village heads, many of whom opposed the revolutionary potential of Christian values. Moreover, criticism by British officials in Cameroon lamenting the decline of Christian congregations unequivocally neglected the ambiguous impact of indirect rule. Indirect rule represented a double-edged sword in that it permitted traditional authorities to overstep previous limits, shaking at the foundations of sanction governing local political institutions. NAs and NCs, the pillars of the system, favoured the monopolisation of social control in the hands of few African leaders. This needs to be elaborated within the political framework established by the British, and in the context of the BM's enterprise.

2.4.1 Establishing Indirect Rule: An Overview

The mandate system was introduced to British Southern Cameroons on 20 July 1922. The territory came under the Lieutenant-Governor of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria in 1923, following the adoption of indirect rule as recommended by the Secretary of State for the colonies.[58] The new Cameroons Province was divided into the four administrative units Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe, and Victoria Divisions. A Resident was appointed under the Lieutenant-Governor to oversee the administration of the entire province. The League of Nations' Mandate witnessed seven Residents' terms of office up to the early phase of the Second World War: Major F. H. Ruxton (1921-1925), E. J. Arnett (1925-1928), Mr H. G. Aveling (1928-1929), E. J. Arnett (1929-1932), J. W. C. Rutherfoord (1933-1934), O. W. Firth (1935-1938), and A. E. F. Murray (1939-1942).

Beneath the Resident each division had a Divisional Officer (D.O.), backed by one or several Assistant Divisional Officers (A.D.O.s). A recurring pattern among these upper ranks of British officialdom was the rapid succession of changes that occurred in all four

[58] Verkijika G. Fanso. *Op. cit.*, pp. 82ff.

provinces throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[59] Other than the leading officials, the colonial administration variously included medical officers, superintendants of education, forestry officers and road engineers, all Europeans. Africans working for the British administration included the treasury clerks, first, second, third class district clerks and probationer clerks, messengers, interpreters and teachers.[60] This core was extended by forest guards, scribes, dressers, sanitary inspectors, drivers, overseers of road works and artisans.[61]

Following the endorsement of the trusteeship system under the United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations mandate in 1946, political structures were changed in 1949 when Bamenda became a province on its own. Meanwhile the three remaining divisions were once more grouped together under the Cameroons Province. A Commissioner was subsequently appointed to oversee the administration made up of one Resident, his D.O.s, A.D.O.s and departmental officers in either province. The office of the Commissioner was placed under the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Nigeria until 1954 when Southern Cameroons assumed a quasi-federal status under the Lyttelton Constitution. The Southern Cameroons Executive Council was henceforth put in charge of controlling policy matters. From 1951, the territory was reorganised into six divisions including Wum and Nkambe which had been carved out of Bamenda Division. The D.O.s' duties were geared to enhance the precept of Federated Native Authorities with a view to gradually increasing administrative autonomy pending independence in 1961.[62]

Prior to the Second World War, the thinly distributed European officials relied mainly on Native Administration, involving indirect rule through NAs, NCs and Native Treasuries. Colonial subjects came under a system of government that was based upon their customs and conducted through their traditional political institutions. This system was based on the Nigerian Native Courts Ordinance of 1914 and the Nigerian Native Authorities Ordinance of 1916. Both ordinances underwent a series of amendments along with Ordinance X of 1925 governing the general administration of British Southern Cameroons.[63] The practice of indirect rule retained its basic characteristics until the Second World War after which, according to the Atlantic Charter of 1941, Britain and the USA had promised 'to respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live.'[64]

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[59] Bamenda Divison was administered by 2 D.O.s and 5 A.D.O.s in 1934. The A.D.O.s alone shared 8 short terms of office. The following years equally witnessed frequent changes. See BNA Cb/1934/1, Bamenda Divison, Annual Report, 1934. Kumba Division played host to 4 D.O.s and 3 A.D.O.s in 1928. See BNA Cd/1928/1, file no. 9/1929, Kumba Division, Annual Report, 1928. Mamfe Division was home to 3 successive D.O.s and 4 A.D.O.s in 1937. See BNA Ce/1937/2, League of Nations Report on Mamfe Divison, 1937. No evidence has been collected to illustrate the turnover of British officials in Victoria Division. Similar trends may probably be inferred from the examples given above.

[60] See BNA Cb/1929/1 Bamenda Divison, Annual Report, 1929, p. 1.

[61] See BNA Cd/ 1937/1, file no. 2668, Kumba Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1937, p. 2. African government staff and employees in Kumba Division totalled 27 and 91 respectively in 1937.

[62] Verkijika G. Fanso. *Op. cit.*, pp. 125-129.

[63] See amendments of 1918, 1920, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1932, 1934 and 1941 in PRO CO 763 (6-29).

[64] Quoted in Tambi Eyongetah Mbuagbaw, Robert Brain & Robin Palmer. *A History of Cameroon*. Burnt Mill, Essex: Longman, 1990 (2nd ed.), p. 99.

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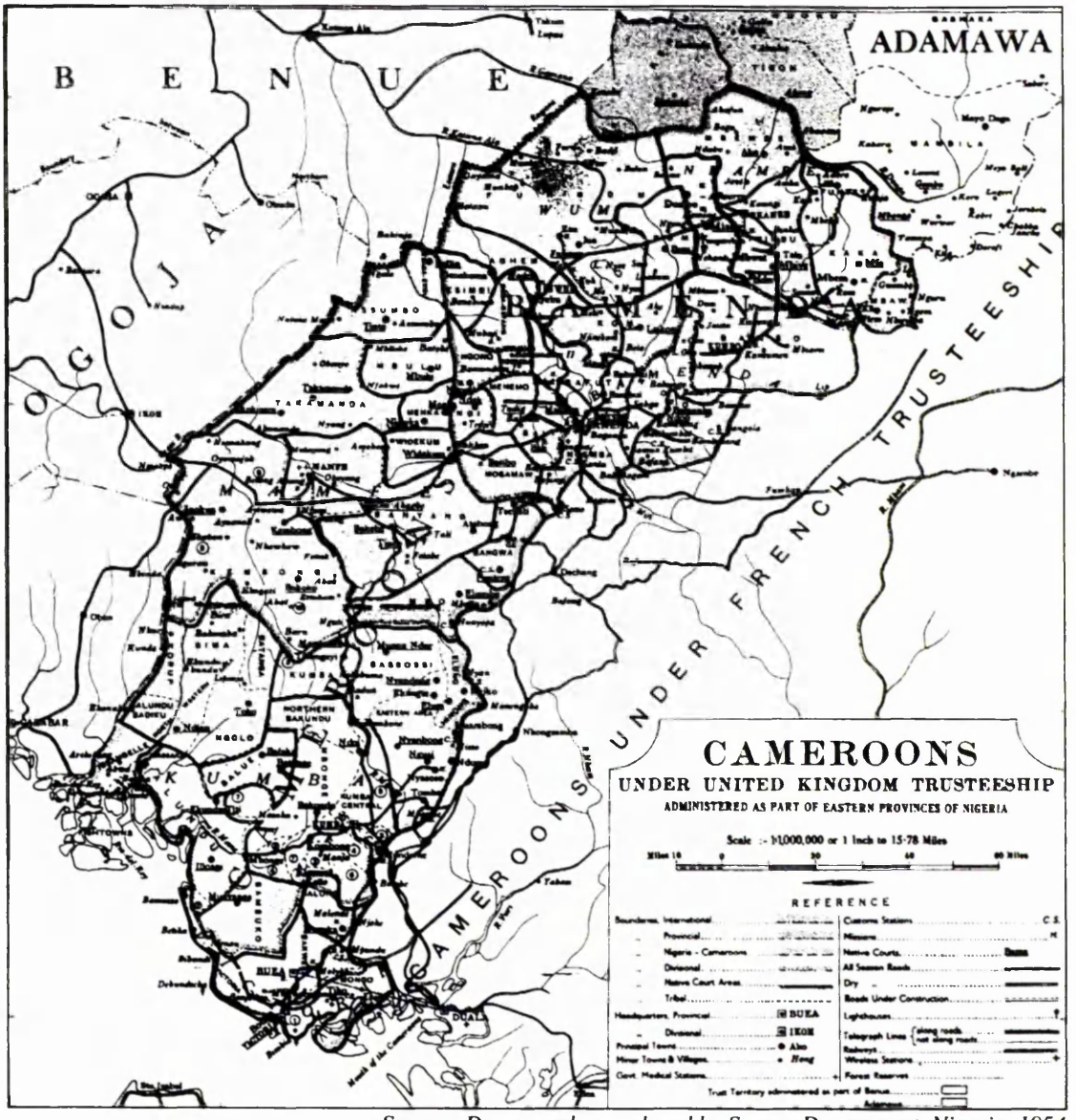

Source: Drawn and reproduced by Survey Department, Nigeria, 1954

Note: - The Smaller Native Court Areas and Tribal Areas and those consisting Of two or more detached are indicated by numbers thus 1

Victoria Div.: 1 Bimbia
2 Balong

Kumba Div.: 3 Balong
4 Ekumbe
5 Bafaw
6 Southern Bakundu
7 Barombi

Mamfe Div.: 8 Keaka
9 Ekwe
10 Obang

Bamenda Division was composed of 15 NAs and Native Councils by 1929, constituted in accordance with an assessment of 'ancient native institutions'.[65] Systematic assessment in the division – as elsewhere – started in 1923, resulting in the division of the first three NC areas into smaller districts based upon the following criteria: Where the head of a clan was recognised by several villages, he was retained in his position according to 'native law and custom' (for example in Banso, Bikom and Bali); was the head of a clan recognised by a single village, several villages were grouped together to form a district where the more influential heads would be appointed as council and court members (for example in Bafut, Fungom, Meta', Ndop, Ngemba, Ngie and Wum); wherever circumstances were deemed inappropriate, villages would not be grouped together as geographical units, causing some of them to get linked to clans with no traits of ethnic affiliation (for example in Moghamo, Ngunu and Mbembe). Such guidelines for village assessments were tied to a stipulation of the Native Authorities Ordinance to rank indigenous personnel at five different levels.

Native Administration faced difficulties with mixed councils of chiefs whose interests often proved difficult to harness collectively. This was partially tackled by paying heed to ethnic diversity as well as distinct patterns of traditional rule and consequently augmenting the number of NAs in two of the divisions. In 1937 Bamenda Division featured 22 NAs following a rise from three to 15 in the course of the 1920s.[66] Kumba Division witnessed an increase from ten to 19 between 1933 and 1934.[67] By contrast, the figures for Mamfe Division remained static, merely changing from seven to eight over the years.[68] Meanwhile Victoria Divison maintained 3 NAs throughout.[69] The smaller the number of NAs, it could be deduced, the more extensive the influence of those chiefs, sub-chiefs and village heads recognised, selected and instituted by the British colonial administration. An analysis of this assumption would have to take into account varied patterns of local social and political institutions. Suffice it here to illuminate relevant connections between the BM and NAs.

2.4.2 Controlling Colonial Subjects: A Challenge to Christianity?

As noted, the BM entertained cordial relations with several British officials around the period of her re-launch in Cameroon in 1925. Yet after enjoying exceptional support from Resident Ruxton, the BM faced a successor E. J. Arnett – labelled by Anthony Ndi as one of the 'High Priests' of indirect rule – who displayed a more reserved stance. [70] According to Arnett, Ndi notes, 'Foreign religions had disintegrating effects and tended to diminish the power of the chiefs and he considered them as an obstacle to the natural and gradual evolution of a stable NA.'[71] Reasons for doubt about fruitful collaboration with NAs were

[65] BNA Cb/1929/1, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1929, p. 6.
[66] BNA Cb/1937/1, file no 2270, Bamenda Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1937, p. 76.
[67] BNA Cd/1934/1, file no. 1541, Kumba Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1934, p. 14.
[68] BNA Ce/1937/2, League of Nations Report on Mamfe Division, 1937, p. 4.
[69] Verkijika G. Fanso. *Op. cit.*, p. 85.
[70] Anthony Ndi. Op. cit., p. 191.
[71] Ibid., p. 97.

of course not restricted to Arnett's term of office. As earlier reports on Mamfe Division disclose, NAs were major stumbling-blocks to the spread of Christianity at any given time. In 1918 chiefs in what was then still Ossidinge Division jointly sent positive signals about British rule, relishing all endeavours to reinstate their lost authority.[72] In the early 1920s they consolidated their position in the NAs which drew upon the regulatory and judiciary powers of secret societies in the NCs. This practice of law fell in line with the BM's rigid objection to secret societies such as the *Nyankpe* societies among the Banyang.[73]

Several problems faced the BM in Mamfe Division: The Banyang and Keaka peoples (two major groups in Mamfe Division) seemed not to be as open to 'conversion and zeal' as the populace of Bamenda Division. Second, missionary activity suffered the handicap of inexperienced catechists as compared to their counterparts in Bamenda Division whose training could be traced to the pre-war years. Third, several vernacular schools were run by 'ill-qualified Nigerians' who were apparently ignorant of the local languages. Fourth, only a few teachers were versed in Duala and reportedly often violated the education code as laid down by the British colonial authorities.[74] These points triggered grievances between BM Christians and *Nyankpe* members, leading to direct confrontations, such as the case reported by Moses Mbi from Igbekaw to the D.O. of Mamfe Division in late 1924:

> Sir, our native men said that we are not to build our church in its former place, saying that they want to build their nyankpe juju house there. But we refused to leave the place to them. Therefore they put their nyankpe there. They said if we build there, we will pay some money for their nyankpe. That is why we take the case to you so that you may call them and settle it.[75]

This case reflects the tenacity of both camps in debating prerogatives. Prior to 1925, British officials were inclined to predict the decline of Protestant Christianity, ostensibly sympathising with complaints by *Nyankpe* members about the 'disrespectful behaviour of Christian learners.'[76] Articulations of anti-Christian hostility went so far as threatening to stamp out its influence. Notably, the Village Council of Besongabang ordered everybody to swear an oath on the powerful *Mfam* medicine which amounted to sufficient evidence of not being possessed by a "witch". "Witch" is a synonym for forces that defied the order imbibed by traditional authority. This supposedly included Christian faith, as exemplified by four Christian wives who declared their immunity to the *Mfam* cult. As a result, they were forcibly removed from the church precincts by their husbands.[77]

It is worth adding that non-Christians and Christians discredited each other in similar ways. Either side refuted its opponent's values, justifying their viewpoints by employing the notion of a witch, a widely circulated currency among European missionaries. Carried

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[72] PRO CO 750, nos. 19 and 20, memoranda to the Colonial Office, 3 July 1918 and 28 July 1918.
[73] See also Chapter 4, pp. 142f., 148.
[74] BNA Sd/1923/5, file no. 26/1923, Why the mission faces difficulties in Mamfe Division, n.d.
[75] BNA Sd/1923/5, file no. 26/1923, Moses Mbi to the D.O., Mamfe Division, 25 November 1924.
[76] BNA Ce/1924/3, Mamfe Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 1924, p. 47.
[77] BNA Ce/1923/1, file no. 1120/1924, Annual Report, Mamfe Division, 1923, p. 46.

one step further, the term "witch" appears in the light of considerable reluctance in both camps to accept otherness. In the present context otherness signified a threat to prevailing customs, expressed through alternative beliefs and practices of social control.[78] Reactions to otherness often displayed self-righteousness, intolerance, misapprehension and fear.

Roman Catholic and Protestant catechists, who held up the banner of Christianity in the absence of European missionaries, were frequently considered trouble-makers by the local authorities.[79] This also affected mission schools. J. H. Pollock, D.O. for Mamfe Division, remarked in 1926 that the persisting negative image of Christianity resulted from waning popularity of some teachers who faced village councils with an 'attitude of superiority.'[80] It is not surprising that the dominant feature of local response to the renewal of organised Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division in 1925 was described as 'one of caution.'[81]

Given its demographic and ethnic diversity, Bamenda Division was likely to witness the most varied responses to Christianity. A rough demarcation separated the eastern portion of the division where the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Fathers took a leading role after 1922 from the western part where the BM was more prominently represented since 1903. While the Mill Hill Fathers confronted perennial disputes with the local authorities in Banso and Bikom Districts (chiefdoms), similar challenges in the BM community were concentrated around Bali.[82] In most recorded cases the disputes centred on the question of legitimising the inviolability of chiefs. While acknowledging the ambiguous impact of indirect rule in the Annual Report for Bamenda Division in 1922, it was concluded that the situation

> has been and is extremely difficult. On the one hand one desires to rule indirectly through Native Administration and therefore to uphold the prestige of the chiefs, and on the other hand one must allow full scope for Christian missionaries who... have no love for Native Administration.[83]

Although this passage refers explicitly to the Roman Catholics, it also applied to the BM in Bamenda Division. Representatives of either camp preferred to forward complaints to European officials rather than consulting the NAs.[84] And before 1925, BM plaintiffs and

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[78] See also Chapters 4 and 5.

[79] This is a recurrent categorisation in annual reports for Mamfe and Bamenda Divisions throughout the 1920s. See for example BNA Sd/1927/1, file no. 29/1927 and BNA Sd/1927/2, file no. C.b/27.

[80] BNA Dd/1926/1, file no. 7/4/26, Quarterly Reports, Mamfe Division, 1926, Report for the Quarter ending 30 September 1926, p. 7.

[81] BNA Dd/1925/1, file no. 9/4/25, Quarterly Reports, Mamfe Division, 1925, Report for the Quarter ending June 1925, p. 11.

[82] On African responses to Catholic missionary activities, see Jacqueline de Vries. *Catholic Mission, Colonial Government and Indigenous response in Kom (Cameroon)*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1998, pp. 37-60 and Anthony Ndi. Op. cit., pp. 94f., 107ff. See also BNA Cb/1918/2, Bamenda Division, Annual Reports, especially Annual Report, 1921, p. 9, and Annual Report, 1922, pp. 18-21; BNA, Cb/1924/2 Quarterly reports on the Bamenda Division, Cameroons Province, March 1924 - September 1927. P. Dieterle provides a general picture of the BM's community in Bali in BMCA E-4,7.69, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 7 June 1924.

[83] BNA Cb/1918/2, Bamenda Division, Annual Reports, 1918-1923, Annual Report, 1922, p. 21.

[84] BNA Cb/1918/2, Bamenda Division, Annual Reports, 1918-1923, Annual Report, 1922, p. 19, and Cb/1924/2, Quarterly Reports on the Bamenda Division, Cameroons Province, March 1924 - September 1927, Quarterly Report ending September, 1927, p. 19.

defendants were not vocal advocates from overseas but catechists who sought to alleviate the plight of their followers.

In contrast to Mamfe and Bamenda Divisions, conflicts between non-Christians and Christians as well as between Christians and NAs in Kumba and Victoria Divisions were generally less conspicuous. In Kumba Division, as in Bamenda Division, the BM's staff featured reputable African catechists and evangelists. Grievances that paralleled disputes in Mamfe Division were usually settled out of court. A distinction was made in 1922 between the positive attitude of the younger generation towards Christian missions and reservation among elders who viewed the latter with 'regretful tolerance.'[85] Three years later in 1925 it was observed that friction between non-Christians and Christians was dwindling. The fundamental cause for discontent among elder members was described as an imbalance of social privileges to the advantage of the emerging youth. Christian youths, in particular, were reprimanded for displaying insolence towards their "pagan" elders.[86]

Conditions in Victoria Division in the 1920s turned out to be favourable for the BM's congregations, bearing in mind that the NAs were dominated by Christian elements. As a result, it was stated in 1924 that missionary activity had achieved 'outstanding progress,' albeit without entirely discarding "paganism" which was considered to dominate in Buea District.[87] And however persistent the Christian advance might have looked, its adherents remained suspicious of any potential 'wolf in sheeps' clothing' in their midst. Such was the case when the death of catechist Zacharia Mbepe in Victoria stirred misapprehension among congregational members who accused a church elder of killing the man, insisting that the alleged assailant was a sorcerer. This rumour roused sufficient attention in mission circles to attract a thorough investigation by Modi Din.[88] As F. Bärtschi remarked in 1925, younger Christian communities in the northern parts of Victoria and Kumba Divisions and in the eastern area of Kumba Division confronted similar problems to the BM's distraught remnants in Mamfe Division. He reported wide resignation and stagnation in these areas and labelled them seedbeds for a new brand of 'paganism tinged with Christianity.'[89]

By and large, Native Administration in British Southern Cameroons clearly fell short of systematically involving Christians in the establishment of a new *modus vivendi* between European officials and Africans and between missionised communities and NAs. Rather, the local leaders of Christian congregations, mostly teacher-catechists, often appeared to be undermining colonial authority by exerting considerable influence in the outstations where they were posted. Many of them played a crucial part in trying to disengage the populace from traditional social and political institutions with a view to winning over new converts.

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[85] BNA Cd/1922/1, file no. 869/1923, Annual Report, Kumba Division, 1922, p. 11.
[86] BNA Cd/1925/1, file no. 1523/1926, Annual Report, Kumba Division, 1925, p. 20.
[87] BNA Cf/1924/1, file no. 1333/1925, Annual Report, Victoria Division, 1924, p. 20.
[88] BMCA E-4,7.72, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 25 October 1924.
[89] Archives of the EEC, Douala, F. Bärtschi, Auszug aus dem Jahresbericht pro 1925 an das Komité der Basler Mission (Extract from F. Bärtschi's Annual Report, 1925), p. 2. (My translation)

However, there is no evidence of a common agenda to supplant and replace traditional authority in the early 1920s. The teacher-catechists who engaged in drawn-out disputes as in Bali or Mamfe either fought on their own or formed small pressure groups. Essentially, then, the notion of local BM staff yielding unwarranted power and posing a threat to NAs and NCs was not a dominant feature but a challenging side-effect of the BM movements' struggle for survival. Thus the realms of teacher-catechist's activities became yardsticks of the prerogatives and limits of spreading Christian faith under varying circumstances.

Presumably the long-term effect of the missionary impact had been miscalculated both by European officials and traditional authorities. African cells of missionary Christianity evolved according to peculiar forms of appropriation by their adherents. These encounters were also coloured by the methods employed by the many untrained teacher-catechists to introduce liturgical rites and teachings from the Scriptures. Reinterpreting the Gospel was perhaps the key to self-reliance for congregations that were abandoned to experiment with themselves. Such experiments were not always consonant with official guidelines of public order as the D.O. of Mamfe Division, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, implied, predicting in 1923:

> The day... that sees the permanent location of European representatives of both creeds within the Division will mark the opening of a new era. Imperfectly educated and only partially supervised catechists cannot be expected to exert an influence that is uniformally beneficial to the community in that few can resist the temptation to utilise the power that the control of a large body of followers inevitably brings and are apt to fail to recognise their responsibilty in things temporal to a pagan chief.[90]

Patterns of interaction between African non-Christians and Christians in their different capacities varied considerably throughout the four divisions of the Cameroons Province in the 1920s. As Bärtschi fleetingly commented in 1925, returning European missionaries faced a wide range of changes among their target groups. He explained diverging degrees of commitment to Christian faith, arguing that the older, more experienced congregations had pursued their course more persistently than the younger ones.[91] A decisive criterion for Bärtschi's assessment was the recorded level of opposition in each area of the mission field. Significant opposition tendencies, he remarked, were reported from the new outposts around Kumba and Nyasoso as well as from Mamfe Division. Conversely, he observed that BM adherents in the coastal zone (Victoria Division) and in the Grassfields (Bamenda Division) had virtually adopted the missionary task as their own responsibility.

Much as African agents lamented opposition to their work, they were the very group of adversaries at the helm of opposition against traditional authority. But what did opposition signify to African Christians? According to Bärtschi, it amounted to an offshoot of Jesus' role as the master of all laws. These 'true' laws were superimposed over those put in place

[90] BNA Ce/1923/1, file no. 1120/1924, Annual Report, Mamfe Division, 1923, p. 45.
[91] Archives of the EEC, Douala, Friedrich Bärtschi, Auszug aus dem Jahresbericht pro 1925 an das Komité der Basler Mission (Extract from F. Bärtschi's Annual Report, 1925), pp. 2f.

under Native Administration as an assistant catechist exclaimed in a course on justice and Christian faith, 'therefore let us abide by this law [of Jesus], for every person who does so will live on.'[92]

This interpretation served as a powerful motive for adherence to Christian faith. But was it a tenable argument with which to justify defiance of traditional authority? In such circumstances Jesus appeared as a politicised leader who certainly provided guidance and preached endurance. But he sometimes inspired his followers to adopt a belligerent stance towards non-Christian elements. Teacher-catechists, often haphazardly appointed, not only gave rise to concern among British and local authorities but also to disillusionment about their militant methods of evangelisation. However unorthodox, though, survival strategies require a driving force. Both Rutherfoord's comments and the assistant catechist's verdict alluded to such an incentive which was widely interpreted in missionary circles as a quest for liberation among the BM's orphaned Christians. This assertion will now be explored in the light of African Christians' reactions to the re-emergence of the BM.

2.4.3 African Reactions to the Return of the Basel Mission: Leading Motives

Leaving the statistical data briefly alluded to in the previous chapter to one side, the very survival of BM congregations from 1914-1925 was remarkable in itself. Ekese and Modi Din were the two main links with the outside world. Commonly, they might have found a chance to inform their fellow Christians on the BM and prospects of future collaboration once every few months while on evangelisation tours. Local congregations, whether more or less experienced, large or small, basically had to sustain themselves with little external support. In the absence of ordained pastors besides Ekese, teacher-catechists shouldered virtually all the duties involved in leading such congregations. Although teacher-catechists belonged to an inferior category according to the echelons of the BM, this was presumably the time when they reached the summit of personal social and political prestige.[93] In their congregations they were ranked among few literate middlemen who performed additional roles as counsellors, plaintiffs and defendants. They enjoyed autonomy in the absence of a rigorous mechanism of control regulating the individual congregations in British Southern Cameroons. And not least, they represented a welcome alternative among many followers to social and political control under traditional rule as practised through the institution of NAs.[94] Conversely, however, the fact that Christians were occasionally ostracised by their adversaries put precisely this alternative at stake. To what extent did the woes of Christian congregations and teacher-catechists influence reactions by African adherents of the BM Church to the return of European missionaries?

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[92] Ibid.

[93] BMCA E-4,6, Das Personal der Protestantischen Kirche in Kamerun, n.d., miscellaneous notes. This proposal to rank African church workers appears to be based on the agreed terms of collaboration between the BM and the PEMS in 1925/26.

[94] See BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 8 August 1919 and 16 April 1920.

Evidence from the late 1910s and the first half of the1920s in support of the return of the BM from African agents and Christians more generally is scanty except for Ekese's contributions. Whether Ekese can be considered a spokesman for each congregation and teacher-catechist is questionable. Nevertheless, by dint of his position as the only ordained Cameroonian pastor in the ranks of the BM he was designated to be a communication link with the BM Home Board in Switzerland. His main concern after Rohde was repatriated in 1917 centred on the problem of co-ordinating and remunerating the African staff posted at outstations throughout the mission field. In late 1919, he appealed to W. Oettli:

> And we have enough teachers now, up to 46 T. from Bakwiri, Bombe, Nyasoso up to Balle [Bali] villages; and all these teachers are able to work, but they giveth alway [sic] the petition for their payment. But the church can't get enough help for all these. Also the goods (clothes) have been kept high price that 2 yards of cloth should cost up to 7 shillings... I only beseech so, for the Teachers haven't a sufficient salary and for the petition's sake.[95]

At that time teachers, or teacher-catechists, were hardly prone to becoming destitute as they enjoyed board and lodging provided for by their host villages.[96] All the same, Ekese reiterated the problem of funding, coupled with a lack of teaching material during the early 1920s.[97] Such practical requirements for outstations and village schools eventually gave way in 1923 to a recurring appeal for the return of European missionaries. Ekese's main point was that the BM's task was being jeopardised by competition from Catholic circles. He argued that the Mill Hill Fathers posed a threat to BM adherents who insisted that they should receive their own European missionaries lest they would switch to Catholicism.[98]

This hint of disorientation among Christians is reflected in Bärtschi's earlier comments on *Zuchtlosigkeit*, lack of discipline, which he saw as the dominant feature of a prevailing spirit of *liberté*.[99] In 1926 the Missionary Conference of the PEMS arrived at the similar conclusion that

> Our Christians in the Grassfields are spearheading the liberating movement which is very incomprehensible. Unfortunately, it seeks to attain freedom by destroying the present social order. The latter, however, is protected by the secret societies which enjoy the favourable disposition of chiefs and even the government.[100]

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[95] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 15 November 1919. See also J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, 6 August 1919, and J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, 3 October 1919.
[96] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to R. Rohde, Membea, 5 August 1919.
[97] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 1 September 1920, 16 May 1921, 10 November 1921, 5 April 1923 and 21 February 1923.
[98] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 5 April 1923 and 29 May 1923. Ekese had however already appealed to the Oettli to consider sending more missionary staff from Europe in 1921. See J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 15 August 1921 and 27 February 1922.
[99] BMCA E-4,7.8, Extract from a letter by F. Bärtschi, Ndounge, 15 November 1920. The term "*liberté*" is referred to here in its orginal form as employed by Bärtschi and several of his colleagues in the PEMS.
[100] BMCA E-4,6, Bericht über die 6. Konferenz der Pariser Mission, Ndounge, 6 February 1926. (My translation)

Oettli was keen to avoid disparities between the 'present social order' and Christianity. He wrote to C. Frey in 1925 that liberation in Christian circles ought to be approached from a culture-sensitive angle. His view mirrors a policy of the BM set out by Mission Inspector Th. Oehler in 1886: 'The society sees it as its duty to preserve the national character of the different peoples in so far as these do not through their heathen character conflict with Christianity.'[101] W. Oettli's concern went beyond preserving the "national character" in consonance with Christian principles. His objective was to reorient missionary advance by drawing upon appropriate traditional social institutions. Relating to emancipation among the Bamileke under the 'liberating' influence of Christianity, he suggested with regard to the Bamum that such institutions should be respected and maintained by missionaries as much as possible. In line with Bruno Gutmann's approach in East Africa he proposed that Christian communities could be organised analagously to the *Mandjong* structures among the Bamum.[102]

Liberation was not confined to Christian circles. It also inspired revolutionary counter-trends, notably the *Ngu* movement which emerged among the Bamileke and spread to the Bamum. According to Frey, *Ngu* aimed at total independence from traditional authority and ritual objects. Candidates acquired membership through the consumption of a special potion. Members were united through rules that prohibited the attendance of Christian worship and other religious practices. Strict adherence was required under punishment by death sentence if any rule was breached. Members worshipped a singular female heavenly being, *Manyi*. In the broader context of Bamum society, Frey claims, *Ngu* was intended as a regulatory antidote aginst *parum* (causes of illness and death) and *pie* (leopard-men).[103]

Culturally sensitive or self-imposing, Christian or non/anti-Christian – on the one hand, the widespread notion of *liberté* provided a key to the transformation of social and political affiliation. Consequently, it served as a means to escape oppression through government, traditional and religious authority. On the other hand, Modi Din's comment on increasing participation in church services supports the Christian ideal of 'awakening' within – rather than in defiance of – the prevailing system.[104] Dieterle praised this development, adding:

> The Gospel is a great liberation.... The light that has been projected by pupils of mission schools into their villages during the war has flooded the country, and today we find a mass movement progressing from everywhere towards this light. A real *mouvement indigène* in the positive sense of the term.[105]

The concept of *mouvement indigènes* was as a *Leitmotiv* for Christian communities in the absence of European missionaries. However, it was a term used by the latter rather than

[101] Erik Halldén. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.
[102] BMCA E-4,7.145, W. Oettli to C. Frey, Basel, 1 October 1925. Viewing *Mandjong* as a class system in Bamum society, Oettli wrote: 'If the social classes, the Mandjong...could be preserved or Christian congregations could be organised similarly, then all manner of fate would be prevented.' (My translation)
[103] BMCA E-4,7.150, C. Frey to W. Oettli, 12 January 1927.
[104] BMCA E-4,4.2, J. Modi Din to Vöhringer, Douala, 5 May 1919.
[105] BMCA E-4,7.69, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 7 June 1924. (My translation)

by Africans who stressed that they were not willing to continue promoting Christian faith without help from overseas. Reasons for this varied. Ekese's appeals generally reveal that the return of European missionaries was expected to alleviate the burden of organising the mission field without sufficient means, manpower and support.[106] Ekese's concerns were amplified by the view in PEMS circles and among some colonial officials that he and other Africans were unable to run the missionary enterprise.[107] The response to allegations that led to such disrepute is typified by Ekese's colleague in Douala, Josef Kuo. Kuo reviewed his actions, having been suspended from the PEMS on account of 'shameless behaviour', declaring: 'The fact that I have gone so far is largely to blame on the Mission. You always speak of freedom, of independence. We Blacks do not know what to do with this freedom. We require leadership, control, and authority.'[108] Although trends of liberation or freedom evoked either praise or consternation in missionaries' comments, they fell short of actually implanting themselves in the Christian community as the ultimate recipe for the future. On the contrary, they emerged as short-lived phenomena that merely persisted until changes occurred that upset the fragile balance of power and privileges in the colonial system. All the same, subscribing to *liberté* provided a basis for self-confidence irrespective of Frey's critique in 1927 that 'Certainly, our communities will become autonomous, but only to the extent that they are morally mature.'[109]

Two years earlier, in 1925, Frey had already pointed at the evolving dynamics of local economies penetrating the coastal hinterlands, dubbing the process an offshoot of the 'Douala spirit'. This revolved around increasing cocoa farming and trade along with the extension of the regional railway. Frey linked the 'Douala spirit' to race consciousness. Blacks, he wrote, were no more bothered by their skin colour and spoke more freely about exploitation by Whites who, in turn, encountered dwindling respect due to the First World War. He therefore emphasised that the imminent danger of partisan politics spreading and disrupting work for the creation of the Kingdom of God ought to be forestalled.[110] This continued preoccupying Frey as European missionaries began to return. The predicament of the missionary enterprise, he stated some years later in 1930, was that African staff had lost confidence in white missionaries due to the absence of a distinct dogmatic position. In his words, 'Our black Christians are not dogmatic, but they request clear guidelines from those whom they wish to recognise as leaders in their religious lives.... They have thrown away a whole religious system. What they want in return is a proper substitute.'[111] Frey's proposed solution stressed the need for a 'very strong Christian personality who would be

[106] BMCA E-4,4.1, J. L. Ekese to W. Oettli, Membea, 15 August 1921, 27 February 1922, 5 April 1923 and 29 May 1923.
[107] This was reinforced by several charges against Ekese on the grounds of misappropriation of church funds and excessive drinking. See BMCA E-4,7.61, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 16 September 1923; BMCA E-4,7.7, P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 25 October 1924.
[108] BMCA E-4,7.153, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Buea, 26 August 1927. (My translation)
[109] Ibid. (My translation)
[110] BMCA E-4,7.147, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Ndoungue, November 1925.
[111] BMCA E-4,7.183, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 14 June 1930. (My translation)

able to inspire new religious life in those [Bamum] communities through God's spirit.'[112] He viewed spiritual guidance as the key to reconciliation between Africans and Europeans, especially where religious convictions were coupled with forms of political activism.

Political involvement of BM agents was recorded in Bali. Furthermore, it was generally resented that the BM's movement was fuelling political undercurrents in Mamfe Division. Their Catholic counterparts raised more eyebrows among British officials until 1928 when E. G. Hawkesworth, Ag. D.O. in Bamenda Division, claimed: 'The Christians are in most places now content with the administration of the Chief and his Council and have ceased to try to claim a separate political existence under the leadership of the catechist.'[113] As such, Hawkesworth also expressed satisfaction at Vielhauer's endeavours to resolve the disputes between the BM teacher-catechists and the Fon of Bali.

In sum, the return of European missionaries prompted encouraging reactions from the Cameroonian BM adherents. Their re-launch was a chance for the largely underqualified, underequipped and understaffed indigenous personnel to seek relief. Claiming affiliation to an institution that was willing to cope both with the colonial context and large-scale co-ordination of evangelisation was accompanied, however, by high expectations. The demand for future improvements emerges from Bärtschi's remark in 1925 that many Christians were disappointed 'at not yet having found what they were looking for in the Gospel.'[114]

2.5 Conclusion

The changing political landscape in British Southern Cameroons produced new levels of interaction between African church workers and Native Administration. This influenced the BM's movement through trends of continuity and discontinuity as will be illustrated below. Directives addressing the future of missionary activity were two-pronged, covering selection criteria for European agency and discernible progress among "native" agents. The colonial authorities' largely sceptical attitudes towards the latter had a decisive impact on shaping a ruling opinion in favour of calling missionary societies back to their task. In spite of frequent criticism and aversion, "native" agency remained the basis for sustained evangelisation in the absence of European missionaries. It also provided the foundation for varied patterns of congregational development. Such traits of Christian expansion were paralleled by the fact that Native Administration drew upon a similar diversity of traditional authorities to govern colonial subjects through indirect rule. But Native Administration, which operated through colonial sanction, afforded a considerable degree of autonomy to its African agents from the onset. By contrast, the autonomy of "native" agents in the BM from 1917-1925 was an early unforeseen, experimental manifestation of self-reliance. This process demonstrated that assimilated values of Christianity could provide both the means

[112] Ibid. (My translation)
[113] BNA Cb/1928/2, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1928, p. 40.
[114] Archives of the EEC, Douala, F. Bärtschi, extract from his Annual Report, 1925, p. 2. (My translation)

and the end for the survival of a new belief system in the wider realm of changing foreign control. "Native" agency was responsible for maintaining a certain degree of continuity in keeping Christian faith altogether alive. Conversely, discontinuity was apparent at the local level where congregations were held together by professing singular representations of the Gospel. BM congregations lacked coherent organisational and social control. Individual congregations remained more or less isolated and relied mainly on their teacher-catechists' clerical, pedagogical, linguistic, social and diplomatic skills. Since "native" agents were often appointed at will and did not share equal qualifications, their influence varied. So did conditions for the expansion of Christianity, which were more conducive in some areas of the mission field – notably in Meta' – than in others – in Mamfe and Kumba Divisions.

Christianity transformed as its adherents asserted themselves, bearing up against non-Christian aversion and European scepticism. Outlining polarities between Christians and non-Christians or Christians and Native Authorities raises the problem of oversimplifying the issues at stake. Beneath reported tensions and disputes there were symbolic elements including concepts of 'witch' (evil), 'supreme being' (creator, guardian) and others that mutually permeated distinct notions of 'Self' and 'Other'. Such ideas were replicated and inspired the exchange of symbols of religious configuration and social cohesion. Further, symbols and symbolic gestures can be ascribed to what Bärtschi vaguely and presumably mistakenly referred to as 'paganism tinged with Christianity'. Looking at the roots of this phenomenon, it seems to have stemmed from changing ways of appropriating Christianity. Such processes of appropriation produced various brands of Christian faith with peculiar traits. These features blended with otherness, in this case embodied by "paganism".

Symbolism went hand-to-hand with early political activism in Cameroon's BM circles. The most common political theme embraced ideas of *liberté*. This term, which circulated in the ranks of the PEMS, encapsulates both the path towards freedom and freedom proper. Indeed, the notion of *liberté* is crucial to the study of African BM Christians' responses to foreign influences in British Southern Cameroons in the 1920s. BM adherents were under foreign political control and they faced renewed foreign missionary supervision. Prospects of continuing alone, however, probably became so daunting that the BM's authority was clearly favoured. African Christians cast aside all doubts raised in Bärtschi's observation of widespread resignation once the BM had assumed full responsibility for her enterprise in 1925. Indeed, there is no indication of choice about accepting or rejecting missionary supervision, for decisions were taken by the colonial authorities and the BM Home Board.

"Native" agents had concluded a first chapter on unintended selfhood. This was a vital stepping-stone towards Africanising the congregational and church structures. As the BM reorganised her offshoots into a coherent movement, "native" agency continued to play a central part. African clergy, laity and Christian adherents alike pursued a struggle that was monitored by European missionaries but evolved on the basis of local initiatives, showing how the BM's Christian movement fermented from its indigenised grassroots upwards.

3. Mobilising the Gospel: Itineracy, Trade, and Migrant Labour

Increasing human mobility in the 20th century had a significant impact on the strategy of the BM's enterprise in Cameroon. Plantation labour and road works, the rising demand for farm produce and the distribution of merchandise via the Calabar-Mamfe trade route and the ports of Victoria and Douala all generated new economic incentives for the local population. These factors produced distinct patterns of internal migration.[1] The developing trends of fluctuation among rural communities complicated the BM's goal of reaching out to widely scattered, mostly small settlements throughout British Southern Cameroons.[2]

The present chapter explores the socio-economic dimension of missionary expansion. Income opportunities are investigated as possible motives for adherence to the Christian movement. It might appear to be stating the obvious that adherence to Christianity, notably for educational purposes, provided a key attraction for job-seekers, but this common-place begs a more complex question: To what extent did mission subjects who were temporarily absorbed in various areas of the colonial economy remain loyal to their home communities and the BM? By granting access to employment opportunities, the BM confonted herself and her subjects with the challenges of economic competition and social control. Sharon Stichter says: 'What is important here is not political centralization, but rather the extent to which elders, chiefs or kings controlled the labor time of junior males or other dependent clans or ethnic groups, either within or outside households.'[3] On the one hand, there was a remarkable degree of solidarity for example among the Banyang whose elders commonly catered for local lineages in the absence of migrant labourers, expecting them to take over upon their return. This sense of duty was matched with a sense of security in that the aims of seeking paid labour were often not for unique expenditures such as bridewealth but for 'long-term "career" intentions'.[4] On the other hand, as the case of the Bakweri illustrates, rising mobility provoked instability through potential interethnic conflicts where stranger's quarters were formed.[5] The ideal Christian units built around family nuclei, lineages and village communities were changing in the face of migration and occupational diversity.

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[1] I focus on internal migration. For a useful discussion on the sub-categories of return/circular migration and in-migration, see Sharon Stichter. *Migrant Laborers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 1-28. The scope of economic activity in Cameroon was set out under German rule and partly continued under the British. See Harry Rudin. *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914. A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1938, pp. 222-296.

[2] On settlement structures, see Malcolm Ruel. *Leopards and Leaders. Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1969, pp. 2f, 16; Heinrich Balz. *Where the Faith has to live. Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion. Part I: Living Together*. Basel: Basel Mission, 1984, pp. 37, 39; Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Traditional Bamenda. The Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Government Printer, 1967, pp. 6f. Urban growth in British Southern Cameroon was centred on Bamenda, Kumba and Victoria. Much of the BM's mission field was rurual once Douala, Mangamba and Foumban in the French zone had come under the PEMS.

[3] Sharon Stichter. *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

[4] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, pp. 15f.

[5] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Plantation and Village in the Cameroons*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 263, 336.

From the 1920s, the BM had to adjust to this development by deploying a fast-growing body of indigenous teachers, catechists and assistant catechists. With a focus on putting a decentralised system of missionary organisation in place, connections between mission compounds, relating to the central European mission stations, and the concept of 'village mission' are explored. This ties in with the aim of extending the missionary front into the 'hinterlands' of the BM's stations. The discussion is then chanelled towards the interplay between commercial activity and mission and between plantation labour and mission.

3.1 Paths of Itineracy: From Mission Station to Village Mission

The First World War ushered in a decade of mission without missionaries. The largely rural mission field urged the BM to shift her focus from large mission posts to outstations that were manned by teacher-catechists. This reorganisation intensified once the European missionaries began to return to Cameroon after 1925. 21 of the BM's 29 mission stations founded from 1886-1957 were opened before the First World War. In 1914, merely six of the pre-war mission stations and 114 of 388 outstations came under the administration of British Southern Cameroons. The number of outstations in the region rose to 179 in 1926, 368 in 1928, 510 in 1936, 604 in 1938 and 698 in 1942 when it reached its apogee. The figures for outstations in the old BM fields in China, the Gold Coast and India remained significantly lower. They were 130, 61[6] and 99 respectively in 1928; 124, 253 and 97 in 1936; 129, 265 and 106 in 1938 and 150, 339 and 111 in 1942.[7] In order to relate these statistics to the larger picture, it can be added that the Cameroonian membership of the BM Church lagged behind adherence to the mission churches in the other three fields until well into the 1930s. Thus proportions between the total membership of Christian communities and the number of their congregations varied considerably in different areas of the BM's presence. This indicates that the level of centralisation or decentralisation in each mission field was decided upon in respect of their varied demographic and socio-economic factors.

Another modification of the missionary enterprise brought about by the experience of the First World War and the immediate post-war era was increased itinerant supervision.[8] Not only were resident European missionaries withdrawn during that decade, but mission stations were also closed and placed under public custodianship as enemy property.[9] In the event, the most conspicuous signposts of Christianity – sprawling compounds around large mission residences, 'carraboard' (plank) churches with zinc spires – the hallmarks of mission architecture – and white missionaries clad in formal attire, equipped with ornate accessories and accompanied by entourages of bearers and assistants – thus disappeared

[6] The statistics for 1928 and the following years until 1935 refer only to parishes among the Ashanti.
[7] The Annual Reports of the Basel Mission, 1914-1968 provide detailed statistics for the study.
[8] See also Chapter 1, pp. 40-57.
[9] Mission stations were sequestrated as enemy property under General Dobell's military command and subsequently placed under the supervision of the Commonwealth Trust Ltd. Gov. Clifford initiated discussions about the release of the property in 1923. It was returned to the BM following the return of European missionaries in 1924/25. Miscellaneous correspondence in PRO CO 750, Vols. 1-5, nos. 1-48.

temporarily from the realm of religious encounters. Typically, a more indigenised form of representation replaced the paraphernalia of Europeans. The most common evidence of Christian presence and adherence was a small, usually makeshift chapel built with various components of rafia palms. Alternatively, mud bricks were employed to reinforce skeletal frames made of rafia stems and other branches. Such buildings were covered with thatched roofing or corrugated sheets of zinc instead of palm-branch mats. They were more costly, reflecting growing membership and wealth within the community.[10] In the 1930s refined church architecture became prominent among the Meta' who acquired a reputation as the most ardent followers of the BM.[11] Outstation churches appear to have been positioned strategically within reasonable proximity of village authorities, suggesting either a means of facilitating close surveillance of congregational reunions, symbols of prestige, or both.[12] The original sites of church buildings often remained unchanged throughout sequences of renovation and extension as new structures were raised around and over old ones.[13]

The evolution of church and chapel architecture during the 20th century offers valuable insights about innovations of material culture, different stages of congregational growth or decline and interaction between Christians and non-Christians. Apart from constituting a space for worship and devotion, churches served as congregational meeting places and centres of the popular mission feasts. Moreover, they were used for vernacular instruction and catechism classes. They embodied singular features of the local *quartier* life, typifying variants of multipurpose community space, much like the courtyards of village palaces.[14] Ideally, BM Inspector Emil Kellerhals noted on an extensive trip through the Cameroonian mission field in 1933/1934, outstations embodied prominent symbols of order. 'The yard [surroundings of the church and the teacher's house],' he complimented, 'is frequently an idyll of cleanliness and friendliness amidst the dirt and disorder of the village.'[15]

Genres of this kind advocated conversion at different levels: conversion to Christian faith, conversion to another lifestyle with new values and conversion to a reformed outward appearance expressed through hygiene and neatness.[16] Spatial distinctiveness of outstation premises from the village neighbourhood entailed radiating publicity in order to attract audiences for evangelisation campaigns and preaching (*Heidenpredigt*).[17] Indeed, they

[10] The 'dilapidated' chapels of the Bakweri are contrasted with the 'modern' chapel of Grassland Christians in Buea in BMCA E-5-1,1, Jakob Erne, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1933.
[11] See for example BMCA E-5-1,2, W. Häberle, Annual Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1936.
[12] The locations of outstations defined a nexus between the Christian movement and village authority.
[13] On Ye, see BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1936; on Bamedü, see A. Vielhauer, 'Unsere Bali-Christen', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1926(3), p. 43.
[14] See Christraud Geary. *Images from Bamum. German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988. See also the photograph BMCA E-30.92.109, "An audience with the new chief of Bonenyang (Minge) 1934."
[15] BMCA E-5-8,5, Emil Kellerhals. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun. Basel, 29 January 1935, p. 20.
[16] Interview with Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 19 April 1999.
[17] On similar findings, see Anne Hugon. 'L'implantation du méthodisme en Côte de l'Or au XIXe siècle: Stratégies d'évangelisation et modalités de diffusion (1835-1874).' Paris, Ph.D., 1995, vol. I, pp. 129ff.

formed vital nodes between Christians and non-Christians. Both photographic and written evidence illustrates how the two camps converged to attend the *Heidenpredigt* or celebrate festive occasions that generally roused considerable curiosity and often offered spectacular alternatives to traditional ceremonies involving entire villages or chiefdoms.[18]

As BM Inspector Kellerhals emphasises, the newly baptised were not accommodated in Christian villages modelled on the noted precedents of the Gold Coast.[19] The missionised community in British Southern Cameroons was widely dispersed and generally composed of small, remote and fragile settlements of adherents to Christianity. Typically, to use the example of the BM's former station in Foumban, run by the PEMS since 1917, 'The sites [of the outstations], located within a radius of two to five hours [from Foumban], are not manned to date. The people who are inclined toward the Gospel come to the town.'[20] The scores of catechists employed at any one time between 1926 and 1968 barely matched the number of outstations. This was the most obvious reason for increasing itinerant staff after the return of European personnel in 1924/25. Evangelists were responsible for examining baptismal candidates and catering for catechists and congregations while ordained pastors were in charge of distributing the sacraments in consonance with the BM's regulations.[21] Itinerant clergy remained critical to Christian advance, even on the brink of substituting the lay ministry for the African *clerus minus* in 1968. The task of reorganising the church, a memorandum set out in 1967, continued to render 'mobile evangelists' indispensable.[22]

The co-ordination of outstations served to reinforce the BM's complicated local set-up. This implied forging alliances between the individual cells of Christian adherents in order to enhance their growth and self-reliance. It was unacceptable, G. Tischhauser reported on the attitude of the Bafut in 1933, 'that a congregation only sees to its own requirements; rather, it must engage in mission work, too, in order to survive. They [the congregations] must select an area as their own mission field and jointly support all new tasks in the area of Bafut.'[23] Tischhauser's critique invokes the object of early experiments with selfhood, the task of promoting 'mission within the mission', inspiring a process of 'missionisation

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[18] The following photographs attest to joint gatherings: BMCA E-30.86.029, "An evangelist preaching the gospel." 1932/1937; BMCA E-30.86.188, "Rev. Daniel Foningon preaching to non-christians, using the fetishes belonging to a magician from the We district. (Now no longer working because of illness)." 1932/1945; BMCA E-30.82.042, "Dedication of the church in Mboakwe (Bamedig). Asili is standing at the rear on the right." 1924/1928; BMCA E-30.91.051, "The missionary Weber preaching to the mourners of the deceased chief (Batibö-area)." 1935/937; BMCA E-30.92.016, "Re. Wunderli evangelises." 1924/1935; BMCA E-30.91.043, "Two grassfields chiefs at the mission festival in Babesi (Grassfields)." 1933/1934.

[19] Emil Kellerhals. Op. cit., p. 12.

[20] 'Aus unseren ehemaligen Gebieten. Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1922(1), p. 12. (My translation)

[21] See BMCA E-9-1, III, 5b, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, 6 February 1935, § 105, p. 18.

[22] The supervisory role of an itinerant *clerus minus* was sustained, albeit eventually at a considerably reduced level, throughout all organisational changes, including the autonomy of the PCWC in 1957 and the abolition of the catechist ministry in 1968. See PCCCAL 2598, PCWC, Department for Lay Training, Memorandum on the future policy of the Church concerning the ministry of the Evangelist and Catechist, Fiango, March 1967.

[23] BMCA E-5-1,1, Georg Tischhauser, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1933. (My translation)

BMCA E-30.86.029, J. W. Zürcher, "An evangelist preaching the gospel." 1932/1937.

BMCA E-30.86.188, J. W. Zürcher, "Rev. Daniel Foningon preaching to non-Christians, using the fetishes belonging to a magician from the We district. (Now no longer working because of illness)." 1932/1945.

BMCA E-30.83.042, E. Wunderli, "Dedicating the Church in Mboakwe (Bamedig); Asili is standing at the rear on the right." 1924/1928.

BMCA E-30.91.051, F. Mischler (Ms), The missionary Weber preaching to the mourners of the deceased chief (Batibö-area)." 1935/1937.

BMCA E-30.92.016, E. Staub, "Rev. Wunderli evangelises." 1924-1935.

BMCA E-30.91.043, E. Kellerhals, "Two grassfields chiefs at the mission festival in Babesi (Grassfields)." 1933/1934.

through the missionised'. This agenda bolstered the foundation of a continuum that was reaffirmed in the Book of Orders of the PCC: 'The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon has an evangelical, missionary outlook which is rooted in its historical beginnings.'[24]

The concept of 'mission within the mission' calls for further reflection on the formula for decentralisation in the BM's enterprise. *Out*-stations were set apart just as the mission field comprised a separate domain from the BM Home Board in Switzerland. The linkages between the mission field and the Home Board and between each mission station and the Principal of the mission field in Cameroon were based on a centre-periphery model. This was reproduced at a third level, based on the necessity for evangelistic microcosms, local mission fields that comprised the 'polis' of the BM Church, to be coordinated through the European mission stations.[25] The concept of polis as apprehended here is borrowed from Ruel's remarks on community patterns among the Banyang. It is employed to throw light on the approximation of mission networks to local social organisation. According to Ruel,

> The *etok* is a group of people who live together and who, by virtue of this fact, are, on the one hand, assumed to share an identity of interest in the regulation of their common affairs, and, on the other, are expected to observe the corporate authority of the group, as it is expressed collectively by those who represent them. This concept defines what I speak of as the Banyang 'political community'. An *etok* is a residential group organized to govern itself: one might speak of it as the 'polis' of Banyang political organization.'[26]

To stress the analogy with the BM's structures, Ruel's analysis could be rephrased by substituting 'BM Church congregations' for the idea of Banyang 'political communities'. BM congregations resembled integral components of the political communities among the Banyang. As such, they were incorporated into the web of indigenous social and political institutions. This occurred in varying degrees among the different peoples throughout the mission field. Thus outstations, 'bush' churches, village teacher-catechists, and vernacular instruction all bore features of Africanisation at the grassroots. Given that missionisation through the missionised relied largely on local initiatives, Africanisation lay at the heart of Christian advance. The successful extension of the missionary frontiers relied on itinerant African church workers to guarantee orientation, co-ordination, support and control.

Since teacher-catechists were assigned to outstations, the itinerant *clerus minus* was mainly composed of evangelists who were appointed to oversee specifically demarcated districts.[27] From 1928-1945 the number of evangelists climbed from 17 to 41 while that of African pastors rose from two in 1929 to 14 in 1945. By 1957, the figures had reached 42 and 39 respectively. Meanwhile, as the number of catechists was almost halved between

[24] Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. *Book of Orders. Procedure and Practice of the Church*. Limbe, Presbook Press, 1995, p. 4.
[25] For an excellent in-depth analysis of the BM's centre-periphery model, see Jon Miller. *The Social Control of Religious Zeal. A Study of Organizational Contradictions*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994, pp. 75-113.
[26] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 20.
[27] These districts were demarcated during the inter-war years. E. Kellerhals. Op. cit., p. 10.

1942 and 1957 from 702 to 384, the contingent of teachers expanded from 52 to 502.[28] Suffice it to comment on these statistics cursorily. The ordination of African pastors was concentrated around the two decades preceding the PCWC's autonomy in 1957 except for J. L. Ekese and P. Essoka who assumed full pastoral duties in 1929. The separation of the dual capacity of teacher-catechists occurred in 1932 and was later entrenched in the 1940s through improvements of teachers' training programmes.[29] The vital role of evangelists as brokers between the congregations/outstations and the mission stations is not reflected in a steady increase of their numbers. What can be discerned, instead, is a trend of levelling the contingent in accordance with the requirements in each district.[30] In other words, there was no need to assemble a large reservoir of new evangelists once all the districts were staffed.

As Christian advance continued, 'mobile evangelists' played an important part in the shift from evangelisation campaigns to the formation of congregations, particularly in the Grassfields.[31] Until 1930, this section of the mission field was entirely co-ordinated from the BM station in Bali. By the late 1930s, four new stations, Mbengwi (1930), Kishong (1932), We (1932) and Bafut (1937) had emerged. Five mission stations in the Forest area had been opened prior to 1930, including Victoria (1887), Buea (1896), Nyasoso (1896), Besongabang (1912) and Dikume Balue (1928). In 1943 the Grassfield area was divided into 23 evangelists' districts, averaging 15-20 outstations each. The expanse of the region illustrates remoteness: In 1930 Evangelist Thomas Fe was put in charge of 14 catechists in the Nsungli/Mbembe area some 150km north-east of his origins in Bali. In the same year, John Mösi left Meta' for a new post in Kishong, Banso, almost as far from home as Fe.[32] Poor means of transport and long distances between home areas and outstation posts often discouraged BM agents from accepting such transfers. Reviewing the largely unfavourable conditions and recurring reluctance among evangelists, J. W. Zürcher reported in 1944:

> We have decided to construct an attractive evangelist's residence at the centre of each district. Such residences shall not be turned into private property but will belong to the community. The congregations of each evangelists' district will be in charge of their centres. We hope to make houses out of clean bricks. A second building is foreseen for the evangelist to organise courses and for preparations with his catechists at any time. The evangelist's residence should represent a kind of cell that radiates life into the surrounding villages.[33]

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[28] Annual Reports of the Basel Mission, 1928-1957.

[29] This distinction was initiated at the Catechist's and Teacher's Seminar in Nyasoso. Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 295.

[30] The mediating function of African clergy was reinforced by their 'insider knowledge' of parish affairs. On the same point in an East African context, see Thomas O. Beidelman. *Colonial Evangelism. A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 177ff.

[31] Interview with Thomas Ngwane Ediage, Nyasoso, 19 April 2000. Christian advance in the Forest area in the 1920s and 1930s revolved around the reinstatement of the old mission stations. Emil Kellerhals. Op. cit., p. 9, mentions ethnic diversity and complexity in the Forest area, together with organisational constraints of the BM, as the main reasons for slow progress.

[32] BMCA E-5-1,1, Paul Leu, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1933; Werner Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 280.

[33] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), 10 July 1944, p. 6. (My translation)

By linking the dissemination of Christianity to the objective of 'radiating life', Zürcher points at the core of an all-embracing approach to evangelism that underlay the agenda of itineracy. The leading evangelists in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, portrayed as extraordinarily energetic and committed personalities, fit into this picture. Some of them were eventually promoted following extensive periods of service as itinerant preachers. Johannes Ashili, the reputed Meta' pioneer, and his Bafut colleague Jakob Shu, both from the Grassfields, were ordained together with Daniel Lyonga, Emil Molindo and Elisa Peta from the Forest area in 1937.[34] Daniel Foningong, John Mösi and Elisa Ndifon, all from the Grassfields, followed in 1938.[35] Catherine Musoko stresses emphatically that such 'men of God used to travel for *miles on foot* for their evangelism work.'[36] In J. Erne's view, 'moving around on foot' instead of travelling by car in order to find more time for personal encounters and conversations was an essential criterion for effective evangelisation.[37]

Long pre-ordination experiences in the lower ranks of the BM continued to characterise the course of the Christian movement during the years to follow. Rev. Peter Mfuh Kenji, for instance, looks back on a remarkably diverse career. Born in 1925, he started as a cook for a German lady in Bamessing in 1939 and made his way to the coastal plantations when she was interned at the beginning of the Second World War. The 12-day journey on foot took him to Mutengene where he was employed on a banana farm for two months before returning to the Grassfields to enroll at the Catechist Training Institution (CTI) in Bafut. Upon completing the course in 1943, he was appointed as a catechist from 1944-1951 in Bamunka, Balikumbat, Bamessing and Bamundun I-Mankon. He became an evangelist from 1952-1971, initially for the entire Ngoketunjia Division, thereafter for the parishes of Baba I, Bamunka and Balikumbat. Kenji was later authorised as Assistant Pastor for the Upper Ndop area in 1972 and was then ordained in Bamessing in 1974. In that same year he received the Cameroon Medal of Merit from the CNU government and was nominated by decree as Assessor of the Court of Appeal in Bamenda. Kenji also served as a member of the Special Police from 1961-1963 and as a municipal councillor from 1968-1975. His church work earned him the titles *Mochoto* (Prince of Peace) from the Fon of Baba I in 1967 and *Doh-Gwankudbila* (builder of the village) from the Fon of Balikumbat in 1969. More recently, he became Knight of the Cameroon Order of Valour in 1997 before being appointed Chairman of the Nsei Traditional Council by Fon Muntong II in 1999. As a pastor he served for 15 years in five different parishes before retiring in 1989.[38]

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[34] A. Vielhauer, 'Ein Gruss aus dem Grasland von Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, July/August 1939(7/8), p. 99. On Ashili, see interview with Samuel K. Ndingwan, Buea, 4 March 2000.
[35] *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, May 1938 (5), p. 78.
[36] Interview with Catherine Musoko, Buea, 7 July 1999. Catherine Musoko is Daniel Lyonga's daughter.
[37] BMCA E-5-1,1, Jakob Erne, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1930.
[38] CV of Peter Mfuh Kenji and 'A welcome address presented by the Presbyterian Church of Bamessing Parish to the Moderator of the PCC, The Right Rev. J. C. Kangsen, on the occasion of the ordination of their son, Pastor P. M. Kenje(i), 10 Novemver 1974.' (Private correspondence to the author)

Rev. Kenji's experience amplifies the pervasive nature of missionary and church work. Embodying a vital link between religion and other walks of life, he draws attention to Paul Gifford's argument that 'This establishment or building of bridges between the Bible and African traditional religions has considerable effects, too, since one's attitude to a culture determines how one assesses the actions determined or sanctioned by it.'[39] So 'Radiating life' and 'building bridges' were not merely guidelines for the African clergy's itineraries but also defined itineracy and the interface between the missionary enterprise and its target groups in broad terms. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali on 26 March 1999, one of the ex-students, Dr. Solomon Nfor Gwei, vividly illustrated this point. He performed a sketch with his former class mates instigating a laymen's evangelisation campaign. The exercise included three components: obeying the teacher's command to 'Draw your swords (=Bibles)!', charging (into the field) and then reading (to villagers). Lay evangelism was a common feature of young students' college experiences as they swarmed out on Sundays to convey the message of the Gospel in their neighbouring villages. Dr. Gwei underscored the importance of this task under the pioneer Principal of CPC, David H. O'Neill, and under the Swiss teacher Jean-Pierre Schneider.[40] If schools were essential for the promotion of evangelism, the lay movement also emerged from other pockets of the missionised community. The joint Afro-European undertaking, Richard Gray notes, was often supported by African Christian traders and craftsmen who created nuclei beyond the missions' reach.[41] To what extent did this apply to the BM?

3.2 Trade: A Vehicle for Evangelism

Evangelisation was intrinsically bound up with the circulation of merchandise through formal networks and petty trade. As the colonial economy grew, the BM began to engage in commercial activities in 1898 with provision stores in Douala. Following Harry Rudin,

> This competition was real, although the mission's trading stations were only three or four in number; for the Basel people showed that it was possible to succeed in trade without the use of liquor, which traders said was essential to successful commerce, and that great trade would result from paying natives higher prices for their commodities.[42]

However, the expansion of Douala-based European merchant firms to Yabassi in the interior and the entry of Duala into cocoa production in the early 20th century altered the picture.[43] Moreover, mission trade came to a standstill during the First World War when

[39] Paul Gifford. *African Christianity. Its Public Role.* London: Hurst & Co., 1998, pp. 30f.
[40] Taken from the author's notes on the celebration of the CPC Golden Jubilee on 26 March 1999 in Bali.
[41] Richard Gray. 'Problems of Historical Perspective: The Planting of Christianity in Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in C. G. Baëta (ed.). *Christianity in Tropical Africa.* London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 26.
[42] Harry Rudin. *Op. cit.*, p. 233. See also pp. 368f. on the origins of Basel Mission Trading Company and pp. 369, 384 on the BM's rigid disapproval of the liquor trade.
[43] Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick. *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers. The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600-c. 1900.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 115-120.

its outlets were confiscated together with the remaining BM property.[44] Local initiatives continued to benefit Africans, albeit partly to the detriment of the missionary cause in C. Frey's view in 1925. He observed that Modi Din's large plantations caused his popularity to dwindle, arguing that the image of a wealthy clergyman was incompatible with a mission affected by poverty and financial constraints.[45] Frey's opinion can be contested, however, inasmuch as a poor pastor might not have earned the same respect as a wealthy one. Modi Din's colleague Joseph Kuo was reprimanded more severely in 1927 for his involvement in 'risky business' with Europeans. An incident involving illicit liquor trade with a truck of Kuo's provoked harsh criticism. He ended up being placed under suspension.[46] Frey's views were echoed in 1933 when Dikume Balue, hard-hit by the economic depression of the late 1920s, attracted support from neighbouring congregations to sustain BM teachers:

> Following their initial perplexity, they [the congregations] adjusted to the new situation and were willing to relieve the teachers from suffering. None of the teachers have left their posts. They explained that they would remain faithful to God's cause under all circumstances. The emerging sense of responsibility is accompanied by an inner awakening among a good number of Christians.[47]

This act of solidarity, dubbed a 'blessing of poverty', idealised a spirit of collaboration in a society that was depicted by Frey as one of increasing individualism in 1929:

> A gradual transformation from communal property to personal belongings is occurring. Certainly, this enhances the performance at work. People have generally become more industrious. But they only work for themselves. The sense of solidarity is disappearing. Previously, the family comprised a unit whose income would naturally also benefit its ill or weak members. Now society is dissolving into individuals, each of which seeks to accumulate wealth at the cost of the others.[48]

Modi Din and Kuo belonged to those entrepreneurial Duala whose success 'required both the right economic incentives and critical support from sympathetic Europeans.'[49] European responses to African entrepreneurship was more favourable during the German period as trade decreased under the British. Although several German firms returned to the coast in the 1920s, John Holt & Co., the United African Company and a few smaller firms formed a British majority of commercial businesses.[50] Sara Berry links entrepreneurship and innovation among African farmers as interchangeable variables 'directed towards adapting new techniques to local conditions so as to render them economically viable.'[51]

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[44] See despatches on the BM Trading Company in PRO CO 750, nos. 21-23, and PRO CO 751, pc. 3.
[45] BMCA E-4.7,147, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Ndoungue, November 1925.
[46] BMCA E-4.7,153, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Douala, 9 November 1927.
[47] *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1933 (3), p. 46. (My translation)
[48] BMCA E-4,7,179, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 4 September 1929. (My translation)
[49] Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick. *Op. cit.*, p. 118.
[50] Emmanuel Chiabi. *The Making of Modern Cameroon*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1997, pp. 178f.
[51] Sara Berry. *Cocoa, Custom, and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, footnote 4, p. 38.

Indigenous cocoa farming on Mount Cameroon inspired early cash-crop plans in German plantations.[52] The experiment failed because of the extremely wet climate, and cocoa was abandoned in favour of bananas, rubber, oil palms and tea.[53] There is an indication outside the German plantation system, however, that local efforts to cultivate cocoa appeared to be more successful. An example cited by Edwin Ardener is Chief Efesua of Bonjongo, one of the 'more intelligent chiefs' and a Baptist.[54] Berry, too, emphasises the important role of Christian converts and clergymen in late 19th century Yoruba cocoa cultivation. Several of these figures, her appended biographical notes suggest, intermittently planted cocoa and ventured into other trades or migrant labour while others diversified their farm produce.[55] It is unclear whether Christians could be considered better capitalist farmers or successful capitalist farmers tended to become Christians. Cyclic movements between varied income-generating activities also occurred among the Banyang. In 1953, Malcolm Ruel observes, 32% of the male inhabitants from six Upper Banyang villages were absent, predominantly in paid employment rather than trade.[56] Revenues were thus generated and partly ploughed back into farming activity with the aim of expanding local coffee and cocoa production.

Much like contemporary informal 'business', trade often supplemented earnings from other sources. BM Church funding relied increasingly on membership levies, school fees and offerings as the level of financial support from Europe continued to dwindle during the 1930s.[57] African contributions relied on good harvests, local markets, retailing, wage labour or salaried employment. At the critical time of the economic *baisse* in 1933, a major dilemma was outlined by F. Raaflaub: He associated the problem of collecting school fees with low cocoa prices and the scarcity of alternative income opportunities. All the same, he insisted that the self-reliance of the BM Church depended on school fees, fully aware that

> In their [the family heads'] eyes education is merely worthwhile as long as it produces material gains. Girls' education would be the most "profitable" since an "educated" girl can fetch a higher bride price. Prospects for boys are bad. If they become catechists nothing can be expected from them. They are badly paid and just manage to care for themselves. Government clerical posts are usually occupied by Nigerians. Thus many boys who attended school are now unemployed and form a semi-educated proletariat.[58]

A possible answer to the predicament lay in self-help initiatives, one of which was able to alleviate the problems of the BM Girl's School Victoria in 1933. It entailed producing and selling needlework to help sustain the school. Headmistress Maria Walcher decided to alter the system of prizing the goods at school fares on the grounds that

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[52] Edwin Ardener. *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon. Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996, p. 106.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[54] Jesko von Puttkamer to Buchka, 30 May 1898, Supplement 11 to a Land Comission Report, in *ibid.*, p. 126.
[55] Sara Berry. *Op. cit.*, pp. 41-49, 211-215.
[56] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[57] BMCA E-5-1,4, J. Staub, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1932.
[58] BMCA E-5-1,1, Fritz Raaflaub, Annual Report (extract), Bombe, 1933. (My translation)

> In earlier days buyers used to come to the school, but nowadays that has stopped owing to the scarcity of means and the production of cheap cloth for the Blacks. So I had the idea to employ a hawker. He now carries his box, inscribed with "Basel Mission – Girls School", to various markets in the area to sell his treasures. At the end of each month he delivers his revenues and receives a remuneration commensurate with his turnover. His box is then filled again and he sets off once more.[59]

Elsewhere the proceeds of needlework at the Girl's School in Bafut went towards a new church in 1937.[60] And in Batibö, students assisted in building a dormitory in the 1940s.[61]

Along with raising the means to construct and maintain schools and churches, students sought to acquire Christian publications, which J. W. Zürcher referred to as the "primer trade".[62] The "primer trade" rapidly sparked a lively firewood business in Kishong, thus securing sufficient supplies to cover the mission station's needs for the whole of 1935. In 1936, a copy of the Bali Primer was 'priced' at ten bundles of firewood, involving a four-hour trek to fetch each load. A collection of Bible stories 'cost' 20 bundles. Meanwhile, a hymnary demanded six days of manual labour on the BM's local construction site.[63] One of Zürcher's photographs attests to the laborious services rendered for a copy of the New Testament in Mungaka, the most costly item before the Bible translation was completed.[64]

Successful experiments to exchange goods for services like the "primer trade" stood out against the uncertainty of cash-crop revenues. A short-lived peak of the cocoa price in 1936 was followed by a slump from 20 shillings to 6 or 7 shillings – at times 4 shillings – per crate. The bitter feelings of African cultivators towards European buyers just fell short of provoking a 'cocoa revolt'.[65] Condemning the impact of the price collapse on Christian communities, one church elder in Dikume Balue exclaimed, 'We have escaped from the Losango ('secret society') devil and have now fallen into the arms of the cocoa devil!'[66]

Dissatisfied farmers commonly took to tapping and selling palm wine.[67] Palm wine of varying types and qualities was – and still is – a key product for entertainment and rites all over Southern Cameroons. Since it was an affordable and popular beverage that occupied virtually any niche of collective social drinking, the market appeared to be insatiable. A significant rise in consumption occurred in the Cross River region in Mamfe Division in

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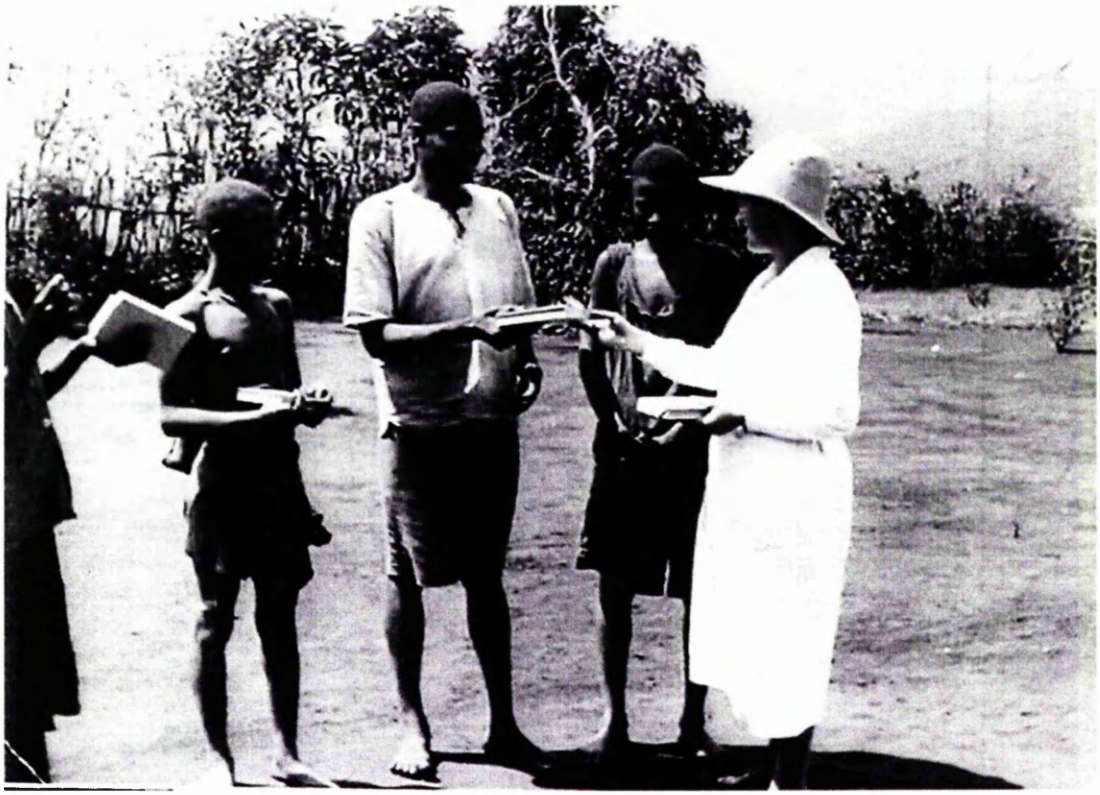
[59] BMCA E-5-1,1, Maria Walcher, Annual Report (extract), Victoria, 1933. (My translation)
[60] BMCA E-5-1,2, A. Hummel, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1937.
[61] Interview with Meshack Tiku Akanji, Buea, 13 July 1999.
[62] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1935.
[63] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1936.
[64] BMCA E-30.86.033, J. W. Zürcher, "For the sake of obtaining a Bible these young men trek for weeks with the missionary, invite their countrymen to listen to him preaching, form a choir with him, sleep with him in poverty-stricken huts, go through the deep waters, suffer hunger and thirst. When they get home they receive the book they desire, and also the pay for their work. Here Mrs Zürcher is giving copies of the New Testament to the young men as reward for their work. Today they are students in the Bible School in Bali." 1932/37.
[65] BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Peyer, Annual Report (extract), Fotabe, 1937. The 'cocoa crisis', associated by E. Peyer with rising costs of living, was said to have fostered a pro-German stance on the assumption that Germans would 'bring money'.
[66] BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Pfenning, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1937. (My translation)
[67] BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1933.



BMCA E-30.86.033, J. W. Zürcher, "For the sake of a Bible these young men trek for weeks with the missionary, invite their countrymen to listen to him preaching, form a choir with him, sleep with him in poverty-stricken huts, go through the deep waters, suffer hunger and thirst. When they get home they receive the book they desire, and also the pay for their work. Here Mrs Zürcher is giving copies of the New Testament to the young men as [a] reward for their work. Today they are students in the Bible School in Bali." 1932/1937.

1934. This was pronounced a 'menacing ill' to society at large and a 'great temptation' to BM Christians.[68] From an economic viewpoint, however, the increasing palm wine trade promoted the collection of BM Church levies, a report from Victoria Division suggested in 1940.[69] Not least, in 1938 several Christians in Bimbia had decided to buy felled oil palms from which they intended to tap palm wine, sell it, and use the proceeds to erect a chapel.[70]

Such mechanisms of entrepreneurship aimed to enhance self-reliance at the local level by supplementing major revenues from church levies and offerings. Although small-scale initiatives had a limited influence on the overall extent of church funds, they represented important steps in the development of community welfare. Johana Epie, a daughter of the main church elder in Kumba, Chief Abel Mukete, and the first female BM schoolteacher, bolstered this new trend by forming the Area Women's Co-operative Produce Marketing Society Ltd. in 1970, especially to commercialise palm oil.[71] The advance of financial self-reliance relied on sustaining economic viability in all areas of market-oriented production.

Global price fluctuations affecting export crops constituted a major risk since they took producers by surprise. The steep rise of the cocoa price by over 100% to £120 per ton in 1948 caught cultivators in Kumba Division largely unprepared. Some had neglected their farms in previous years while others claimed that excessive rains had destroyed the crops. Wary of resentful reactions to the improved prospects, P. Scheibler agreed with C. Frey's view on individualism, contrasting the 'blessing of poverty' with the 'curse of wealth': 'A certain class of people including farmers and middlemen are virtually swimming in money. But this wealth is arrogantly taken for granted instead of being received with gratitude.'[72] Looking back on the same year, F. Raaflaub identified three main problems affecting the BM Church: the lack of a true 'will to offer', the absence of a community consciousness, and the preponderance of 'Holy Communion congregations' over 'congregations of the Word'. Most importantly, he interpreted the latter, 'Many Christians expect salvation from the sacraments alone and neglect listening to the Word.'[73]

If the sacraments seem to be reminiscent of the spiritual and healing powers bestowed on traditional herbal remedies, seeking such prescriptions for Christian 'salvation' caused frowns. When it came to receiving the Lord's Supper, J. Erne noted in 1934, communicant members of the BM Church sought forgiveness in return for church levies. This interplay is illustrated by absentees from Communion services allegedly making occasional requests to have their shares of the 'Blood of Christ' sent home in bottles together with a piece of

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[68] BMCA E-5-1,2, 'Die Lage am Kreuzflussgebiet', Stationsprotokoll Besongabang, 27 June 1934.
[69] BMCA E-5-1,1, E. Keller, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1940.
[70] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Victoria, 1938. In 1940, felled palm-trees were sold to tappers at 2 shillings each. See 'Afrika im Schatten Europas', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1940(1), p. 3.
[71] 'The Life Story of an Influential Mother: Ma Johana Ndoh Epie', in *1995 CWF-CMF Study Material* by the Department for Women's Work and Lay-Training & Evangelism, PCC, April 1994, p. 108.
[72] BMCA E-5-2,17, P. Scheibler, Annual Report (1948), Kumba-Nyasoso-Dikume, 1949, p. 1. (My translation)
[73] BMCA E-5-2,17, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 25 March 1949, p. 6. (My translation)

the 'Body of Christ'.[74] Merchandising the Lord's Supper was a cause for concern for the BM. It bore resemblance to traditional libation and conciliation rites involving sacrifices to appease local deities or ancestors, and palm wine consumption.[75] It also fuelled the notion that the Lord's Supper could be placed on the same scale as salt, rice, oil and perishables.

Such commercialisation affected church life in other ways, too, by creating openings for a local middleman economy. Samuel Mbo Ndiba started his career as a teacher-catechist in Manyemen and Nguti. He then ventured into cocoa cultivation and retailing as a partner of the United African Company (UAC) and the African Fruit Company (AFC). He ran stores and supplied food to the prisons in Buea and Kumba.[76] Among the leading middlemen of the 1920s was Chief Fritz Ntoko Epie of Nyasoso, Bakossi. Despised under the Germans, Ntoko, who was baptised by H. Dorsch of the BM, rose to remarkable wealth and prestige under British rule. In 1921 he completed the first motorable road in Bakossi. He opened a shop furnished by the AFC and ran a co-operative to support farmers as a produce-buying agent.[77] He championed the BM's cause among the Bakossi before falling into disrepute for turning to polygamy and allegedly negotiating profitable divorce agreements.[78]

It has been contended that African middlemen remained peripheral since 'the lack of capital and credit played a significant role to stifle indigenous trade expansion' and 'The practice by European forms of maintaining either company stores or agents in the interior further discouraged the expansion of the independent African middlemen.'[79] The first part of the argument must be reviewed in the light of a growing agrarian middle class after the First World War. Already by 1920, this segment included 500 indigenous cocoa farmers in Victoria and Kumba Divisions.[80] As argued above, their initiative was variously curbed during the Long Depression which wore on until the late 1930s. But it was the formation of marketing boards in the 1940s which checked their local influence more profoundly in favour of state-sponsored modernisation projects.[81] Subsidiaries of the marketing boards in Nigeria established monopolies over major cash-crops in British Southern Cameroons, such as cocoa, palm oil and groundnuts, and secured their export at fixed rates. The Cocoa Marketing Board, for example, secured the sale of 2600 tons of cocoa at £120 per ton.[82]

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[74] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1934.
[75] Interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[76] Interview with Ida Mallett, Bota, Limbe, 22 June 1999.
[77] Samuel N. Ejedepang-Koge. 'Chief Fitz Ntoko Epie', p. 1.
[78] BMCA E-5-1,4, J. Staub, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1932.
[79] Emmanuel Chiabi. *Op. cit.*, p. 178
[80] Simon J. Epale. *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975. A Study in Agrarian Capitalism.* New York: Vantage Press, 1985, p. 84.
[81] The West African Cocoa Control Board was established in 1940, the West African Produce Control Board in 1942, the Nigeria Cocoa Marketing Board in 1947, and the Nigeria Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board in 1949. See H. Laurens van der Laan. *Cameroon's main marketing board. History and scope of the ONCPB.* Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1987, pp. 4f. See also Susan Martin. 'The Long Depression: West African Export Producers and the World Economy, 1914-45', in Ian Brown (ed.). *The Economies of Africa and Asia in the Inter-war Depression.* London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 83-87.
[82] Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 13.

Emmanuel Chiabi's proposition about the 'discouraging' impact of European control over company outlets on African middlemen stigmatises the plight of ambitious merchants without accounting for small-scale enterprise. This limitation suggests that the category of African middlemen ought to be widened, for, as Edwin Ardener illuminates with reference to the Victoria Division Annual Report of 1929, 'In the German times European firms had agents in the chief villages of the Kpe and other tribes, a policy that appears later to have been abandoned at Government suggestion in an endeavour to stimulate native traders.'[83] Following G. Tröster's opinion in 1939, those who suffered most severely when stores of the AFC and West Afrikanische Pflanzungs Vereinigung (WAPV) both in Tiko and Bota closed in 1939 were scores of African traders.[84] The assumption that Tröster was not only referring to selected company agents and leading African entrepreneurs is corroborated elsewhere by the report of a 'salt crisis' that was ostensibly resolved through government intervention.[85] In 1940, rising costs for European merchandise caused the strike by traders plying the Bamenda-Calabar route when their attempts to increase prices for local produce were snubbed by the colonial authorities and police. The ensuing boycott of expensive salt from company stores rapidly prompted an alternative: A trade alliance was struck with the Banyang who extracted salt from Mbankan and retailed it to Grassfielders for resale.[86] A very common produce for bulk purchase and supply by retail, generally a basis for family commerce, was and is palm oil. Henry Awasom, the former Moderator of the PCC, recalls how, alongside tapping palm wine from a '*mimbo* bush', his parents engaged in the palm oil trade in the 1940s. The trade yielded profits of 5-10 shillings per market day that were ploughed back into the business and went towards covering Awasom's school fees.[87]

It can be inferred that the middleman phenomenon recurred at many levels, in different areas and under varying conditions of trade.[88] Compelling economic as well as ecological reasons demanded competitiveness, resilience and a propensity to diversify, all of which characterise innovation. Innovation, as called for by the colonial economy, has a disruptive connotation. It opened up escape routes from the social control of traditional authorities to potential prosperity. Jean-Pierre Warnier points out that such opportunities had an adverse influence on social structures in the Grassfields, prompting young male bachelors to evade chiefs and notables. Bachelors often took to armed brigandage as *Kamenda* or *Tapenta* ('Free Boys') or 'defected' into the market economy and missions. Indeed, the BM was dealt a blow in 1916 when some of her Bali Christians were identified as rebel *Tapenta*.[89]

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[83] Edwin Ardener. *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*. London: International African Institute, 1956, p. 49.
[84] BMCA E-5-1,2, G. Tröster, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.
[85] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. Uloth, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1939.
[86] BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Keller, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1940.
[87] Interview with the Very Rev. Henry Anye Awasom, Buea, 23 June 1999.
[88] See for example on the local kola trade with Nigeria BNA Cb/1929/1, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1929, p. 44.
[89] Jean Pierre Warnier. 'Rebellion, Defection and the Position of Male Cadets: A Neglected Category', in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.). *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*. Oxford/Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996, pp. 116-119.

Thus the predicament of waning social control ironically preoccupied the BM just as much as it worried both traditional authorities in the Grassfields and elders in the other divisions. Warnier's investigation on 'defecting bandits' is mirrored by J. Erne's later observation in 1933 that vagrancy and waylaying posed a considerable threat to security throughout the coastal zone in the face of declining job opportunities and redundancy.[90]

However, these disruptive effects of innovation were interlaced with what Eugene Mote-Ndasah refers to as the aggregation of remote areas through the spread of Christianity.[91] Christian advance thus precipitated innovations that influenced evolving patterns of trade and consumption. Innovation as a corollary of evangelisation took various directions. On some occasions it occurred through gifts and medication that were offered by missionaries and catechists to chiefs, village heads and elders to rally their support for evangelism. This became common practice in the region of Akwaya in Mamfe Division and also enhanced missionary encounters in Bafanji in the Grassfields.[92] Another way of winning over local authorities for the missionary cause was by offering assistance in legal matters as the BM did successfully among the Bakweri.[93] Incentives of various kinds – partly in conjunction with material and technological innovations – were a significant means of legitimisation for the BM and her agents. Elsewhere in the mission field, the catechists played a leading part in encouraging the cultivation of pawpaw, mango, avocado and orange trees in Menchum Division.[94] The introduction of new household items was also widespread. Jonas Tumban triggered a demand for kerosene lamps which he introduced to the village of Befang where he was posted as a catechist in 1946.[95] Another BM catechist, Dan Tunyi, who engaged in trade while posted at Mbengwi from c. 1939-1972, was found still retailing various goods at the market of Kedjom Keku during the earlier stages of the present research in 1999.[96]

Trade also featured in the life of Samuel Titamangwa from Bali-Nyonga. He engaged in retailing kerosene, matches, cigarettes and soap at the age of 14 after completing school at Standard VI level. By 1935, he recalls, 'I was able to follow other boys to Mamfe where we bought those articles in bulk. We usually trekked. At times we spent four to five days before reaching Mamfe, and on coming back to Bali-Nyonga we usually spent, say, six days on the way.'[97] He subsequently assisted in Mungaka translation work before starting a course at the CTI Bafut. He qualified as a catechist in 1942 and occupied posts in Bafut, Mbiameh (Nso), Pinyin and Bali-Nyonga. Titamangwa was obliged to resign from church duties in 1962 after taking a third wife. 'From then I became an agriculturalist and also a smuggler. I spent at least two weeks to trek from Bali to Nigeria and come back.'

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[90] BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1933.
[91] Interview with Eugene Mote-Ndasah, Buea, 28 June 1999.
[92] Interviews with Daniel Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999, and John Ngwana, Bafanji, 1 May 1999.
[93] See Chapter 4, p. 123.
[94] Interview with Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 19 April 1999.
[95] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 24 April 1999.
[96] Interview with Dan Tunyi, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[97] Samuel Feh Titamangwa, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Gangni Quarter, Bali, 12 July 1999.

The extent to which trade provided a 'vehicle' for Christianity is amply illustrated by the early career of Richard Pefok who joined the ranks of the PCC in 1972 and has been serving as a 'Pension-on-Duty' minister in recent years. Pefok started his job life with the Public Works Department in Bamenda in 1950, moved to Nkongsamba from 1952-1953 and was employed by the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) from 1954-1969. Reviewing his experience, he concludes: 'Throughout my time as a mechanic I was always preaching. I did my work as a mechanic honestly like a Christian.'[98] Paul Shu Ndanka is another BM Christian who left for the coast after abandoning school at Standard V level in 1945. Following his apprenticeship as a tailor, he returned to Bamenda in 1948 and started supplying the BM Church with school uniforms and pastoral gowns. Ndanka diversified his activities as a trader and joined a group of friends from Bamenda to Calabar and back, a journey of approximately three weeks on foot with head-loads, to purchase clothes and additional articles for retail.[99] In the northern Grassfields, groups of traders were formed by Nsungli and Banso Christians who often relied on distant markets for cash income.[100] Market trips took place twice or three times a year for stretches of 10-11 weeks. Reading the Bible and practising fellowship *en route*, such 'itinerant communities' form the core of Richard Gray's 'nuclei of African Christian traders'. However, the nuclei extend beyond the horizons of trade in the present context; they incorporate scores of migrant labourers who flocked together in search of employment opportunities in the coastal plantations.

3.3 Plantations and Itinerant Communities

The plantation economy in the coastal zone surrounding Mt. Cameroon was developed by the Germans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's noted dictum 'the flag follows trade' was superseded by the perceived necessity to create a plantation system that became the single most important factor of Cameroon's colonial economy. It had its roots in a series of experiments conducted at the Botanical Garden in Victoria, founded by Governor Julius von Soden in 1890. The plantations offered a means through which to intensify the cultivation of export produce, such as wild rubber and palm kernels, and to surmount worsening problems among commercial enterprises in obtaining goods from the interior.[101] At the beginning of 1913, 195 planters operated 58 plantations with 17,827 African labourers and nearly one quarter of 115,000 hectares of alienated land (28,061 hectares) under cultivation.[102] The plantations suffered a considerable set-back in the First World War. They were subsequently reinvigorated after being put up for sale and bought back, primarily by their former German owners, at an auction in London in 1924.

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[98] Interview with Richard Pefok, Bamenda, 20 April 1999.
[99] Interview with Paul Shu Ndanka, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[100] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1936.
[101] Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.* pp. 24f.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 43f. and Harry Rudin. *Op. cit.*, pp. 248f. Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, p. xxvii, suggest that 'by 1914 about 264,000 acres of the Southern Cameroons had been formed into estates.'

If cocoa production thrived before the war, African peasants (including women), 189 of whom were recorded in Victoria Division in 1919, were profoundly affected by dwindling exports in the early war years. Cocoa exports from Cameroon dropped from 5000 tons in 1912 to 2000 tons in 1916.[103] Simon Epale suggests: 'In normal times these smallholders sold their produce to firms operating locally, often in exchange for goods. The disturbance resulting from the war made it impossible for these farmers to sell their produce.'[104]

Frequent fluctuations of labour characterised the plantation economy during the inter-war years and in the Second World War. During the Depression the labour force declined from 14,419 in 1928 to 8,320 in 1931. Following a slow rise to 10,123 in 1933, the figure climbed rapidly to 25,113 in 1938, then dropped sharply to 7,768 in 1941 and recovered to averages of 15,000-17,000 between 1942 and 1946.[105] The value of export trade through the ports of Victoria and Tiko fell from £386,260 in 1928 to £154,550 in 1931, soared to £526,554 in 1937 and dropped again to £426,544 in 1938. The value of exports virtually collapsed to £27,998 in 1941 but picked up again to reach £400,000 in 1946.[106] Following the outbreak of the Second World War, German-run plantations and enterprises were once more sequestrated and placed under the Custodian of Enemy Property. In 1946, ex-enemy estates were sold to the Governor of Nigeria and leased for a renewable term of 60 years to the CDC, founded on 1 January 1947.[107] The labour force fluctuated between around 16,000 in 1947 to 26,000 in 1952 and back down to 16,000 in 1960, with a continuous rise and fall in between the three years.[108] The CDC's revenues from sales increased steadily between 1947 and 1957, except for two downward trends in 1952 and during the period of 1954-1956, from £513,000 to £2,948,000.[109]

A perennial problem of the plantation system was the instability of the migrant labour force. Open criticism on this issue earned the BM the title of 'a vocal champion of African rights against plantation interests.'[110] In 1925 BM Inspector W. Oettli wrote to C. Frey:

> The root of the [labour] problem appears to me to lie in the system of large plantations as a whole. Why is the example of the Gold Coast, where native plantations have been successfully promoted, not emulated? The Gold Coast model shows that everybody receives their share, the natives, the traders and the government. Hardship is inevitable in the present system; but the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission should introduce a more efficient means of protection for the natives.[111]

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[103] Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.*, p. 62
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[105] *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 116.
[106] *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 119.
[107] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, pp. xxviii-xxix.
[108] Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.*, p. 165. The figures are rounded and inaccurate. Edwin Ardener et al. *Op. cit.* come up with 25,561 in 1953 (p. 370), 24,694 in January 1955 (p. 355) and 17,742 in January 1958 (p. 358) as compared with Epale's calculations of 25,000 in 1953, 22,000 in 1955 and 19,000 in 1958.
[109] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.
[110] Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick. *Op. cit.*, p. 117.
[111] BMCA E-4,7, W. Oettli to C. Frey, Basel, 1 October 1925. (My translation)

This certainly did appear to warrant careful consideration in BM quarters, for, as Polly Hill notes, 'Ministers of religion, catechists, teachers, and prominent Christians generally, were among those most sensitive to the possibilities of the new crops and if the 'scholar-farmer' was sometimes derided, though usually only in public, his influence and example were profound.'[112] However, the BM personnel in Cameroon could not draw on a similar experience from their far shorter presence to assume such a pioneering role in the advance of indigenous cocoa cultivation. All the same, it is important to bear in mind that Christians could constitute a considerable majority among migrant labourers. A sample survey in Edwin and Shirley Ardener's detailed analysis of the coastal plantations in 1953 illustrates that 1,272 out of 1,711 (74.3%) plantation labourers had claimed to be Christians.[113] The authors suspected 'an overstatement of membership of Christian Missions.' Nonetheless, due to the under-representation of the Igbo contingent in the survey, they also suggest that the overall proportion of Christians was possibly even higher (c. 80%) than demonstrated.

The prominence of BM Christians among plantation labourers is ascertained by other sources. First, annual fluctuations – in- and out-migration occurring in the BM districts – constitute the single most critical indicator of growth and decline of Christian communities in the mission field (the trends are shown in table 1). Bali and Mbengwi in the Grassfields, Kumba (in conjunction with the hinterland 'annexes' of the coastal plantations) and, put together, Buea and Victoria, forming the heartland of the coastal plantation system, show the highest levels of mobility. Connections between the different centres arise most clearly from the growth of 'Grassland communities' in Kumba Division. A steady increase from 303 to 640 members was registered during the period 1926-1932.[114] The significance of migratory labour for 'Grasslanders' was strikingly evidenced in 1955 when they made up almost one third of the Cameroonian labour contingent in the plantations.[115] Indeed, they maintained similar levels of representation in 1954, 1957, 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1963.[116] Among the distinct groups, the Aghem, Bakweri, Banyang, Bafut, Menemo and Bali in that order featured most prominently in the plantations' workforce in 1955.[117] It must be noted that their homelands were all important areas of BM activity. Although the data does not permit comprehensive correlations between the BM and migrant labourers, they serve as a tool to evaluate other sources. As such, for instance, they can be employed to investigate Michael Rowlands' link between the 'entrepreneurial ethos' of Bamenda Anglophones and the conversion of many Grassfields peoples to Christianity, particularly by the BM.[118]

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[112] Polly Hill. *The Migrant Cocoa-Farmers of Southern Ghana. A study in rural Capitalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963 pp. 168f. On the BM's role, see also pp. 170-172.
[113] Edwin and Shirley Ardener. 'Aspects of Demography', in *op. cit.*, pp. 67f.
[114] BM Annual Reports, 1926-1932.
[115] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, p. 354.
[116] Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.*, p. 215.
[117] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, pp. 353-355.
[118] Michael Rowlands. 'Accumulation and Cultural Politics of Identity in the Grassfields', in Peter Geschiere and Piet Konings (eds.). *Itinéraires d'accumulation au Cameroun (Pathways of accumulation in Cameroon).* Paris: Karthala/Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1993, p. 92.

Rowlands' point must be dilated upon while exploring the correlations between the BM and migratory labour. His 'entrepreneurial ethos' is associated primarily with farmers and traders. This does not, however, exclude migratory labour. Rather, biographical fragments repeatedly reveal that migratory labour was coupled with trading and farming. It assisted in furnishing labourers with initial capital or with support for their existing ventures that were being sustained by family members, relatives or friends in their absence. By no means can migrants be viewed unanimously as a labour aristocracy, though some fit into this picture. The plantations were a catchment area for workers from distinct backgrounds, including those ranked among the lowest in society, the landless poor. Thus the BM's concern with plantation labourers stresses her class-blindness in selecting target groups. This suggests that membership of the BM was detached from the idea of necessarily acquiring wealth.

Table 1 Church membership and mobility, 1928-1951[119]

Year	Total membership of the BM Church[120]	Fluctuation of membership in BM districts[121]	
		Departures	Arrivals
1928	**10,501**	**950**	**286**
1929	**12,463**	**2,250**	**2,260**
1930	**13,706**	**1,832**	**1,622**
1931	**14,258**	**2,133**	**1,681**
1932	**15,255**	**1,814**	**1,928**
1933	**16,354**	**1,699**	**2,088**
1934	**17,332**	**1,606**	**1,706**
1935	**18,870**	**1,861**	**1,973**
1936[122]	**20,307**	**3,129**	**2,829**
1937	**22,489**	**2,648**	**2,404**
1938	**24,226**	**2,163**	**1,737**
1939	**26,229**	**2,701**	**2,312**
1940	**27,209**	**3,079**	**2,230**
1941	**26,963**	**3,485**	**2,410**
1942	**28,053**	**2,396**	**2,573**
1943	**29,379**	**2,463**	**2,276**
1944	**31,205**	**2,266**	**2,249**
1945	**33,817**	**2,139**	**2,268**
1946	**35,373**	**2,671**	**2,347**
1947	**36,964**	**2,653**	**2,132**
1948	**38,293**	**3,050**	**2,104**
1949	**39,968**	**3,438**	**2,380**
1950	**41,032**	**3,698**	**1,886**
1951	**41,914**	**2,971**	**1,496**

[119] See the BM Annual Reports, 1928-1951. Detailed statistics after 1951 have not been published.
[120] The figures in this column include communicant members who are listed seperately according to the individual BM stations/districts in the published statistics.
[121] This column shows trends of in-migration and out-migration among BM Church communities. Other factors that account for changes in membership statistics are death, expulsion, baptism and readmission.
[122] Data for the Grassfields and the Forest area are listed separately in the BM Annual Reports from 1936.

Ambiguous views prevailed in missionary circles on the roles and influence of migrant labourers. It has variously been agreed that they played a cardinal part in disseminating the Gospel, albeit not without persistent competition. The General Conference of the BM in 1930 concluded that the 'many Africans driven to Roman Catholicism' were 'especially plantation workers.'[123] These presumably included large numbers of Igbos. Furthermore, the Catholic stronghold among plantation settlements was reflected in their set-up with five out of eight stations in British Southern Cameroons concentrated in Victoria Division.[124] Intent on rapidly curtailing Catholic dominance, the BM adopted an affirmative stance that was highlighted in § 117 of the revised BM Church Regulations of 1935, which prescribes that 'We should not share fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church since many of her teachers and customs do not conform with the Word of God but set traps for its souls.'[125] A staunch exponent of the need to intensify evangelism in the plantations under the given circumstances was P. Dieterle of the PEMS. Drawing W. Oettli's attention to the mixed population at the coast, he claimed that it demarcated a major 'catchment area' for the BM:

> All these workers are inclined towards the Gospel and we face a unique opportunity to reach the many different tribes. Notably in the Grassfields, for instance, we are not able to organise our work properly since we lack the necessary people for the task. What a special opportunity the plantations offer to spread the Good News! And far away from home they are particularly responsive to this message. All over the estates small chapels can be found where people gather for fellowship. In Tiko, for example, the plantation manager told me straight away that there were many 'Basler' among his workers.[126]

High mobility rates recorded among the BM's Grassfield communities in subsequent years reinforced Dieterle's observation on the prevailing 'strangers'' element amidst the coastal Bakweri. "Strangers' Congregations" represented a significant feature of the BM Church, notably from the 1920s.[127] In 1929 H. Wildi observed similar heterogeneity. His account offers a corollary to the Ardeners' suspicion about workers' claims for affiliation with Christian missions. Numerous labourers ostensibly roamed around Bakweri villages spending their earnings between brief (one-month) spells of work. They were reproved for leading a 'veiled Christian life' because 'Most of them simply demand to be baptised and receive Communion. They lack true commitment and a quest for salvation.'[128] In 1932 the largest strangers' community composed of immigrants from the Grassfields was based in the BM's Kumba District. Several new outstations were opened in the course of that year, mirroring Dieterle's previous conviction about devoted Christian migrant labourers. The

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[123] Jonas N. Dah. *One Hundred Years. Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon (1890-1990).* Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press, 1989, p. 41.
[124] BMCA E-5-8,5, Emil Kellerhals. Op. cit., p. 16.
[125] BMCA E-9-1, Section III, 5b, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, § 117, p. 19 (my translation); see also BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract) Buea, 1933, where the Catholic Church is likened to a 'brokerage' that was willing to 'sell' the sacraments to those who wished to secure their blessings.
[126] BMCA E-4,7,61. P. Dieterle to W. Oettli, Douala, 15 September 1923. (My translation)
[127] See Chapter 5, pp. 171-176.
[128] BMCA E-5-1,1, H. Wildi to W. Oettli, Victoria, 25 November 1929. (My translation)

census of these congregations proved to be problematic as it was taken in mid-December when many workers returned home for a month.[129]

Recurring emphases on degrees of religious commitment among plantation workers tied in with the broader aims of the missionary enterprise in the plantations: The estates and adjacent camps were considered a seedbed both for the production of cash crops and for the proliferation of evangelism. Evangelisation became the cardinal missionary strategy in the plantations as opposed to the formation of congregations, which was thought to be jeopardised by the fluctuating labour force.[130] Devout adherents, newcomers or occasional Sunday worshippers – all those professing to Christian faith in one way or another were expected to become 'agents' of the BM as soon as they had completed their contracts and returned to their villages.[131] It was in view of this prospect that the Grassfield missionary E. Wunderli was often found shuttling between the Victoria, Buea and Kumba Districts to prepare members of the "Strangers' Congregations" for their trips home in late 1932.

As the 'itinerant communities' dispersed throughout their home areas, their members rallied new gangs of job-seekers for the journey to the coast. A considerable 'exodus' of young Meta' and Ngie men was reported in 1937. Recruitment was often organised along the line of kinship ties or through informal networks. Touts encountered around Mbengwi assembled groups of up to 30 people. W. Häberle's account projects them as radiating an air of wealth, for they were given travel allowances to be distributed among new recruits.[132] Following W. A. Warmington's findings, touts were often headmen undertaking publicity while on leave or senior labourers who aspired to become headmen by bringing along new recruits after leave.[133] There is no indication of large-scale organised recruitment during the period under review. Apart from countrymen networks, the labour supply was largely conditioned by combined economic and ecological factors. African cocoa cultivators, for instance, who confronted poor harvests and low market prices swelled the ranks of migrant labourers in 1938 after an acute shortage in 1937.[134] Linkages between smallholders and Southern Cameroons' colonial economy reinforce Sharon Stichter's broader conclusion on African peasants: 'As some wage work became necessary, often a compromise was chosen: seasonal work, which allowed the rhythm of the agricultural cycle to dictate the length and timing of wage work.'[135] Yet the circumstances in which such circular migrancy

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[129] BMCA E-5-1,4, E. Wunderli, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1933. Banyang migrants also commonly returned home during the Christmas period; Malcolm Ruel. 'The Banyang of Mamfe Division', in Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, p. 242. It was a popular period for labourers from other parts of Cameroon to go on leave, too; W. Keller. 'Die Missionarbeit in den Pflanzungen und ihre Probleme', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, November/December 1953(11/12), p. 118.

[130] BMCA E-5-8,5, Emil Kellerhals. Op. cit., p. 7.

[131] 'Der Dienst am Evangelium unter den Farmarbeitern', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, May 1939(5), p. 69.

[132] BMCA E-5-1,2, W. Häberle, Annual Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1937.

[133] W. A. Warmington. 'Employment Histories', in Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.

[134] BMCA E-5-1,2, O. Zinniker, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.

[135] Sharon Stichter. *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

occurred varied along with the effects it produced on distinct home communities. Malcolm Ruel's survey of Banyang migrants defines a basic interface for the appraisal of migrancy, arguing that 'One of the most important effects of migration is the relationship established between the home villages and the working areas of the south.'[136] Such relations differed from area to area. The local economy in the remote chiefdom of Esu in the Grassfields, for instance, remained largely unchanged until 1955 while the modernising effect of returning labourers from the coast was felt strongly in Victoria, Kumba and Mamfe Divisions.[137]

A key reason for the BM to focus on plantation communities centred upon the complex of tradition, modernity and social change. It was generally held that migrant labourers were susceptible to a battery of influences that fell within the category of 'immorality'. Crime, prostitution, excessive consumption of alcohol and the emergence of bands and clubs were branded the most virulent ills in the mixed coastal society. They were strictly rebuked by the moral code of church discipline in § 140 of the BM Church Regulations:

> Church discipline rules over sins that occur through public offense:
>
> 1. Certain grievous offenses such as idolatry, witchcraft and magic, the practice of, and submission to, divination, the use of pagan medicine, theft, prostitution, harlotry, perjury, suicide attempts, slave trade, unscrupulous abandonment of women and children etc.
>
> 2. Habitual sins and vices like gluttony and boozing, excessive smoking, squandering, careless indebtment, laziness, unsociableness, severe matrimonial discord, rough treatment of family relatives, usury etc.
>
> 3. Assiduous contempt of the congregation and its regulations, particularly the sacraments and the church liturgy, absence from church services, neglect of childrens' regular school attendance, disrespect of the leaders of the congregation, rude behaviour, and lying to the consistory.
>
> Each case should be treated according to its degree of severity and with the appropriate disciplinary means.[138]

The ultimate disciplinary sanction was expulsion from the BM. This measure needed to be ratified by a missionary or an ordained pastor following an inquest to verify the gravity of any offense under scrutiny (§§ 141-148).

Attempting to manifest recognised presence in the labour camps, the BM endeavoured to enhance cordial relations with the plantation managers. Improved levels of co-operation were reported in 1933, a year marked by considerable changes in the plantation landscape owing to the 'banana fever' which had spread at the expense of declining cocoa, palm oil and rubber production.[139] By 1953 a good spirit of collaboration had also been generated with the CDC which assisted the BM by erecting small bush churches in several camps.[140]

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[136] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, pp. 246f.
[137] Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener. 'The Esu of Wum Division', in Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, p. 228.
[138] BMCA E-9-1, III, 5b, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, § 140, p. 22. (My translation)
[139] BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1933.
[140] W. Keller. 'Die Missionsarbeit in den Pflanzungen und ihre Probleme', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, November/December 1953(11/12), p. 119.

The penetration of migrant communities with satellites of Christianity was intended so as to promote the BM's self-representation. Moreover, it provided a safety-net against rival denominations and 'temptations'. These camps were the most experimental theatres of evangelism in that their temporary congregations were continuously being reconfigured. Outside the plantations, 'bush' churches emerged wherever migrants came together, as in government road camps near Ekona in Victoria Division and Etuku in Mamfe Division.[141]

Crime was associated with migrant labourers but not clearly identified beyond posing a threat to Christians and church funds.[142] It is apprehended here from the vantage point of appropriating modernity in reply to traditional constraints by choosing between 'protest, defection, loyalty and apathy.'[143] In the same vein, prostitution, clubs, bands and drinking attracted attention as alternatives in a universe of innovation. The dynamics of innovation, including accessories that 'transformed Blacks into Europeans,' boosted such trends more visibly at the coast than elsewhere.[144] Bands were sometimes dubbed 'secret societies of the youth'.[145] Similarly, it was suggested that 'clubs' substituted diminishing age groups, usually targeting youths between 15 and 35 years old. They resembled exclusive 'states within the state', albeit without the constitutional backing of secret or regulatory societies. Club meetings were held at night and large parties were organised regularly to feast, drink and dance. Determined to prevent her Christians from attending such gatherings, the BM tried to motivate Christian club members to form church choirs.[146] The announcement of a 'Grand Novelty Picnic' organised by the 'African Club' on Christmas Day in 1944 was a cause for deep concern to the BM. On another occasion the BM decided to appeal to the Department of Education against the admission of school children to Saturday dances.[147] As clubs and bands spread from the coast to the interior in the 1930s, one venue in Kumba was condemned for promoting 'modern Foxtrot and all that goes along with it' rather than African dances.[148] And when the Fon of Mankon was requested to prohibit the 'untenable conditions in the dance sheds,' he replied: 'But this is also the way you Whites dance.'[149]

While clubs and bands dictated the contents of leisure time and entertainment, savings associations, *njangi*, provided the foundation for individual opportunities and aspirations. Moreover, 'country meetings', tribal unions, provided a basis for insurance through thrift funds that were operated as 'trouble-banks' and granted loans when required.[150] Savings

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[141] BNA Cf/1927/1, Annual Report, Victoria Division, 1927, p. 5; Paul Wöhr. 'Missionsgelegenheiten an Kamerunstrassen', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1936(3), p. 35.
[142] See for example BMCA E-5-1,4, J. Ittmann, Annual Report (extract), Buea and Kumba, 1932.
[143] See Jean-Pierre Warnier. *Op. cit.*, p. 120. I refer to Warnier's four options for 'organisations allegedly in decline'.
[144] BMCA E-5-1,2, O. Zinniker, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.
[145] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen*, p. 320.
[146] BMCA E-5-1,2, G. Tröster, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.
[147] BMCA E-5-1,2, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, June 1945, p. 4.
[148] Paul Scheibler. 'Aus dem Gemeindebezirk Bombe', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, September 1936(9), p. 133. (My translation)
[149] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1942), Bafut, 15 March 1943, p. 9. (My translation)
[150] Edwin Ardener, Shirley Ardener and W. A. Warmington. *Op. cit.*, pp. 175, 178-180.

and support clubs were not merely important for mid- and long-term objectives as well as remittances to home areas, they also constituted central pillars of the BM Church treasury. The correlation between migrant labour, membership levies and church workers' salaries was punctuated in 1940 when the plantations eventually came to a standstill. It was held that 'The Church will only be able to reckon with one quarter of its revenues under such circumstances.'[151] This 'calamity' imposed a new salary scale upon African staff that they had earlier rejected. Salaries were henceforth paid in allotments calculated on the basis of local church revenues. They accrued to church workers in accordance with their ranks and years of service. Here lies the main cause for a drawn-out dispute between the BM and the local sub-clergy during the 1940s that culminated in the so-called 'Money-Box Affair'.[152]

The forecast for 1941 was exaggerated, though Buea and Victoria were more seriously affected than other BM districts. The total contribution (including membership levies and various offerings) by all congregations dropped from £3,134.8.5 in 1940 to £2,529.-.1 in 1941.[153] The following two years saw a recovery of the revenues to £3,630.[154] By contrast, the salary scale for indigenous church workers remained stagnant throughout the 1940s, particularly in the Grassfields where catechists' average salaries barely increased between 1941 and 1950. Many received 6-9 shillings a month, frequently less owing to their rising numbers and perennial financial constraints of the BM Church. In comparison, catechists of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Nigeria were paid £24-48 per year in 1941. The deplorable situation of BM catechists was further exacerbated by membership levies which rose from 4 shillings a year in 1941 to 8 shillings and more for men in 1950.[155]

The plight of catechists was not new. Already in 1932, their salaries had begun to drop sharply following massive cuts in overseas funding from Basel. Predicaments arising from this stalemate included general survival and very commonly bride price demands on young men. Although amounts certainly varied from area to area and according to distinct criteria (levels of education etc. of prospective wives), an average sum of 300 Swiss francs (c. £8) can be taken as a yardstick for the central Grassfields in the late 1930s.[156] But bride prices varied. In one case, £15 were paid before the Second World War. Payments often ranged from £14-18 between 1945 and 1947.[157] In 1937, when many catechists' wages amounted to 3 shillings per month, a loan scheme was created to help church workers pay their bride price by providing £3 free of interest and refundable over a period of five years.[158] These

[151] Mixed news column, *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1941(3), p. 46. (My translation)
[152] See Chapter 6, pp. 189-193.
[153] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22 April, 1942, p. 8.
[154] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, p. 10.
[155] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22 April, 1942, p. 9; BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1942), Bafut, 15 March 1943, p. 7; Heinrich Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 19.
[156] Adolf Vielhauer. 'Die Gehilfenfrage, eine der brennendsten Fragen der Graslandmission', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1939(1), p. 6.
[157] Marriage Payments & Units of Account: extracted and epitomized from Phyllis Kaberry's MS touring notebooks 1945-1947. Typescript, pp. 1-11.
[158] BMCA E-5-1,2, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1937.

circumstances often prompted catechists to request several years leave to secure additional means for a wife, after which they were supposed to resume their church duties. However, A. Vielhauer concluded, 'Naturally, most of them do not return once they have alienated themselves from serving.'[159] A widespread lack of financial support was the most salient reason to 'disappear' for catechists and run-away students alike.[160] Another motive was to join one of the settler communities in the south. John Musumbe, a farmer from Mbengwi, did just this, having briefly returned home to marry after his first spell of work in 1940.[161]

The varied trajectories of itineracy for the cause of the Gospel and of circular migrancy for the purpose of earning an income converge in the joint problems of the BM Church's growth and financial self-reliance. Itinerant African church workers played a vital part in expanding the realm and membership of the BM Church while wage labourers and traders were expected to reinforce its financial backbone through rising contributions. A possible explanation why this did not occur in a continuous process is rooted in a reproach directed at European missionaries for failing to systematically teach African Christians to tithe.[162] Missionaries in turn tended to rebuff such critique on the grounds of what they considered a common lack of 'will to offer' among African Christians. How was this to be justified? Here lies one of the major dilemmas in assessing the impact of labour migration and trade on the evolution of the missionary enterprise into a partially self-funded African church.

3.4 Conclusion

The different forms of mobility explored in this chapter lead to a crossroad. What the present Moderator of the PCC, the Right Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, labels the 'vibrancy of Christianity in villages' was put to the test under the impact of modernity, stimulated by trade and migrant labour.[163] Endeavours to reinforce the expanding web of rural Christian communities were challenged by the opportunities of the coastal job market. On the one hand, migrancy had a destabilising effect on Christian advance. It provoked unpredictable fluctuations throughout Southern Cameroons that jeopardised integral church development at congregational, district and regional levels. The BM Church existed largely nominally as a whole during much of the period under review, particularly prior to the late 1940s. The principle measure against congregational and, on a broader scale, social disintegration was a remarkable increase of mission outstations coupled with the deployment of a big number of African mission workers. This concept of 'village mission' therefore basically centred

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[159] Adolf Vielhauer. 'Die Gehilfenfrage, eine der brennendsten Fragen der Graslandmission', in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1939(1), p. 6. (My translation)
[160] BNA Sd/1925/2, no. 46, Appeals by Theodor Autherieth, BM-Besongang, to the Native Court and the D.O. Mamfe Division, 3 September 1926, to prevent school boys from running away to Victoria and Calabar.
[161] Interview with John Teghen Musumbe, Buea, 25 May 1999.
[162] Lloyd Kwast. *The Discipling of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 155.
[163] Interview with the Rt. Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, Buea, 18 May 2000.

upon interaction between BM congregations, stationary catechists and itinerant evangelists. African clergy gradually gained ground to co-ordinate the transformed system of pastoral care, supervision and control in compliance with European colleagues from the late 1930s.

Church growth also depended critically on sustaining viability in all domains of market-oriented production and other income-generating activities. The prime target was financial self-reliance. In this respect, migrant labour and trade were key assets for the BM Church, notably after 1932 when funding from overseas was increasingly curtailed. Moreover, as Mola Njoh Litumbe, a former employee of the CDC comments, 'It was through plantation work and other jobs which enabled the groups of people involved to purchase new and different goods that others began to appreciate the benefits of school and Christianity.'[164] In mission circles, however, the 'bright lights' effect of modernity was firmly reproved for unveiling a life full of 'temptations' and 'immorality' at the coast and eventually further inland. But advantages were also acknowledged in the coastal zone, both for organisational and funding purposes. Most importantly, migrant labourers formed a network of 'itinerant communities' that were recognised as a vanguard of Christianity in previously unreached areas. As such, they were supposed to constitute a vital force of informal African agency.

Similarly, trade was instrumental to the development of self-reliance. A successful early take-off of the BM Trading Company was later thwarted by the tumult of the First World War. In the absence of the flourishing organised European mission trade, the BM Church capitalised on African contributions: entrepreneurship, a diversifying middleman economy, and small-scale initiatives promoted some degree of self-support in various congregations and schools. These alternatives were inspired by broader trends of innovation in Southern Cameroons' colonial economy. If innovation in the present context has been attributed to escapism, notably among young males, as a way of defying traditional authority, it evoked a more ambiguous response to mission Christianity. Judging by the continuous growth of church membership, it might be interpreted as a motive for affinity and loyalty. Taking into account the lingering financial dilemmas of the indigenous church treasuries, by contrast, it can be understood as a cause for reservation, scepsis or indifference towards Christianity.

[164] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.

4. Evangelisation at a Threshold: Appropriation or Rebuttal? Chiefs, Secret Societies, and Christian "Native" Agents

This chapter deals with the relations between BM agents, varied forms of chiefdom, and secret societies in Cameroon. It reflects on the extent to which Christianity strengthened or weakened the political, social and religious authority of such institutions. It investigates the central question how Christianity was appropriated and accommodated or contested and rebuffed at regional and village levels. Christian advance resembles a perpetual 'tipping-of-the-scales' process. Initial approval or defiance of Christian faith neither guaranteed its decisive appropriation nor its definitive rebuttal in the long run. Challenging indigenous social order, evangelism confronted continuously changing circumstances that periodically gave rise to distinct tides either of anti- or pro-Christian sentiments. Religious encounters were experimental, and therefore they needed to be probed thoroughly by the BM's target groups before they decided finally whether to accept and assimilate or dispel the Gospel.

Bearing in mind the diversity of social structures in the Grassfields and the Forest area, attention is drawn to the changing role of chiefs in the colonial era. How did this affect the BM's strategy of approaching chiefs and village heads as catalysts and role models for the aims of evangelism? Regional comparisons reveal that Christian advance – like the spread of Islam – occurred less rapidly in acephalous societies than in centralised chiefdoms with influential and co-operative leaders. Influence and co-operation of chiefs are seen in terms of their ability to prompt favourable responses to missionary activity among their subjects.

Besides the influence of chiefs in authorising or jeopardising the spread of Christianity, the responses of secret societies are valuable measuring-rods for the appraisal of religious encounters. Secret societies were unequivocally considered in BM circles as mounting the most severe opposition to evangelisation. They were usually associated with occult powers, evil and backwardness and were depicted as major sources of interference and dissuasion. The evidence suggests that their reactions expressed a means of self-assertion to maintain their prerogatives. Many Africans were presumably vexed at seeing the BM's campaigns spread throughout a territory that extended beyond individual domains of local traditional jurisdiction. Consequently, the two camps, comprising chiefs and secret societies on one side, and European and African BM agents on the other, engaged in contests over mutual recognition, tolerance or defiance. As a result, terms of co-existence between 'traditional' customs and Christian values had to be negotiated. To what extent did a *modus vivendi* entail conciliation between the BM's ideas of social control and the powers of chiefs and secret societies as traditional authorities and pillars of the Native Administration?

Chiefs and secret societies are discussed separately – without splitting them off in two distinct systems of traditional rule – in order to illuminate the different ways in which they were perceived by, and in turn responded to, agents of the BM. Religious encounters are not seen purely as occasions for dialogue between missionaries and chiefs, secret societies

and other 'big men'. They also underpin the discourse between traditional authorities and commoners under the impact of Christian reformism. Alternative inroads are thus opened up into the current debates on the recognition, ambiguity and transformation of traditional authority, which, in the past, have tended to concentrate largely on political variables.

4.1 Missionary Encounters with Chiefs: Legitimacy and Authority

Working through chiefs offered leverage for evangelisation, for royal sanction granted open access to the populace. This approach prevailed in the highly centralised chieftaincies (*fondoms*) of the Grassfields.[1] As the examples of some Bakossi chiefs in the Forest area disclose, it was also employed in communities whose clan leaders or district heads gained wide recognition among commoners. By contrast, the BM had to revise this strategy where the institution of chieftaincy carried less weight, notably among the acephalous peoples of the Forest area, whose socio-political structures called for a distinct method. Owing to 'the segmentary logic of the local patterns of organisation,' as among the Bakweri, 'the whole native administrative machinery threatened to disintegrate.'[2] The colonial authorities tried to reinforce chieftaincy in the Forest area by installing district heads. This was introduced by the Germans who selected Manga Williams as Paramount Chief of Victoria in 1908.[3]

Opportunities for evangelisation often relied on invitations from chiefs. On no account could the BM establish herself permanently through claims to self-arrogated legitimacy or colonial support alone. The first missionary to reach Nyasoso in 1894, F. Authenrieth, was astutely aware of this: 'He always knew that despite everything that he had to bring, on the human level he was still an invited guest in Nyasoso, not a master.'[4] Mutual co-operation was crucial, for instance when the BM appealed to the German Reichstag on behalf of the Bakweri against the expropriation of native land. In return, Chief Endeley Likenye offered the BM a large plot in the mid-1890s.[5] 30 years later the European staff who resurrected the BM's enterprise confronted similar challenges of winning over African rulers and their retinues. Their path was intermittently marked by stumbling-blocks and pillars of support.

Misapprehension triggered by the expanding missionary enterprise frequently revolved around land disputes, the more contested of which centred on chiefs' attempts to reclaim portions of the large compounds surrounding BM stations. The debate on the BM plot in Bali figures among the most drawn-out of land disputes. It began in 1912, appeared to be

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[1] See Edward F. Lekunze. 'Chieftaincy and Christianity in Cameroon, 1886-1926: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Evangelistic strategy of the Basel Mission.' Chicago, Th.D., 1987, pp. 89-153. For parallels with the BM in the Gold Coast, see for example the account of missionary encounters with Ofori Atta I in Richard Rathbone. *Murder and Politics in Colonial Ghana*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, pp. 21-42.

[2] Peter Geschiere. 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and British Style', *Africa*, 63(2), 1993, p. 161.

[3] Edwin Ardener. *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*. London: International African Institute, 1956, p. 29.

[4] Heinrich Balz. *Where the Faith has to Live. Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion. Part I: Living Together*. Basel: Basel Mission, 1984, p. 174.

[5] Interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.

resolved in 1913 but flared up again in 1937.[6] The problem of acquiring and possessing land is interlaced with the question of the BM's legitimacy. As such, it also touched on the approval and security of the Mission's outstations in village communities. Controversies prompted the BM to negotiate binding agreements with chiefs.[7] In 1927 Eduard Wunderli, the first European to return to the Grassfields once the BM had been reinstated in 1925, noted that colonial law prohibited whites from purchasing land. Difficulties arose because

> The whole village with all its farms belongs to the chief. This has frequently caused us problems when we build chapels. On one occasion the young chief of a village simply refused to grant the Christians permission to build, and there was nothing we could do about it when we approached the government. However, now we make sure that any land where a church is constructed is offered to the congregation as a gift to assure that it remains uncontested. The deed of gift is signed by the chief and recognised by the government. Consequently, our Christians enjoy a certain degree of protection.[8]

Wunderli's overview expounds a characteristic feature of the vital negotiations involved in securing mission property in the Grassfields. It emphasises the BM's double target of asserting the right of occupancy and of laying claims to ownership against the backdrop of customary land tenure and usufructuary rights. His account shows how the BM sought to fetter royal authority by introducing the procedure of issuing deeds of gift to safeguard the mission premises. On the set of constraints associated with obtaining access and rights to land in the Bamenda Grassfields, Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry elaborate that

> Throughout most of the Grassfields eminent domain in land is vested in the chief or village head as trustee of the community and the settlement of strangers requires his permission. *De facto* control over land is exercised by lineage or extended family heads and in some cases extends to trees planted by male dependents. The overlordship of a chief over land represents the territorial aspects of his authority over persons: in practice subjects were seldom dispossessed, except for crime or treason or for public purposes, such as the building of a new capital.[9]

The preponderance of overlordship in the Grassfields was contrasted by varied forms of community trusteeship that prevailed in the coastal zone. Unlike the Grassfields, where traditional land tenure survived, the coastal peoples had experienced the 'wholesale loss of land and control' by the time the British arrived at the outbreak of the First World War.[10]

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[6] PCCCAL 560, Adolf Vielhauer, Record on the Land Dispute between the Chief, Fonyonga, and the Basel Mission at Bali, Bafut, 29 November 1937. See also PCCCAL 562, Letter from the Missionary, BM Bali Station, to the D.O., Bamenda, 20 April 1928, and Letter from the S.D.O., Bamenda Division, to Dr. Vielhauer of the BM Station Bali, 16 November 1937.

[7] On overdue legislation, see BNA Da/1928/1, no. 13/4/28, Bamenda Division, Quarterly Report Ending 1928, p. 3.

[8] Eduard Wunderli. 'Widerstand des Heidentums in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1927(1), p. 6. (My translation)

[9] Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Traditional Bamenda. The Precolonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Government Printer, 1967, p. 38f.

[10] Emmanuel Chiabi. *The Making of Modern Cameroon. A History of Substate Nationalism and Disparate Union, 1914-1961*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1997, pp. 164f.

The BM was already granted freehold titles on their existing plots in Buea and Victoria in 1897. The deeds of transfer were entered into the German *Grundbuch* (Land Register).[11] The acquisition of these plots did not result from expropriation. A land alienation survey in 1938 shows that Victoria Division had lost almost one third (381.6 sq. miles) of a total 1,166 sq. miles, compared to 4% (157.44 sq. miles) of 4,162 sq. miles in Kumba Division, 0.009% (0.39 sq. miles) of 4,321 sq. miles in Mamfe Division and merely 0.005% (0.36 sq. miles) of 6,932 sq. miles in Bamenda Division.[12]

Local contests over the Christian presence sometimes erupted into village affairs about sanctioning or repelling the missionary enterprise. They usually targeted outstations such as that of Bamenka near Bapinyin in Bamenda Division. A. Vielhauer received a report in 1928 that a customs officer had ordered the construction of a 'custom-house' on the land granted to the BM by the village head. The local catechist-in-charge lodged the complaint, having unsuccessfully attempted to assert his right to use the space. His appeal was turned down by a sub-chief on the grounds that he had not sought permission to farm out the plot adjacent to the premises of the mission church.[13] Earlier on in 1922, C. Frey had insisted that a series of incidents affecting the BM's enterprise in Bali and its neighbourhood were aggravated by political instability, giving rise to the widespread notion of a 'Bali crisis' in mission circles. In his view, 'Catechists have been caught up in the disputes between the Bali tribes whose discord has proven most disruptive.'[14] Jona Mbu, a Meta' catechist, was among the group who took on the Fon of Bali. As a result his house was burnt down. He took the matter to court but was soon compelled to withdraw and leave Bali.[15] Mbu's case throws light on the ambiguous role of teacher-catechists. They occasionally exacerbated traditional social control as in Mamfe Division in the late 1920s.[16] By refusing customary allegiance to village heads they could expect expulsion or incarceration. The sentence of a catechist for assaulting the Chief of Abafum (in Mbembe) in 1927 is a typical example.[17]

Frequent struggles over the legitimacy of Christian affiliation underscore the extent to which numerous teacher-catechists were prepared to defend their title and responsibilities. They rallied support from missionaries and colonial authorities and backed congregations that were pressured by non-Christian elements and chiefs. In one instance the catechist of Bametchom/Bambütsom, a village under Bali-Nyonga's jurisdiction, successfully parried

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[11] Edwin Ardener. *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon. Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast*, 1500-1970. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996, pp. 117-124.

[12] Simon J. Epale. *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975. A Study in Agrarian Capitalism*. New York: Vantage Press, 1985, p. 96.

[13] PCCCAL 556, Petition letter from Missionary Adolf Vielhauer to Ag. Div. Officer against custom-house or (sic) construction on Mission Plot, Bali, 16 May 1928.

[14] 'Aus unseren ehemaligen Gebieten. Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1922(1), p. 12. (My translation)

[15] A. Vielhauer. 'Unsere Bali-Christen', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1926(3), p. 42. It is not clear why Mbu lost his case. Vielhauer insisted that Christians should endure, not fight such provocation.

[16] Efforts to appease catechists and local authorities in Mamfe Division were geared to separate religion from politics. See BNA Ce/1929/1, no. 7/1930, Mamfe Division, Annual Report, 1929, pp. 50-52.

[17] BNA Da/1928/1, no. 13/4/1928, Bamenda Division, Quarterly Report ending March 1928, p. 14.

an attempt by a royal patrol in 1930 to dislodge the entire local Christian settlement.[18] By and large, Elias Cheng affirms,

> the catechists at that time [in the 1930s and 1940s] were very bold. They could stand. I remember the example of a catechist who stood for Christ in the Mbenka village which is part of our village. He stood seriously, even for the community when they rose up against him, to the extent that he was chasing the chief of the village. He stood firm for the Gospel and was able to fight the encounter to show to the people that the church he was planting was the true Church and the god he had brought was more powerful than the local gods.[19]

Cheng goes further to explain how the catechist succeeded in convincing the villagers that the strength of Christians lay in conviction for their cause. The ambivalent responses of such potentially vulnerable congregations, many of which comprised a mere handful of members, buttressed the need for itinerant clergy: They were not only required for pastoral care and to motivate Christians to collect church contributions but also for protection.[20]

Close collaboration with chiefs as captured by J. W. Zürcher in the 1930s did not only lie at the heart of the BM's policy.[21] George Bender of the Baptist Mission advocated the same approach when venturing into new areas.[22] Chiefs' positions on missionary activity were, in Adrian Hastings' words, 'a matter of political strategem' for politics and religion were inseparable.[23] It was notably Catholic teacher-catechists who posed a threat to chiefs by the outbreak of the First World War.[24] In 1917 the D.O. of Bamenda Division felt that

> the opinion of chiefs is not altogether in favour of the re-establishment of Missions. Chiefs I have interviewed affirm and assure me emphatically that the German Missionaries undermined their authority and created many difficulties. These chiefs also inform me that since the German Missions were closed these difficulties have to a great extent disappeared and they are able to exercise a very much more efficient control over their "boys".[25]

The arrival of Catholic missionaries in 1922 triggered further grievances between chiefs and Christians in Bamenda Division. 'On the one hand,' the D.O. deplored, 'one desires to rule indirectly through the Native Administration and therefore to uphold the prestige of the chiefs, and on the other hand one must allow full scope for Christian Missionaries who it must be confessed have no love for Native Administration.'[26] The case of the Catholic

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[18] BMCA E-5-1,1, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1930. See also BNA Da/1927/1, Bamenda Division, Quarterly Report Ending 31 March 1927, p. 19, and Cb/1928/2, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1930, p. 56.
[19] Interview with Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 19 April 1999.
[20] 'Die Nöte unserer Kamerun-Mission', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, October 1932(10), pp. 147f.
[21] See 'Das Christuszeugnis im Königsgehöft', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, July/August 1938(7/8), p. 100.
[22] Lloyd Kwast. *The Discipling of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 140.
[23] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 408.
[24] Jonas Dah. *One Hundred Years: Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon*. Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press, 1989, p. 14.
[25] BNA (no shelf-mark), The D.O., Bamenda Division to the Resident, Bamenda, 8 September 1917.
[26] BNA Cb/1918/2, Annual Report, Bamenda Division, 1922, p. 21.

catechist Michael Tinmeng illustrates how the roles of mission agents became increasingly politicised as they eroded the authority of chiefs.[27] Yet by 1928, discord between Catholics and the local authorities had subsided following Father Scully's disciplinary intervention, suggesting that Christians 'have ceased to try to claim a separate political existence under the leadership of a catechist.'[28] The uncompromising demands on Catholics to resolve their problems warned the BM to avoid power struggles. This lesson appears to have paid off in the late 1920s as recurring comments pointed to a peaceful coexistence between BM Christians, non-Christians and Native Authorities.[29]

But Grassfield chiefs did not unanimously earn merit in BM circles. They occasionally attracted harsh criticism: Fon Mbumbi (Abumbi I) of Bafut was labelled a 'drunkard', an 'oppressor of Christians', while the Fon of Babanki Tungo fell into disrepute for claiming to be 'Satan's child' who tried to ward off the BM so as to preserve witchcraft.[30] Others were assailed for demanding 'schools without faith', education stripped of evangelism.[31]

The fierce tirade of missionary criticism was contrasted with the more subtle pitch in an account by Johannes Ashili, the BM's pioneer Meta' evangelist, of a former student who had been raised to the rank of nobility by the Fon. The man was eager to continue learning about God's Word and clandestinely met with Ashili until his family found out and told the Fon. Coaxing him with gifts, the Fon stipulated that it was wrong for someone of his elevated status to join Jesus' followers. Upon returning to Ashili, the young man declared: 'Which purpose will honour and power serve me in due course? I desire eternal life.'[32]

Ashili's story bears a strong resemblance to Elizabeth Mbonifor's recollections of her father, Joseph Fofang. Fofang was born in 1910 to the prince who later became Abumbi I. He grew up 'as one who was always at the palace'. He initially attended church service at the age of 18 and was beaten upon his return. He received the same punishment every time he stole away until he was 20 and decided to renounce 'all that was connected with the palace'. Following employment spells in the coastal plantations and with the Highways Department, he entered the Catechist's Training Institution (CTI) in the 1930s. After over 30 years of service for the BM Church, he went to the Theological College in Nyasoso for further training and was ordained as a pastor of the PCC in 1970. The parallel between Ashili's friend and Mbonifor's father lies in their mutual stance to relinquish all privileges of belonging to the palace, a position Fofang maintained until he passed away in 1998.[33]

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[27] Jacqueline de Vries. *Catholic Mission, Colonial Government and Indigenous Response in Kom (Cameroon)*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1998, pp. 34-51.
[28] BNA Cb/1928/2, Annual Report, Bamenda Division, 1928, p. 40.
[29] BNA Cb/1924/2, Quarterly Report Ending 31 March 1925, Bamenda Division, p. 29; BNA Da/1928/1, Quarterly Report Ending 30 September 1928, p. 13; BNA Da/1929/1, Quarterly Report Ending 30 June 1929, p. 10.
[30] 'Aus dem Baliland', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, February 1927(2), p. 25.
[31] On a chief in Dikume, see BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Pfenning, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1935.
[32] Johannes Ashili to Jakob Keller, Bafut, April 1928. The letter was published in the collection 'Drei Briefe aus Afrika', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, September 1928(9), p. 136.
[33] Interview with Elizabeth Mbonifor, Nsem, Bafut, 20 April 1999.

The juxtaposition of temporal gains and spiritual fulfilment alludes to conflicts between loyalty to chiefs and alternatives to protection offered by ancestors and deities.[34] It denotes waning traditional authority under the impact of Christianity and modernisation.[35] Richard Gray suggests that Western missionaries were occasionally considered powerful sources of supernatural force, thus presenting a potential political threat.[36] J. W. Zürcher embodies a striking example of such a personality who commanded attention and aroused curiosity among chiefs and commoners alike. His reputation as an awe-inspiring preacher and man of God, paired with the myth that he controlled thunder and lightning, assumed legendary status.[37] This derives from an encounter with a catechist who, having been reprimanded for committing adultery, was warned that he would be struck by lightning if he continued. The catechist ignored Zürcher's admonition and subsequently met his predicted destiny on the same day. His death was associated with Zürcher's supernatural power, symbolised by his nickname *fangmbun*, the Mungaka term for thunder.[38]

Another feature that deterred chiefs from embracing Christianity was the prohibition of polygamy for BM adherents. The BM's resolution to outrule the baptism of polygamists dates from 1897.[39] By contrast, polygamists' wives could become Christians, providing they fulfilled the requirements for baptismal candidates. The BM's rejection of ritual tasks associated with ancestral veneration created another impasse for chiefs.[40] In their attempts to check Christian advance from the 1920s, Grassfield rulers became embroiled in several disputes with the BM over her prescribed Christian conduct. This dilemma also prevailed elsewhere. As Richard Rathbone points out with regard to the 19th century Gold Coast, 'to espouse the new faith was to discard much of the essence of Akan kingship.'[41] Moreover, according to a chief in modern Ghana, 'To be Christian is to deny part of oneself.'[42]

Besides fomenting dissonance between chiefs and the BM, Christian otherness marred relations between chiefs and African converts. The latter were at times prey to intimidation and coercion. One instance was reported from the village Tumdib near Nso in 1935 where a BM Christian had been designated to succeed his father as councillor to the village head. Having resisted, he was seized one day, stripped naked, covered in camwood and brought to his father's compound. Some fellow Christians from his congregation came to his aid,

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[34] I draw on a key argument about motives for conversion in Michelle Gilbert. 'The Chief Executioner: Christianity and Chieftaincy as Rivals', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25 (4), 1995, p. 372.
[35] On the colonial impact on the Fons' duties and powers, see Pat and Robert Ritzenthaler. *Cameroons Village. An Ethnography of the Bafut.* Milwaukee: The North American Press, 1962, pp. 25-28.
[36] Richard Gray. *Black Christians and White Missionaries.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 60f.
[37] See also interview with Zachaeus Nchinda, Bamessing, 8 April 2000 on the *Mboung* society in Bagam.
[38] Interviews with Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 19 April 1999, and Daniel Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999.
[39] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun.* Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 116.
[40] BMCA E-9-1, III, 5b, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, 6 February 1935, §§ 41, 81, 91.
[41] Richard Rathbone. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.
[42] Quoted in Michelle Gilbert. *Op. cit.*, p. 372.

demanded his release, which was denied, and finally helped him to escape. He remained in hiding while J. W. Zürcher attempted to appease the infuriated villagers.[43]

Another incident of coercion was reported in 1927 from the royal palace in Bafut where Fon Abumbi I allegedly had Christian pupils seized with the intention of training them as *chindas* (pages).[44] His retinue backed him except for Jacob Shu, an outstanding evangelist of the BM at that time along with Johannes Ashili. Shu, like Ashili, was considered a 'son of the palace'.[45] Both men feature as highly successful evangelists and church ministers in the annals of local history, but their approaches differed significantly in the late 1920s. On the one hand, Ashili turned his sphere into the most promising arena of missionary activity after the First World War by employing diplomatic skills and benefiting from the support of Meta' dignitaries. Shu, on the other hand, resorted to overtly aggressive tactics. He was a fearless evangelist who relentlessly attacked the Fon of Bafut for intervening in church matters. Indeed, according to his former servant, the retired contractor J. C. Ngang, he even went to the extent of boasting that he virtually owned the church.[46]

Fon Abumbi I's stance towards evangelism was more ambivalent than the evidence of his animosity in the late 1920s suggests. Aaron Su recalls a 'strict but loving' personality who rebuffed point-blank all that was held against him, 'I have granted the missionaries the authority to build their church in Bafut. Any Bafut man who objects to this will not be tolerated.'[47] Abumbi I fits into a category of traditionalists who took to the BM but at the same time sought to prevent evangelism from hampering their leadership by penetrating the realm of the palace.[48] Yet this effort was frustrated, for, as Pat and Robert Ritzenthaler note, 'Coupled with the missions has been the partial breakdown of authority.'[49] Pointing to a common concern of Grassfield rulers in 1948, W. E. Baer reached a similar verdict:

> Several chiefs are observing the increasing authority of our pastors with suspicion as their power declines progressively. Pastor Ashili is confronted with a brother, the chief of Nyen, who is full of trickery. The chief of Oshie has repeatedly lodged complaints against Pastor Fomukong, demanding that he should adapt to the local customs in spite of his different tribal background. The chief of Ndek, Mendig, a former seminarian in Nyasoso who has been invited by the government as a delegate to divisional and provincial meetings, draws on old customs to penetrate mission land, disrupt peace and curtail the undisputed prerogatives of Pastor Seta.[50]

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[43] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1935.
[44] E. Wunderli. 'Widerstand des Heidentums in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1927(1), p. 6.
[45] Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999. Jacob Shu, the son of a notable, was a 'son of the palace' by virtue of being substituted for one of the Fon's sons to enter the BM Boy's School in Bali.
[46] Interview with Joseph Chi Ngang, Mulang, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[47] Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
[48] The other traditional ruler to be mentioned here is Fonyonga of Bali-Nyonga. On his divided position towards the BM, see Ndifontah Nyamndi. *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon. A Political History*. Paris: Cape, 1988, pp. 114-115.
[49] Pat and Robert Ritzenthaler. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.
[50] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1947), Mbengwi, 15 May 1948, p. 4. (My translation)

BMCA E-30.86.195, J. W. Zürcher, "Rev. Mösi." 1940.

BMCA E-30.86.207, J. W. Zürcher, "Rev. J. Shu." 1932/1945.

The growing influence of African clerics coincided with rising aspirations of educated *élites* to take over political offices controlled under Native Administration. The authority of chiefs was gradually eroded as this transfer of power began to unfold from the late 1940s, given that 'national consciousness was promoted and finally led to the amalgamation of the precolonial mini-states into operational administrative structures to meet the needs of modern government.'[51] In their effort to forestall disempowerment chiefs often drew upon two options. One solution lay in disbanding congregations through persecution. The other entailed combining at least two, if not all three roles of chief, clergyman and politician.

4.2 Shaping a New Role Model: From Persecution to Christian Chiefs

Persecutions marked the most precarious clashes between chiefs and Christians. They were incited by shifting missionary frontiers. BM reports on persecution tend to dramatise religious encounters, stressing the dichotomy between Christians and "pagans". In the 1930s the dramaturgic trait was highlighted by recurring typologies including cannibalistic chiefs. Cannibalism was a dominant theme in the advance among the Bamenge (Ngie) and Bakobngwan (Moghamo) peoples where stiff resistance had previously faced the BM.[52] A letter published in 1926 insinuated that three BM Christians had earlier been devoured by cannibals in that area.[53] In 1927, Paul Leu introduced a variation of the missionary drama:

> The Bamenge are probably the most feared people in Cameroon. The killing of eight British government officials a few years ago shows just how dangerous and backward they are. The local inhabitants surrounded and stoned their victims and summoned the local chiefs. The victims were then roasted and distributed among the chiefs present.[54]

There is scarcely a more befitting passage to contrast with the enlightened, 'tamed' chief depicted by Zürcher in a photograph of the Fon of Babesi, Moghamo, in the 1930s.[55]

A similar transformation is symbolised by the picture of an audience with the Chief of Bonenyang.[56] The encounter between the BM delegation, comprising three African clerics and one European missionary, and the Chief of Bonenyang followed a notorious wave of persecution in Ngie from 1930-1934. Tension initially arose in the neighbouring village of Etwii where a crowd gathered on 4 May 1930 under the leadership of Njia Eyang, a local

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[51] Paul Nkwi. *Traditional Diplomacy. A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon.* Yaounde: University of Yaounde, 1987, p. 35.

[52] See Hans Wildi, BMCA E-30.84.048, "The chiefs of the Minge area were cannibals but now attend Mission Festivals." 1924/1937; J. W. Zürcher, BMCA E-30.86.035, "The missionary Zürcher sharing a drink with cannibals, a sign of friendship." 1932/1937.

[53] A. Vielhauer. 'Unsere Bali-Christen', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1926(3), p. 42.

[54] BMCA E-5-1,1, P. Leu, Second Quarterly Report (extract), Bali, 1927. (My translation). Captain Adametz's report on the Baminge in 1911 offers similar evidence. See Paul Nkwi. *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields. A German Colonial Account.* Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1989, p. 75.

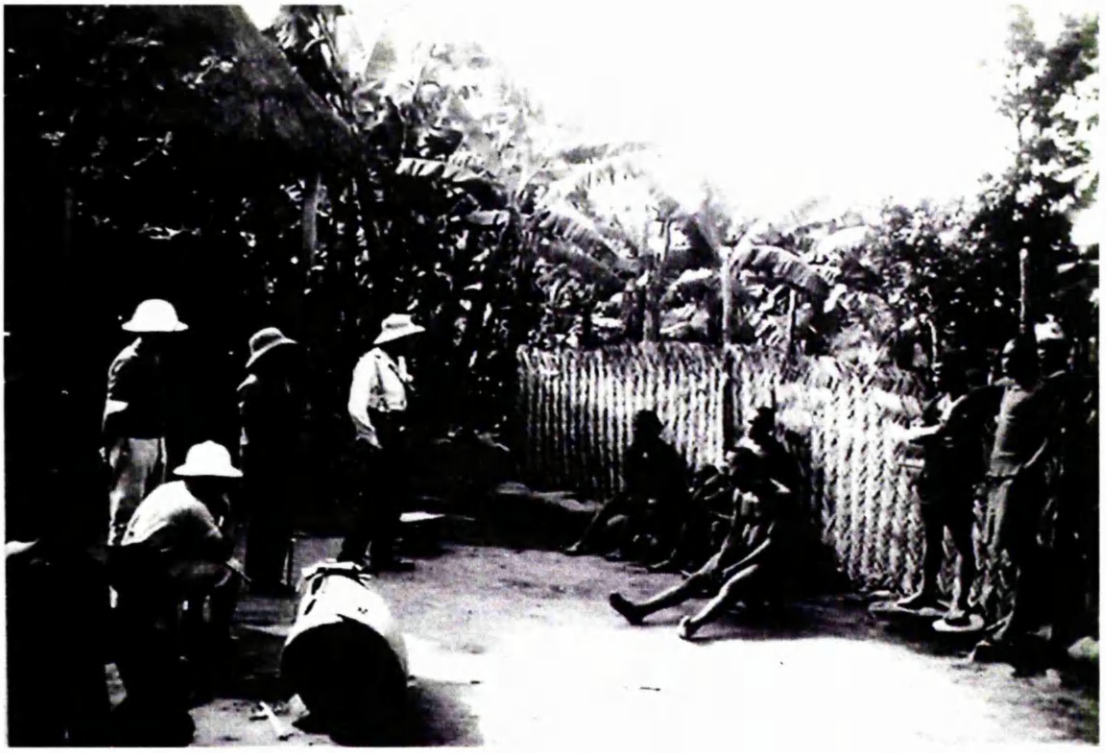
[55] BMCA E-30.85.101, "The chief of Babesi. He used to persecute Christians so severely, that the congregation, which was beginning to form, had to flee. Now Babesi has the largest christian congregation of the Bakobngwan." 1932/1935.

[56] BMCA E-30.92.109, "An audience with the new chief of Bonenyang (Minge) 1934." 1934.

BMCA E-30.84.048, H. Wildi, "The chiefs of the Minge area were cannibals but now attend mission festivals." 1924/1937.

BMCA E-30-86.035, J. W. Zürcher, "The missionary Zürcher sharing a drink with cannibals, a sign of friendship." 1932/1937.

BMCA E-30-85.101, J. W. Zürcher, "The chief of Babesi. He used to persecute christians so severely that the congregation, which was beginning to form, had to flee. Now Babesi has the largest christian congregation of the Bakobngwan." 1932/1935.



BMCA E-30.92.109, J. Uloth, "An audience with the chief of Bonenyang (Minge), 1934." 1934.

"big man", to raid the BM Church premises. According to the D.O. L. L. Cantle in 1930, the key allegation held that the Mission had exercised a disconcerting influence by making women wear clothes and teaching them to disobey their husbands. The culprits mentioned a woman by the name of Monica Ngweto who failed to satisfy her husband, was sent away and 'punished' through rape by a cousin of her husband's together with a friend.[57] Adolf Vielhauer's report suggests that a broader scale of violence was inflicted upon Ngweto as well as other Christians. Following his version, BM teachers were accused of instigating a campaign against polyandry among the women of Etwii. The Fon of Bonenyang, the local paramount ruler, reacted by instructing Evangelist Köndzi to withdraw all married women from the congregation and catechism classes. Having refused to comply, Köndzi and other Christians of Etwii were reportedly beaten. When the Fon of Bonenyang was called upon to account for the hostility, he demanded that Monica Ngweto, the first Christian of Etwii, should be handed over to him by her husband. Refusing to comply, she was dragged away by her feet, stripped naked, shaved and violated. The case was taken to court but remained unresolved. Persecution subsequently continued. Provisional order was restored when the A.D.O., Bamenda Division, had the Fon of Etwii and another culprit locked up. The others fled. The Fon died soon after, and his co-defendant was released for 'lack of evidence.'[58]

Having escaped a court trial in 1930, the Fon of Bonenyang allegedly resumed his task of 'stamping out Christianity.' He impeded Christians from attending church services and ordered the church in his village to be destroyed. He continued to persecute both women and teachers who were repeatedly flogged in public, threatened the local evangelist, and defied all pleas by J. Uloth to abandon his hostile position. He ostensibly fell ill at the time he was gaining an upper hand over Christians in 1934. This vital turning point in Uloth's report reflects the typical genre of repentance in missionary narratives: Having instructed his brothers and sons to abjure the campaign against Christianity, the Fon's last wish was taken down as 'when he dies, the Christians should sing at his grave.'[59] It is unclear how this conciliatory conclusion affected Monica Ngweto. She faded away as an extraordinary personality who was prepared to remain committed to her pursuit of the missionary cause at any cost. Indeed, her courageous perseverance threw light on the need to improve the lot of women and on rising opportunities for social reform.[60] Her persistence evokes Eugene Mote-Ndasah's phrase: 'The blood of the martyr has become the seed of the Gospel.'[61]

Ngweto's meritorious role in the Christian women's vanguard was contrasted in 1930 by that of the 'prophetess' Monica Alendong, or "Makaiya", in the Widekum village of Numben on the fringes of the Western Grassfields.[62] A BM catechumen, "Makaiya" was

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[57] BNA Da/1930/1, no. 42/1930, Bamenda Division, Quarterly Report Ending June 1930, p. 37.
[58] BMCA E-5-1,1, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1930.
[59] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. Uloth, First Quarterly Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1934.
[60] On Ida Mallett, Elizabeth Mbonifor, Catherine Musoko and Ruth Ndando, see Chapter 7, pp. 213f.
[61] Interview with Eugene Mote-Ndasah, Buea, 28 June 1999.
[62] For a detailed account on Makaiya, see Robert O'Neil. 'A History of Moghamo, 1865-1940. Authority and Change in a Cameroon Grassfields Culture.' Columbia University, Ph.D., 1987, pp. 319-325.

an elderly woman who started preaching after having recovered from an illness.[63] Her teachings included monotheism, the abolition of ancestral veneration and acting as 'God's messenger with supernatural powers.'[64] She increased her fame by accurately forecasting a locust plague and rapidly counted sympathisers who were distributed throughout thirty villages in Mamfe Division. Initially, her instructions to stop cultivating crops in favour of obtaining 'food from heaven' – in dissonance with Vielhauer's advice to farm the land[65] – had a wide impact. Banned from preaching by the BM, she continued with the support of her followers before being seized by the police, publicly discredited and imprisoned.

Unlike Ngweto who abided by Christian principles, Makaiya modelled her faith on a distinct calling with controversial consequences. It has been suggested that her prophesies led to the joint invocation by the people of Mbengok, Njimingi and Numben of a "juju" to defy colonial rule.[66] Concern spread in the mission quarters over her growing influence which threatened to subvert BM Christians, notably because she appears to have attracted local authorities. In order to avoid further disruption, Vielhauer was to keep an eye on her movements and prevent her from holding public gatherings once she was released from prison. Meanwhile, the village of Numben was burnt down.

A third case of persecution also revolved around women. It centred upon Baba I in the eastern Bamenda Grassfields from approximately 1945-1950. This struggle over religious authority was ignited by the death of the traditional ruler Fuwe Kanghaperr in 1945. Fuwe Kanghapherr is said to have brought Christianity to the Baba community 'as a means to overcome witchcraft' in the village and among his wives.[67] He probably changed his view of Christianity in the late 1930s, given that he reportedly opposed his wives' adherence to the BM Church until 1936. In spite of Fuwe Kanghaperr's reluctance, eleven wives were eager to be baptised on the premise that 'God offers the Gospel to all human beings.'[68]

Fuwe Kanghaperr passed away at a time when Islam was 'on the march' in parts of the Grassfields. Local practices of Islam were cited for attracting rising popularity because of their ability to 'readily accommodate paganism'.[69] Fuwe Kanghaperr was succeeded by his Moslem son, Fuwe Shiangha, who strictly rejected all Christian practices in the palace. He rallied support from the *kwifon*, the state regulatory society.[70] Prompted by the *kwifon*, Fuwe Shiangha arranged for the church on the palace premises to be burnt down by one

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[63] BMCA E-5-1,1, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1930.
[64] BNA Cb/1930/1, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1930, p. 12.
[65] Interview with Thomas Sona Ngu, Azire, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[66] BNA Cb/1930/1, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, 1930, p. 12f.
[67] Interview with Grace Muenyi, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.
[68] BMCA E-5-1,2, Georg Tischhauser, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1936.
[69] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), 10 July 1944, p. 15. For an analysis of the interface between Islam and traditional religion among the Bamum, see Claude Tardits. *'Pursue to Attain*: A Royal Religion', in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.). *African Crossroads. Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon.* Oxford/Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996, pp. 141-164.
[70] This state regulatory society is referred to as *nwarnggung* in the local vernacular Papiakum. See Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Op. cit.*, p. 24. The term used here, *kwifon*, is taken from relevant interviews, demonstrating its common usage against the backdrop of dwindling vernacular particularism.

of his *chindas* (commoner pages).[71] He was quick to report the arson to colonial officials in Bamenda, claiming that the queens were to be held responsible. Consequently, the latter were summoned to court by the authorities in Bamenda in order to account for their action. They walked to Bamenda, attended the trial and then returned to the palace once the case had been discharged. They subsequently resolved to use the very site where their church house had stood 'to worship the god that they were introduced to by their husband Fuwe Kanghaperr,' a tribute to the concession he made after his earlier rebuttal of Christianity.[72]

About ten queens stood firm and agreed to keep Christianity as their religion instead of surrendering to Islam. They decided to raise their daughters as staunch Christians, which aggravated the situation. Since both camps remained equally committed to their positions, the *nggumba*, a society 'charged with the punishment of serious crimes, the detection of witchcraft and perjury by the sasswood ordeal, and the arrest of criminals,'[73] was drafted in to assess the wrongs. Yet it lacked sufficient evidence to decide on what to do, so the Fon resolved to brand the queens criminals for catching a glimpse of the *nggumba*, which was strictly forbidden. It was on these grounds that they were removed from the palace and relocated on an outlying plot where they established the Meya congregation. The new church and dwellings for the disavowed queens constituted a settlement where they spent the rest of their lives. Most of the queens were later buried in the local mission cemetery.

Even then, the "Mission Ngwifuwe" remained under strain, for, Grace Muenyi recalls,

> My grandmother Susana Njawuh was like a title-holder in the palace, regarded as the leader of the group. She suffered most because they burnt her house again near the church yard. We have to credit the queens for their decision at that time of this century because even now it is difficult for a woman to rebel against a husband, let alone a queen to rebel against the Fon. So that was a very daring attitude of those women. Some of them lost their children. Some of them assumed that their children were even poisoned as a way to get at them and hurt them more for disobeying him. The overall idea is that he, too, realised in his later age that there was no reason for him to be fighting, and he sent people to come and beg for forgiveness and that is how the thing probably ended.
> I can say that if not for them [the Fon's wives], probably the BM, then the PCC, would not have been as strong as it is there, and probably the Moslems should have taken over. The church even now is called 'Mission Ngwifuwe', meaning the mission for the Fon's wives [ngwi=wife, fuwe=fon in Papiakum]. That is how they call it because the women were the people who maintained the BM in that village in particular. The only way my grandmother was able to forgive the late Fon was through the very Christianity that she had fought for. She was very angry and very bitter. She thought that even with her title, they could not take her back to the palace for burial. But since she had that title of the Fon's mother, she gave up the idea that they should not cry or prepare her funeral in the palace because she thought it was necessary for her to forgive the successor of her husband for all what he did to them.[74]

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[71] Interview with Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 19 April, 1999.
[72] Interview with Grace Muenyi, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.
[73] Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Op. cit.*, p. 65. *Nggumba* refers to *mgwarenggong* in Papiakum.
[74] Interview with Grace Muenyi, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.

The church of Meya became the Fon's wives' new 'palace' which they determined to guard in remembrance of their first husband and in honour of what they believed to be the true God. By squaring up to Fon Shiangha's authority and methods of persecution with spiritual strength and devotion, they became protagonists of some fundamental changes in the relationship between Christianity and chieftaincy. In their own ways they contributed towards weakening the backbone of male royal supremacy. Most importantly, they eroded the stigma of powerless and subservient women in a society revolutionising itself through political, economic, social and cultural transformation. Symbolising valiant local resistance to persecution, 'Their picture is in the church as a sign of appreciation of their struggle to maintain Christianity in that particular parish. That is how the Meya Church is growing, with very few men, more women, but very determined.'[75] While these women laid a solid base for grassroots evangelisation in surrounding villages and homesteads, the image of the hostile traditionalist ruler was being outmatched by that of 'modern' Christian chiefs.

Combining the roles of chief, pastor and politician was a complex option that demanded compromises between the prerogatives of each office to render them mutually compatible. The trajectory from chieftaincy to the church ministry was improbable.[76] One of the early rare exceptions was Chief Koto from Mangamba, who instigated a Christian movement in Aboland in the late 19th century and became a staunch 'pillar of support' as a teacher and preacher.[77] Conversely, church workers, laymen and clergy were more likely to take the throne. This can be partly explained by the chronology and patterns of Christian advance. Some princes became pioneer converts where they were considered necessary 'agents of change' and the BM symbolised a 'means of cultural advancement, a way to emulate the technical and institutional strength of the West associated with Western education.'[78] Had the princes in this category attained adulthood by the time succession procedures set in, they were often already engaged by the BM or in other jobs. Instead of relinquishing their positions in favour of taking royal offices, they sought to create linkages between the two. Jona Fonakud reconciled his BM duties with the responsibilities of a Meta' village head upon succeeding his father in 1930. Having inherited his father's seven wives, he released them in consonance with BM Church regulations and continued working as a teacher, apparently under considerable exposure to 'dangers of paganism'.[79]

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[75] Interview with Grace Muenyi, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000. The photograph, taken around 1960, depicts, from left to right, eight queens, Lydia Mbutruh, Tabita Ngogoru, Martha Nveh, Maria Yugpuoh, Susana Njawuh, Anna Pecha, Magdalene Kumbu and Mariam Nsum, flanked by Rev. Elias Cheng and Evangelist Peter Kenji.

[76] This implied a policy of 'conversion from the top' which was tested most elaborately but lastly unsuccessfully by the BM on Njoya, the legendary ruler of Bamum. See Claude Tardits. *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

[77] *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, May 1918 (5), pp. 56-57.

[78] Birgit Meyer. 'Translating the Devil. An African Appropriation of Pietist Protestantism. The Case of the Peki Ewe in Southeastern Ghana, 1847-1992.' Amsterdam. Ph.D., 1995, p. 159; Michelle Gilbert. *Op. cit.*, 356. See also Thomas Beidelman. *Colonial Evangelism. A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 138.

[79] BMCA E-5-1,1, E. Wunderli, Annual Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1930.

From left to right, eight queens of Baba I: Lydia Mbutruh, Tabita Ngogoru, Martha Nveh, Maria Yugpuoh, Susana Njawuh, Anna Pecha, Magdalene Kumbu and Mariam Nsum, flanked by Rev. Elias Cheng and Evangelist Peter Kenji.

BMCA E-30.50.010, photographer unknown, "Chief Koto with family in Mangamba (Cameroon). Court usher." 1895/1897.

The importance of striking compromises between Christianity and traditional rule also resonates in the experience of Richard Mambo Ntoko (1924-2001), Paramount Chief of Bakossi. At the time he was to be instituted as *Nhon Mbwog* in 1944, twelve years after his father, Fritz Ntoko Epie, had passed away in 1932, he was completing a course at CTI Nyasoso. He postponed his appointment because

> That was the year when I gained a BM scholarship to study at Normal College Hope Waddell [in Calabar]. I could not forego this opportunity to come and stay at home at that tender age. I wanted to broaden my outlook in education. So in between, there were regents, not properly entrenched as leaders of the Bakossi. Ajebe himself killed a cow for the Bakossi people in 1944 and now decided to choose among my brothers and myself. But I didn't give chance to become a small puppet chief without substance and good ideas about life. I decided then to pursue my education, which I did.[80]

R. M. Ntoko's reaction can be dilated upon against a backdrop of confusion among the Bakossi following his father's death. He and Ejedepang-Koge suggest that Fritz Ntoko Epie's demise was engineered by the machinations of Harry Vaux, the A.D.O. of Kumba Division. A 'forerunner, prophet and initiator of progress,' Ntoko ended up taking his life as a prisoner.[81] An exegetical tribulation in 1932 drew parallels with King Saul, the victim of Mammon and insanity.[82] According to accusations by officials, Ntoko was incarcerated for embezzling taxes, but his offenses remained concealed and he was denied a court trial. He was succeeded by his elder brother Ajebe whom the British allegedly 'broke with' for fear of letting his powers proliferate beyond their control.[83] As a result, the Bakossi were deprived of a leader until R. M. Ntoko began his term of office in 1956. He also became an educationist for the PCC and a political advisor to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) until he retired in 1989.

R. M. Ntoko's appropriation of chieftaincy, Christianity and politics linked pragmatism with a powerful urge for dynastic continuity. He prepared judiciously for his succession to a charismatic father whose life had mirrored a protracted struggle with Christianity and the experiment of the colonial project. Being "half-free", Fritz Ntoko Epie 'could never hope for a high rank in the traditional secret societies' and therefore apparently tried to make Christianity his own "juju".[84] Moreover, the colonial authorities eroded his legitimacy and authority as the Paramount Chief of the Bakossi. R. M. Ntoko learnt from this to combine traditional authority with a varied career.[85] He diversified his activities and channelled his energy into traditional rule at a point when it stood a

[80] Interview with Chief Richard Mambo Ntoko, Nyasoso, 20 April 2000.
[81] Samuel N. Ejedepang-Koge. *Chief Fritz Ntoko Epie, District Head and Paramount Chief of Bakossi.* Typescript, n.d.
[82] BMCA E-5-1,4, J. Straub, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1932.
[83] Interview with Chief Richard Mambo Ntoko, Nyasoso, 20 April 2000; Samuel N. Ejedepang-Koge. *Chief Fritz Ntoko Epie, District Head and Paramount Chief of Bakossi.*
[84] Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, p. 120. Balz derives this intention of Ntoko's from a statement by his first wife, Nango Julia Senge, who was eventually divorced owing to her barenness.
[85] Interview with Chief Richard Mambo Ntoko, Nyasoso, 20 April 2000.

reasonable chance of outliving the 'follies of its European counterparts'. Unlike his father, whose sympathy for the BM receded at haphazard intervals due to sporadic 'backsliding', he remained a loyal Christian throughout.[86] Indeed, he extolled the fact that, thanks to Christianity, polygamy has been virtually eradicated in Nyasoso.

Jeremiah Chi Kangsen (1917-1988), who witnessed the colonial era as a clergyman and politician long before receiving the chief's staff, was a pillar of combined leadership. After primary and middle school in Wum (1927-1930), Bali/Mbengwi (1931-1932) and Bombe (1933-1934), he enrolled at CTI Nyasoso in 1935. Upon completing his course in 1936, he worked as a teacher (1937-1944) before being sent to Kumasi, Gold Coast, for further theological training (1945-1947). Following his ordination in 1948 he started teaching at CTI Nyasoso (1949-1950) and then became youth pastor (1951-1952). He was elected to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly in 1953 and resumed church duties in 1957. He later went to Edinburgh (1962-1963) for further studies and successively occupied the offices of Synod Clerk (1967-1969) and Moderator (1969-1985) of the PCC. In 1977, he was instituted as Fon of Kusu-Wum, Wum Division, a title he held for the rest of his life until he was killed in a car accident. Kangsen left his imprint on the PCC as a true icon. A collection of eulogies poignantly testifies to his versatility, as summarised by Aaron Su:

> He has been a pioneer in the sense that he is the first pastor of the Presbyterian Church to go into politics. He has been the first Christian Pastor of the Presbyterian Church who became a Chief and at the same time did not give up his membership as a Communicant Member of the Presbyterian Church.... He made a clear distinction between the professional chieftaincy, as it is understood in the North West Province, and a Chief as a Christian. He has led the way.[87]

Kangsen was already a highly experienced, respected and decorated personality by the time he became a chief in Wum. In his capacity as Moderator of the PCC he succeeded in promoting the notion of 'Christian chieftaincy' by advocating reforms of polygamy and ancestral sacrifices. He held an outstanding position of status and authority amidst fellow Africans, which helped to foster dialogue and acculturation. Conversely, earlier attempts by BM Church workers to achieve recognition and interaction were more contested. Notably, Christianity was entrenched in society by the 1970s, exerting greater influence than before.

Indeed, Kangsen's area of origin was one of the epicentres of anti-Christian tendencies in the 1930s. Native Authorities at that time were clearly a force to reckon with. A series of complaints about 'unauthorised' churches between Njinikom and We in 1934 illustrates this point. In his reply to an inquiry into the case, A. Vielhauer assured the D.O., Bamenda Division, of the BM's policy to heed Native Authorities and insist upon respect for chiefs

[86] Samuel N. Ejedepang-Koge. *The Task Ahead. A Centenary of the Gospel in Bakossiland.* Yaounde: S.N.K. Publications, 1996, p. 77.
[87] Aaron Su. 'Kangsen "Mr. Good Man"', in Jonas Dah (ed.). *Kangsen as They Saw Him.* Limbe: Memcam Printers, 1989, pp. 23f.

and village heads in Christian circles.[88] But the local populace remained reluctant towards unanimously accommodating Christianity. In 1946 a report on We sombrely summarised: 'Witchcraft and sorcery are massive bulwarks of darkness.'[89]

As late as 1964, a new episode of hostility was reported from the neighbouring village of Bu. Complaints were lodged against Fon Chu for instigating the *kunjom* society and the "juju" *fonjo* to persecute Christians. By introducing a row of 'decrees' to deter the latter from church worship, Fon Chu tried to erode the position of the catechist Thomas Mbong Ama'azee.[90] A 'son of the palace' like Johannes Ashili in Meta', Ama'azee was criticised for his 'puritanical form of Christianity, not the type that is prepared to accommodate other things. He considered that the church should stand apart. Until today, non-Christians in Bu are known as the people of the world as opposed to the people of the church.'[91]

The practical formulae for missionary encounters outstripped general policy and varied between different localities in accordance with distinct precepts and practices of authority. The promotion of Christian chieftaincy was part of a broader plan of innovation and social reform. Masterminded by the European minority of missionaries, it was rehearsed by the BM Church's "native" agents and congregations on different village stages. Persecution was the most radical expression of opposition to the contestation of traditional authority by Christianity. Yet Christian advance never evolved into a torrent of religious imperialism, conveying instead a mixture of uneven change and resilience at the local level. Kangsen's words of wisdom say it all: 'I can't go very fast, otherwise I would be misunderstood.'[92]

So far, the chapter has centred principally on Grassfield rulers. The question therefore arises why chiefs in the Forest area often played a lesser part in missionary encounters. A plausible answer stems from their ambivalent role in the colonial project. On the one hand, social and political structures in the Grassfields provided a robust foundation upon which to model Christian communities. The essence here was co-operation with authorities who retained their influence under indirect rule through 'mutual control of powers between the Fon and the secret Kweifon society.'[93] By contrast, the Forest area was largely exposed to 'constant change in British policy towards the chiefs.'[94] Among the Banyang in Mamfe Division, as Malcolm Ruel notes, 'village leaders were not given a formal office or formal authority. They became the *de facto* representatives of the village to the administration.'[95]

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[88] PCCCAL 1660, Adolf Vielhauer to the D.O., Bamenda Division, 27 February 1934.
[89] 'Gemeinde Gottes im Grasland von Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, June 1946(6), p. 54.
[90] PCCCAL 939, Memorandum on Chief Chu of Bu Persecuting Christians, We, 27 December 1964.
[91] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999.
[92] Paul Jenkins. 'Kangsen on Mission and Culture', in Jonas Dah (ed.). *Kangsen as They Saw Him*, p. 99.
[93] Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, p. 295; On the functions of *kwifon*, the common retainer association in the Grassfields, as an instrument of traditional rule, see Paul Nkwi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 37-40. Chieftaincy in the Bamenda Grassfields is characterised as a 'very strong, influential and respected institution...unlike in the Forest region' by Victor Julius Ngoh. *History of Cameroon since 1800*. Limbe: Presbook, 1996, p. 203.
[94] Peter Geschiere. *Op. cit.*, p. 153.
[95] Malcolm Ruel. *Leopards and Leaders. Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1969, p. 114.

Elsewhere, Peter Geschiere alludes to the 'invention' of paramountcy among the Bakweri by the British for the sake of social and political stratification.[96] Geschiere's contention is refuted by the present Paramount Chief, Samuel L. Endeley, who claims his grandfather, Endeley Likenye, was the King of all the Bakweri.[97] However, Edwin Ardener once more fuels the counter-current, remarking that 'the Kpe [=Bakweri] village chief never had wide powers, but was in effect the leader of the body of elders of the village, the *vambaki*.'[98] Here lie some of the structural questions which the BM grappled with. It can be deduced that the fundamental problem of orientation in the Forest area lay in the absence of widely recognised centralised local authorities through which to promote evangelisation.

4.3 Uprooting "Weeds of Superstition": Secret Societies and Christian Crusades

While chiefs had a dwindling impact upon legitimising Christianity from the late 1940s, 'secret societies' exerted a more enduring influence. Encounters between BM agents and secret societies triggered a different contest. We are reminded of Mongo Beti's infamous character Sanga Boto, a mighty sorcerer, who discredits his main opponent, the missionary Father Drumont, as simply 'another sorcerer like myself.'[99] Unlike 'closed associations' (secret societies or *losango*) of the Bakweri, which frequently lacked judicial powers, *Ngbe* lodges of the Banyang constituted 'recreational associations' which protected individual land and property rights.[100] Secret societies wielded power through exclusiveness. Many of them were feared. *Male*, for example, the foremost Bakweri association, was rejected by some villages owing to its 'evil and satanic practices.'[101] The way in which secret societies were said to arbitrate between evil and benevolent forces was exemplified in the 1950s by the Bakweri's endeavours to repel the notorious *Nyongo* sorcerers. In their belief that the *Nyongo* were responsible for many social ills caused by the 'new wealth' – brought about by trade and plantation labour – they acquired the prestigious *Obasinjom* "juju" from the Banyang in 1955 as a means of protection.[102] Such cults, along with witchcraft, increased in the 1930s and 1940s against the backdrop of economic hardship during the protracted Depression, and of the Second World War.[103]

The dominant bone of contention for the BM over practices of secret societies was the common use of cult-agencies. Such mediums appeared in the form of "jujus" deployed for various purposes. They denoted 'the societies themselves, the maskers, the masks and

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[96] Peter Geschiere. *Op. cit.*, p. 157.
[97] Interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[98] Edwin Ardener. *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
[99] Mongo Beti. *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 89. (Transl. by Gerald Moore)
[100] Edwin Ardener. *Op. cit*, p. 68, and Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 235.
[101] Daniel Matute. *The Socio-Cultural Legacies of the Bakweris of Cameroon*. Yaounde: CEPER, 1988, p. 54.
[102] Peter Geschiere. *Sorcellerie at Politique en Afrique. La viande des autres*. Paris: Karthala, 1995, pp. 186-188.
[103] *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, November 1932(11), p. 174; Jacob Modi Din. 'Der verborgene Kampf in den Gemeinden', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, June 1947(6), p. 52.

other magic objects and ideas, certain "secrets" and supernatural powers.'[104] The BM set out on a long crusade against objects dubbed "fetishes", the use of which challenged the ideology and moral standards of Christian integrity. One of the tenacious campaigns was launched against the *Mfam*, an anti-witchcraft and community cult which the Banyang took over from the Ejagham.[105] The *Mfam* gained great importance during the 1920s and 1930s through its use in the Native Courts as well as its role as the 'mysterious superior force' of the *Nyankpe* society. In 1927 one *Nyankpe* member tried in vain to convince his two Christian sons to look up to *Mfam* as opposed to *Sango Loba,* God.[106] Deified by many of its followers, *Mfam* was sometimes regarded by missionaries as a demonic symbolic intensity of dark power that drew upon ingredients such as chicken's blood, eggs, leaves, feathers, twigs, bark etc.[107] Conversely, one of the more measured accounts sent to the BM pointed to its 'democratic' attributes which contrasted the 'violent dictatorship' of the *Epi* society in Betuk near Manyemen.[108] How, then, did this democratic trait manifest itself?

In 1933 Eduard Wunderli reported on a sick boy's father who sought a remedy for his son. He went to the local *Ngambi* (diviner) to reveal the cause for his son's suffering. He was told to confess having stolen something or else *Mfam* would kill his son. He admitted to the theft of a barrel in the *Nyankpe* meeting house to construct a gun. This worsened the crime because the barrel was a gift from the head of the lodge to the other members. The culprit was eventually sent to the *Mfo-Mfam*, the cult leader. He was promised help for the price of £15.10/-, a large ram, a cock, one calabash of palm oil, a pig's leg, salt, pepper, two leaves of tobacco, four yards of cloth, eight mango fruits and four kola nuts. He was taken to the sacred forest of *Mfam*. Two kola nuts were placed before *Mfam* who 'inhabited' a pair of buffalo horns in a small dwelling. The blood of the ram was smeared on the horns. *Mfam* 'read' the verdict from the shreds of leaves that were plucked from two trees (*Belen* and *Efunfam*) at either side of the dwelling, torn and dropped to the ground. If the shiny side faced upwards, *Mfam* was said to be contented; if not, the trial would continue. Once the man had 'washed off his guilt', the cult members went to feast and share the booty.[109]

While trials by ordeal were more likely to end fatally, the path of 'investigation' in this case offered the defendant a better chance of making up for his crime.[110] Thus it appeared to bear certain traits of democratising law and punishment insofar as it remained in the 'hands of the people'. However, the selected example suggests a rigged procedure. The

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[104] Peter Valentin. *Jujus in the Forest Area of West Cameroon.* Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1980, p. 7.
[105] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 63
[106] BMCA E-5-1,1, Th. Authenrieth, First and Second Quarterly Report, Besongabang, 1927, p. 9. On *Sango Loba*, the Duala term for God, see Chapter 7, pp. 207.
[107] BMCA E-5-1,3, P. Wöhr, 'Der Mfam', Besongabang, 7 March 1933. See also Th. Authenrieth, 'Religiöse Vorstellungen und Sitten bei den Kreuzflussbewohnern in Nord-Westkamerun', Schorndorf, 7 September 1929.
[108] BMCA E-5-1,2, R. Hungerbühler, Annual Report (extract), Kumba, 1937.
[109] BMCA E-5-1,3, E. Wunderli, 'Ein Geheimbund des Banyangilandes', Besongabang, n.d.
[110] On sasswood, palm oil and resin ordeals among the Bakweri, see Edwin Ardener. *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

suing fee was exceptionally high and, above all, prearranged instead of being charged upon the passing of judgment. This hints at the probability that it was the *Mfo-Mfam* rather than *Mfam* who ended up having the final say on the matter. In the same year, 1933, a colonial decree ordered all villages to relinquish their *Mfam* objects which were sunk in the middle of the Cross River.[111] It was stipulated that reference to *Mfam* would henceforth be strictly confined to Native Courts where 'Its legal use has the effect of taking the matter out of the 'hands of the people' and making the issue one of supernatural judgment.'[112]

For Christians this measure resulted in an uncomfortable paradox as they were obliged to swear an oath on *Mfam* in the Native Courts. On the one hand, those who refused were declared guilty and imprisoned, while on the other the BM's policy was to suspend every Christian who swore on *Mfam*. It was in this context that P. Wöhr appealed to the D.O., E. M. Gorges, in 1932, to air his worries about local judges preventing Christians from using the Bible.[113] Later on, in 1935, he reiterated his concern over secret societies' manipulation of Native Courts, citing the instance of one Christian who incurred a heavy fine for firing a gun during a *losango* meeting.[114]

Wöhr had earlier observed in 1931 that Anyangland, present-day Akwaya, the largest part of Mamfe Division lying north of the Cross River, was 'covered in the deep darkness of paganism' and that its people lived 'under the yoke of fear.'[115] Except for a lone hint in 1937 that Keaka chiefs welcomed Christianity as the 'light that shines upon the country,' optimism remained absent.[116] In contrast to the methodical progress of Christian advance in the Grassfields, the BM's outreach in this northern part of the Forest area was confined to the axes Mamfe-Besongabang and Mamfe-Bakebe-Nguti by the early 1930s. Akwaya was a synonym for remoteness before being opened up for evangelisation in the 1960s.[117] Besides early fluctuations, notably in 1928 when 764 members were suspended, causing a sharp decline from 1221 to 260, and another slump in 1939, the Christian community in Mamfe Division varied moderately in size from 1929-1945. There were 361 members in 1929, 530 in 1931, 741 in 1933, 692 in 1935, 874 in 1937, 617 in 1939, 648 in 1943 and 814 in 1945. By comparison, Dikume (1929: 533; 1945: 2501), Nyasoso (1929: 2178; 1945: 4528) and Bali-Mbengwi (1929: 3275; 1945: 8512) recorded major increases.[118]

Admittedly, the impact of secret societies upon Christian advance is unclear. However, a useful indicator for the BM's encounter with these varying institutions is the campaign to

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[111] BMCA E-5-1,3, E. Wunderli, 'Ein Geheimbund des Banyangilandes', Besongabang, n.d.
[112] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 170.
[113] BNA Sd/1925/2, P. Wöhr to E. M. Gorges, Besongabang, 5 July 1932.
[114] BMCA E-5-1,2, P. Wöhr, Annual Report (extract), Besongabang, 1935.
[115] P. Wöhr. 'Unter der Knechtschaft der Furcht', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, October 1931(10), p. 157.
[116] P. Wöhr. 'Aufnahme der frohen Botschaft in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, February 1937(2), p. 25.
[117] Interviews with three of the pioneer pastors in Akwaya: George Mebafu Nkweti, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000, Daniel Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999, David Tende, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999.
[118] BM Annual Reports, 1929-1945.

destroy Bakossi "jujus" in the mid-1930s. The crusade was not unique. Similar measures were taken to neutralise a new cult that penetrated the Ngie area in 1926/1927. According to A. Vielhauer, the cult was performed by a group of men who feigned being deities and offered protection against illness and magic while terrorising local inhabitants with a dance called *mandeg*.[119] In 1927 P. Leu travelled to the same area where he delivered a powerful sermon against 'sorcerers' that met with approval of local chiefs. Sorcerers had ostensibly appeared in the village of Mendeck – from where the name of the dance seems to derive – and ordered the inhabitants to take a meal of 'plantains, palm oil, human hair and crushed bones.' Once the sorcerers had been tracked down, they were instructed to reveal all their 'ingredients' including a drum that was used to rally neighbouring villagers for the 'magic meal'. Every item was destroyed under the eyes of the village head who then purportedly attempted to poison Leu with contaminated palm wine.[120]

Christians and catechumens were variously confronted with 'magic' cults and potions to deal with illnesses, such as a boy in Buea who, at the point of death, favoured baptism over the famed *Afam* before passing away.[121] Likewise, Franz Sone, the first BM Church elder in Ndom, Bakossi, renounced the customary diagnosis of a mysteriously contracted fatal illness through the *topo la besa* ritual.[122] Christians were pressured to revitalise their 'traditional' heritage in other ways, too. In 1928 one leading member of a secret society in Fotabe decided to send his son to school, apparently hoping to harness European 'secrets and wisdom' to traditional powers and to groom a worthy successor. But his intention was frustrated when his son became a BM Christian and refused to comply with the plan.[123]

Such cases of individual Christian victories fed into the BM's propaganda to persuade secret societies to surrender their weapons – "jujus" – on a broad scale. The last example of the cult member and his son in Fotabe marked out the terrain for a larger crusade which dwelt upon spiritual enlightenment and tied together with social reform. One of the crucial underlying forces of change effused from the simmering generation conflict between the 'young members of the elite and old juju-men.'[124] This axiom applies particularly well to the Bakossi who vigorously promoted BM schools from the reign of Fritz Ntoko Epie in the early 20th century.[125] The way in which the crusade among the Bakossi differed from previous missionary intervention lies in its purely African texture – a local initiative to root out the powers of secret societies in Nyasoso, the heartland of the BM in Kumba Division.

As shown above, the untimely death of Ntoko in 1932 evoked considerable perplexity among the administration of the area. Harry Vaux advocated the revival of *Ngwe* (council

[119] BMCA E-5-1,1, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1926, p. 11.
[120] BMCA E-5-1,1, P. Leu, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1927.
[121] BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Grest, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1930.
[122] BMCA E-5-1,1, J. Erne, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1930.
[123] BMCA E-5-1,1, Th. Authenrieth, Annual Report (extract), Besongabang, 1928. Fotabe is in Mamfe Division.
[124] This relationship is discussed in relation to the *Ahon* society by Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, pp. 250-252.
[125] Samuel Ngome Ejedepang-Koge, 'Church History as I see it', reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history, Yaounde, 18 May 2000.

of elders) rule, which was widely supported by BM Christians and missionaries.[126] The latter featured Johannes Ittmann who discerned the positive attributes of *Ngwe* as a contact zone for Christians and non-Christians and as a viable political system, but reprobated its corollary as a 'medicine or fetish'.[127] The debate occurred in the aftermath of a hazardous succession story: Ntoko's brother Ajebe had assumed brief leadership of the Mwetug clan and, in Ittmann's view, represented a key adversary to Christians as the head of *Ahon*, one of the most powerful Bakossi associations.[128] The new configuration of authority was set against a wary attitude of other Bakossi clans towards Mwetug dominance and confusion over the limitations of *Ngwe* rule. It was in this destabilised political climate that Evangelist Hans Ntungwa, accompanied by a few congenial Bakossi, embarked on a consciousness-raising tour that culminated in a remarkable public ceremony on 26 October 1934 where a host of secret societies were discredited. Their "jujus" were rounded up and cast into the River Mungo on the following day.[129]

The initiative by Ntungwa and his supporters was the most noted attempt by "native" agents to play out Christian authority against traditional customs. It provided a supplement to the triple formula which stemmed the tide of secret societies in Dikume: 'Enlightenment that is brought back to the villages from the partly secularised and partly Christianised coast, enlightenment through government and mission schools, and enlightenment on the part of missionaries makes the dynamite that breaks up the exploitative system of the secret societies.'[130] The exposure of secret societies to modernising influences paralleled mounting pressure upon chiefs to adopt development, especially from 1934 when schools were introduced into the area.[131] But was this pragmatic motive powerful enough to effect the definitive abolition of secret societies in favour of Christian adherence? Or would it be prone to Duala Christians' earlier frustration over the lack of benefits from mission school education after the First World War instead? The Duala had reached a 'saturation point of the conversion movement' and witnessed the 'resurgence of paganism.'[132]

Put into the context under study, these issues point to a paradox in missionary attitudes that favoured links between evangelism and the invigoration of cultural identity in African societies.[133] The 'victory over the idols in Nyasoso' ideally represented the exchange of *losango* membership for a place as a baptismal candidate, and God was praised for having

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[126] BNA Cd/1933/1, no. 1142, Kumba Division, Annual Report, 1933, pp. 6f.
[127] Quoted in Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, pp. 206f.
[128] 'Ein Sieg über die Götzen in Nyasoso', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, April 1935(4), p. 53.
[129] Hans Ntungwa to Johannes Ittmann, 4 December 1934, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, April 1935(4), pp. 51-52. For a translation, see Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, pp. 217-218.
[130] BMCA E-5-1,2, H. Bächtold, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1934. (My translation)
[131] Interview with Eugene Mote-Ndasah, Buea, 28 June 1999.
[132] René Bureau. *Le peuple du fleuve. Sociologie de la conversion chez les Douala*. Paris: Karthala, 1996, pp. 36ff.
[133] Three staunch advocates of this approach outside the BM were the Baptist missionaries Bender, Dunger and Gebauer. Charles Weber. *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon. German-American Missionary Endeavour under International Mandate and British Colonialism*. Leiden: Brill, 1993, p. 154.

succeeded in enforcing his law.[134] Ntungwa's initiative certainly served as a catalyst for the BM among the people of Nyasoso, stimulating many, such as Thomas Ediage, the first Synod Clerk of the PCC, to join the ministry.[135] But behind such spiritual (re)orientation lay secular interests, as Balz illuminates. Ntungwa, for one, demonstrated the advantages of Christianity explicitly through attractive material benefits accruing from education as well as health care.[136] The appeal to serve one master and not two sparked controversy by dint of its implication that the BM Church was meant to replace rather than supplement *Ahon* and *Mwankum* authority. Consequently, secret societies soon experienced a reawakening. Not least, in response to the firm anti-"juju" stance of the BM, some Christians in Ndum decided later on in 1953 to join the Native Baptist Church on the grounds that 'it baptised anyone who came: polygamist, juju man, backslider from other churches, after a little or no catechumen instruction.'[137] The BM's comparatively rigid rules for church membership did not allow for an integrative proliferation of Christianity by accommodating local social and religious norms and practices. This is presumably what induced F. Raaflaub in 1943 to stress considerable 'disillusionment' over the typical 'movements' in Bakossi and the Grassfields from cult membership towards Christianity.[138]

The paradox lay in the discrepancy between the BM's rules for Christians and the local social and political institutions through which missionary aims could be pursued. In other words, it was rooted in the question of compatibility between Western values and African expectations and choice. It was also about empowerment, as exemplified in 1936 by the prospect of a Native Court in Mukuru,Wum Division. After requesting the BM to change the new church to this end, the Fon of Mukuru was checked by W. Schneider 'for craftily drawing the conclusion that the church would be superfluous once a court was set up in his village.'[139] This calls into question the wider relevance of the BM Church and stresses the point that missionaries usually relied on local authorities to support their enterprise.[140] Yet a distinction needs to be drawn between the early stages of setting up mission stations and phases of consolidation. Once a local church structure had been initially approved, the authority of the African evangelist or catechist came into play while congregations were built up. The clergyman now had followers and enjoyed a growing status. Competition set in at this level. Christian conformity went hand-to-hand with social distinctiveness and incited 'deviancy' (sic) – the breach of code of conduct in traditional society.[141]

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[134] 'Ein Sieg über die Götzen in Nyasoso', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, April 1935(4), p. 54; E. Keller, 'Vom Sieg in Ndibnjok', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, February 1936(2), p. 28.
[135] Thomas Ngwane Ediage, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Nyasoso, 29 December 1999.
[136] Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, p. 210.
[137] Samuel N. Ejedepang-Koge. *The Task Ahead*, p. 59.
[138] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1942), Buea, 30 March 1943, pp. 5f.
[139] BMCA E-5-1,2, W. Schneider. Annual Report (extract), We, 1936. (My translation)
[140] T. Price. 'The Missionary Struggle with Complexity', in C. G. Baëta (ed.). *Christianity in Tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 104.
[141] 'Deviancy' is used alongside loyalty, unity, indifference, defiance. Thomas Beidelman. *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

Evidently this pattern cannot claim uniformity throughout the mission field. As shown variously above, the course of religious encounters depended on the goals and approaches of those involved. Indirectly and on a broader scale, social, economic and political factors were added decisive determinants. The growing distribution of wealth among the populace, and with it growing prestige, eroded the exclusiveness of secret societies. Banyang lodges faced this threat in the early 1950s: 'Whereas in the past wealth and political leadership were closely associated, the sources of wealth are now less closely subject to monopoly control and any Manyang has some opportunity of obtaining an income.'[142] Elsewhere, the failure to firmly entrench *Ngwe* as a foundation of Native Administration in Bakossi laid bare the fundamental 'ambiguities of British indirect rule policy': The endless search for a solution was further complicated by virtually inventing 'true native custom'.[143]

Paired with the changing 'official' functions, membership patterns, status and authority of secret societies were modifications of existing cults and the spread of 'witchcraft' or 'demonism'. In 1939 'sorcerers' reinstated some cults at an ancestral shrine in Kak and a *losango* grave in Mpako, Bakossi. 'Your indifference towards the deceased is the reason,' the BM Christians were informed, 'why our tribe is not growing. You despise the ways in which we were taught to increase the tribe: Polygamy and worship of the dead.'[144] A kind of demonism occurred in We in the Grassfields where 'sorcerers' arrived from Nigerian border villages and settled down in huts that were built by their aides, much like some of the BM's outstations. They brewed potions against witchcraft and declared anybody who refused to drink a witch. Such demonism was considered to be prevalent among returning migrant labourers.[145] Another phenomenon that marked the 1930s was the rise of 'bands' which modelled their organisational structures on secret societies but displayed a Western outward appearance using European instruments.[146] Bands were seen as 'secret societies of the youth'.[147] Indeed, there seems to be a certain parentage between distinct generations of secret societies: In the Banyang village of Mbatop, an anti-Christian movement grew around a band under the auspices of the *Nyankpe* Society.[148] Among the Bakweri, *Liemba*, an old source of witchcraft, was replaced by *Nyongo* from Douala in the 1950s, prompting Edwin Ardener to conclude 'that fear of witchcraft has not been affected by Christianity, and among the Kpe, as has been seen, the belief in witches has developed new forms.'[149]

The uneven evolution of secret societies and witchcraft from the mid-1930s is key to the shift from resolute rebuttal to partial accommodation in the fold of Christianity. It was, however, a one-way process, demanding full abstention from secret societies of everybody

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[142] Malcom Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[143] Peter Geschiere. 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon', p. 165.
[144] BMCA E-5-1,2, P. Wöhr, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1939. (My translation)
[145] Based on the German *Dämonie*. BMCA E-5-1,1, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1940.
[146] Malcolm Ruel. *Op. cit.*, p. 259.
[147] Werner Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 320.
[148] BMCA E-5-1,2, K. Gengenbach, Annual Report (extract), Fotabe, 1939.
[149] Edwin Ardener. *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, p. 108.

who aspired to join the BM Church. The PCC's present Book of Orders maintains the same position today, though perhaps with a higher degree of flexibility in practice.[150] Thus Ejedepang-Koge's appeal to 'Christians to abstain from a wholesale condemnation of tradition' probably reflects a common appeal.[151]

4.4 Conclusion

Returning from the present problem of establishing a consensus between tradition and Christianity to the earlier 20th century, Edward Lekunze holds that 'From a comprehensive critical perspective, the failure of a "people's movement" was aggravated by a missionary mindset that was opposed to all the customs and religious sanctions on which the authority of the chief lay.'[152] The concept of a "people's movement" did however play an essential part in missionary policy and evangelistic practice in Cameroon during the mid-1920s. To deny some degree of success is to obscure two points. First, chiefs were not unanimously opposed to Protestant Christianity by dint of their custodianship over traditional customs. Second, Christian advance would barely have unfolded as boldly as it did, notably in the Grassfields, if not for the support or at least recognition by many chiefs. Much as the First World War led to the partial collapse of the BM and provoked scepticism among African Christians, it did not deter "native" agents from seeking to have their new faith ratified. A reformed mode of interaction emerged between chiefs, their subjects and the African sub-clergy. The key problem centred on the distribution of authority between chiefs and the BM Church. In response, a rising trend among chiefs in the 1920s and 1930s was to send 'sons of the palace' to mission schools and for theological training. Fritz Ntoko Epie of Nyasoso and Fon Ngwana of Bafanji[153] were pioneers among the class of Christian chiefs who were going to emerge more commonly as role models of the BM. Instances of anti-Christian persecution, notably in the 1930s and 1940s, were most persuasive expressions of rebuttal in the uneven process of testing and appropriating the alien belief system. Yet persecution frequently occurred in spells that intriguingly gave way to unique chances for "native" agents to embark on more rigorous and fruitful evangelistic crusades.

This leads on to the question why Christian advance turned out to be more successful in the Grassfields than in the Forest area. The inference that centralised political and social institutions in the Grassfields benefited the formation of congregational networks is one part of the answer. The other is deduced from the absence of these patterns of organisation and the 'disruptive' position of secret societies in the Forest area. In Mamfe Division, for example, it is fair to say that the missionary agenda remained unfulfilled. Opportunities to operate through rather than against secret societies were denied both by the BM's rigid

[150] Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Book of Orders. Buea, 1995, p. 12, art. 5.
[151] Samuel Ngome Ejedepang-Koge, 'Church History as I see it', reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Yaounde, 18 May 2000.
[152] Edward F. Lekunze. Op. cit., p. 201.
[153] On Fon Ngwana, see interview with John Ngwana, Bafanji, 1 May 1999.

regulations and her target groups. Speculations were put forward elsewhere in respect of the Bakossi as to whether, after all, it 'should not be possible to graft the precious twig of an evangelical hope of life onto this stem of pagan religion?'[154] Viewing the BM Church as a secret society was a courageous vision against the backdrop of increasing witchcraft in the 1940s. But the linkage was not new. A similar proposal was introduced by Charles Frey in 1929. He suggested modelling the Christian community on the dissolving Bamum association *Nguon* which comprised clan representatives (*Yu-nju*) who shared a bond of mutual support.[155] Today, though, such notions have perhaps lost their significance among those who can be referred to as 'nominal' Christians, 'who express a need for religion but do not expect this religion to have any crucial bearing on their lives beyond the church.'[156]

[154] Johannes Ittmann. *Geistiger Volksbesitz im Blickfeld des Missionars*. n.d. (c. 1943). quoted in Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.* p. 289.
[155] BMCA E-5-1,3, Charles Frey, 'Afrikanische Gebräuche', treatise, 2 December 1929.
[156] Nyansako-ni-Nku. 'The Church and Mass Media', in Nyansako-ni-Nku (ed.). *Journey in Faith. The Story of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*. Yaounde: Buma Kor, 1982, p. 60.

5. Mission Unity – Church Diversity: Language, Power, and Assimilation

The BM boasts a considerable number of linguists among her missionaries throughout her mission fields in China, India, the Gold Coast and Cameroon. In the African settings language studies formed the very core of Mission Inspector Theodor Oehler's methods to instil Christianity among missionised Africans. His was an 'uncompromising demand that the Mission should have the right to use the local native language' because 'If German Christianity was imparted without modification, stamped by the German language and German thinking, the result...in this respect could only be culture-caricature and pseudo-education.'[1] His view not only influenced the BM, but also the PEMS in Cameroon. The missionary Robert held that the use of French as opposed to vernaculars would produce '*des déclassés*', implying mimicry and inferiority.[2] Catholics and Baptists used Pidgin in Cameroon.[3] And German colonial officials also communicated with Africans in Pidgin.[4]

Johannes Gottlieb Christaller and Johannes Zimmermann pioneered the development of Twi and Ga into official BM church vernaculars of the Gold Coast in the 1850s. Others followed.[5] Around the same time, Alfred Saker of the Baptist Missionary Society set out the impressive task of establishing the first set of conventions for written Duala.[6] The BM benefited from Saker's work, adopting Duala as the official vernacular in the Cameroonian mission field in the late 19th century. Although this influenced its dissemination, Duala had already expanded as a *lingua franca* prior to the BM's arrival through trade relations with peoples of the interior.[7] Efforts by Messrs Bufe, T. Christaller, Dinkelacker and Dorsch of the BM to broaden the survey of Duala were later complemented by the work of Bächtold, Bärtschi, Ittmann, Meinhof, Schuler, Spellenberg and others.[8] Just as J. Christaller's study of Twi offered valuable insights into the world of the Akan peoples, the later BM's Duala missionary linguists ventured into exploring Cameroonian societies and cultures in spite of their conspicuous lack of ethnographic training.[9]

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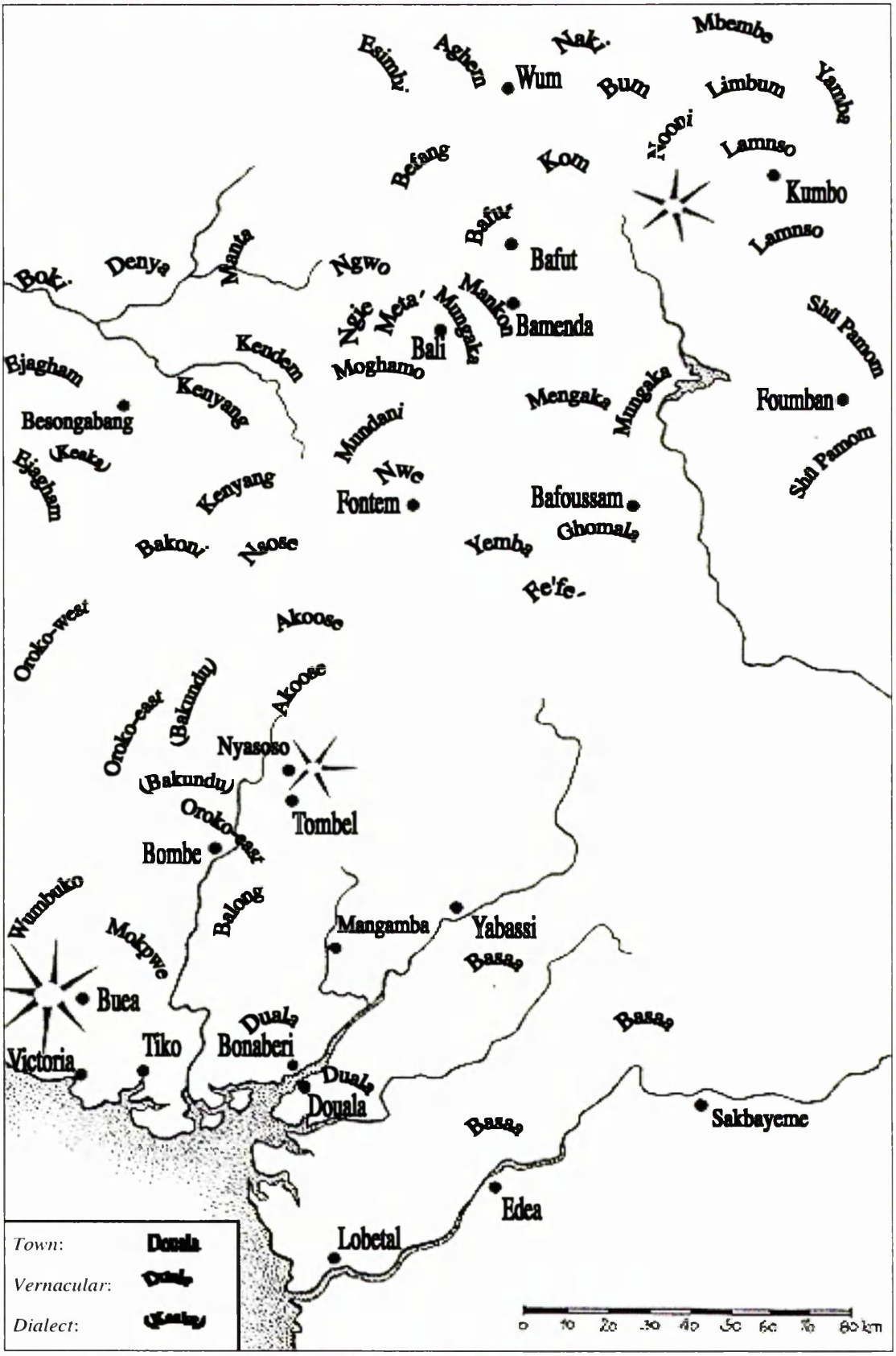
[1] Erik Halldén. *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons, 1886-1905*. Lund: University of Uppsala Press, 1968, p. 52.
[2] BMCA E-4,7.66, P. Dieterle to P. Scheibler and F. Bärtschi, Douala, 15 February 1924, p. 1.
[3] Charles W. Weber. *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon. German-American Mission Endeavour under International Mandate and British Colonialism*. Leiden: Brill, 1993, p. 107.
[4] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit Berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 202.
[5] Noel Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960. A Younger Church in a Changing Society*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966, pp. 54-56, 144f., 201.
[6] Jaap van Slageren. *Les origines de l'Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun. Missions européennes et christianisme autochtone*. Yaounde: CLE, 1972, pp. 23-34.
[7] Erik Halldén. *Op. cit.*, p. 60.
[8] Paul Jenkins and Waltraud Haas. *Guide to the Basel Misson's Cameroon Archive*. Basel, 1988, pp. 135-144. See also Edwin Ardener. *The Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*. London: International African Institute, 1956, p. 33.
[9] Erik Halldén. *Op. cit.*, p. 78. See also Paul Jenkins and Waltraud Haas. *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-130. The themes include local histories, philosophy, politics, proverbs, material culture, customs and religion.

Selected vernaculars in West Cameroon



Source: R. Breton, Dikia Fohtung. Atlas administratif des langues nationales du Cameroun.

A second church vernacular, Mungaka, taken over and re-modelled by the Bali-Nyonga in the Grassfields, began to spread in the early 20th century. In BM circles it was initially promoted by Ernst and Keller who reached Bali-Nyonga in 1903, and later on, following the First World War, by Tischhauser and Vielhauer. Drawing upon their predecessors' endeavours, the latter missionaries embarked on the first comprehensive written grammar of Mungaka and translated the Old and New Testaments. The distribution of Mungaka was more contested than Duala, even though A. S. Alima alludes to the emergence of a 'mungakaphone' culture in the Grassfields. He draws parallels with the spread of Duala in the coastal zone and Ewondo in the centre around the capital of Cameroon, Yaounde, in the French sphere, and Pidgin throughout the British territory and beyond.[10]

This chapter investigates the connection between vernaculars, church development and identity. It assesses responses to the practice of mediating the Gospel as well as collective identities among Christian communities and congregations by means of evangelising and instructing in Duala and Mungaka. The usage and varied degrees of assimilation of Duala and Mungaka are examined from the 1920s onwards. Vernacularisation ties together with other divisive factors in the BM Church. Such trends reflect the combination of interacting and counteracting processes that gave rise to notions of 'belonging' based upon cultural distinctiveness and competition. Some of these traits were more subtle and personal while others became institutionalised. It is therefore imperative to test the intention of enhancing Christian unity through vernacularisation by arguing that the BM's dual language policy did not favour the establishment of an integral church.[11] What emerged, it appears, were distinct congregational patterns centred around political interests, social organisation and linguistic knowledge as well as varying degrees of preference and exclusiveness.

5.1 The Rise and Demise of Vernacular Instruction

The vernacular policy of the BM was superimposed on a region with an extraordinary linguistic diversity, including nearly 100 partly related tongues.[12] Although the missionary enterprise did not extend throughout British Southern Cameroons, it reached numerous localities far beyond the spheres of native Duala and Mungaka speakers. Strategic criteria suggested priority should be given to the two vernaculars. Douala and Bali-Nyonga were primary contact zones where the BM set up stations and facilities before moving afield. While the Duala displayed resilience in maintaining their economic middleman role during

[10] Adolf S. Lima. 'The Mungaka Language – its Development, Spread and Use', in Vincent Titanji et al. *An Introduction to the Study of Bali-Nyonga*. Yaounde: Stardust Printers, 1988, pp. 121f.

[11] A distinction is drawn between the problem of internal church unity and the 'unity-in-diversity' debate on interdenominational and interconfessional rivalry and coexistence. The latter distinction was emphasised by Pope John Paul II. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 'Ecclesia in Africa' of the Holy Father*. Yaounde: Ama, 1995, pp. 49f. See also Jonas Dah. *One Hundred Years: Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon (1890-1990)*. Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press, 1989, pp. 2-5.

[12] On the Grassfields, see Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Traditional Bamenda. The Pre-Colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Government Printer, 1967, pp. 9-12. On the coastal zone, see Edwin Ardener. *Op. cit.*, pp. 33-38.

the German period, the polity of Bali-Nyonga wielded considerable power by the turn of the century, all the more as it 'became the centre of the German scheme for the Bamenda grassfields.'[13] In either case, therefore, German influence prompted the BM to establish strong links with the Duala and Bali peoples and thus to privilege their vernaculars. There was an obvious logic in concurring with colonial alliances.

Although relations between German authorities and their allies gradually deteriorated, Duala and Mungaka remained undisputed in BM circles and became key to missionary advance until the First World War. A common opinion in 'culture-promoting missionary circles' held that 'the African languages must be retained and refined' despite a revision of the BM's cultural policy following the expansion of the missionary enterprise into the Grassfields.[14] As Diedrich Westermann, the renowned German linguist, stressed, African languages and thought were inextricably bound together. A people without its very own language and tradition, he concluded, was 'sentenced to death.'[15] Progress relied largely on preaching and teaching aides – Duala and Mungaka primers and catechism manuals – and interpreters who translated from Duala or Mungaka to other vernaculars. Interpreters were usually teacher-catechists in charge of outstations and "hedge" (vernacular) schools. They also assisted European missionaries with written translation work. This provided a stepping-stone for individual African agents such as Elisa Ndifon, A. Vielhauer's closest assistant, to join the ranks of the clergy. Yet it generally depended on collective efforts of catechists as illustrated by translation work on Bamum Bible passages.[16] Local interpreters and missionary linguists constituted two of the five pillars of vernacularisation. The other three were vernacular (infant) schools, colonial authorisation and local, African approval.

In 1910 the German authorities reiterated earlier objections to the vernacularisation of education, arguing that the Duala and the Bali-Nyonga were gaining excessive influence.[17] While the BM succeeded in maintaining Duala as the language of instruction in the Forest area, the situation in the Grassfields posed a problem. According to Austen and Derrick,

> Although the Baslers did envisage African languages as the basis for rooting Christianity in local culture, their sensibility here was itself rooted in abstract romanticism that evoked little sympathy towards a specific culture such as that of the Duala.... Most missionary beliefs grew out of efforts to replace them

[13] Ndifontah B. Nyamndi. *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon. A Political History*. Paris: CAPE, 1988, pp. 107f. On the distribution of Duala and economic change among the Duala in the early 20th century, see Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick. *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600-c. 1960.* Cambridge: University Press, 1999, pp. 108-120, 122ff. On the distinction between Mungaka and Mubako, see Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Op. cit.*, pp. 18f. Mubako survived as a court-language in Bali-Nyonga and enjoyed greater prominence in the eastern Bali Chamba units. See also Werner Keller. *Op. cit.*, pp. 58ff., pp. 131ff.

[14] Erik Halldén. *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

[15] Summary of a citation by Diedrich Westermann in Fritz Raaflaub. *Die Schulen der Basler Mission in Kamerun. Ihre Geschichte und Gegenwartsaufgabe*. Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1948, p. 93.

[16] On Elisa Ndifon, see Jonas Dah. *In search of a Soul. Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press*, 1989, pp. 73-76. On the translation of Bible passages into Bamum, see BMCA E-4.7,120, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 20 April 1921.

[17] Werner Keller. *Op. cit.*, pp. 205-208.

> with a more orthodox way of life.... If the Baslers did effectively strengthen the middleman role of the Duala it was because they were forced to accept the results of an historical process whose present status, both economic and cultural, they found distasteful. [18]

Earlier support for the Bali by the Germans was withdrawn as the chiefdom's growing power extended beyond the realm of colonial control. Tension increased when Fonyonga of Bali refused to return some 2000 rifles borrowed from the Germans in a joint campaign against the neighbouring Bafut.[19] Before reaching a conclusion, the debate was stifled by the progress of British and French troops and the expulsion of Germans from Cameroon. Systematic vernacularisation gave way to expressions of local vernacular Christianity in BM congregations left without regular missionary supervision. This, however, along with the chronic lack of vernacular literature during and after the war, did not deter F. Bärtschi from suggesting in 1923 that Duala was spreading in church circles.[20] The importance of Duala as the linguistic basis of the church was reaffirmed by the Synod of the PEMS in 1925.[21] By contrast, negative reports on the BM congregations in Bali prompted Inspector W. Oettli in 1927 to propose a meeting between Frey and Vielhauer to discuss a common linguistic policy for the Grassfields.[22] However, Vielhauer, who had returned to Cameroon in 1926, eventually concentrated his efforts on Mungaka studies following close scrutiny by the British colonial authorities while Frey continued devoting his interest to Bamum.[23]

By the time of the post-war reinstatement of the BM in Cameroon in 1924/25, patterns of large-scale vernacularisation were blurred. They were challenged by incipient tendencies among fragmented Christian communities' primary vernaculars of gaining an upper hand over Duala and Mungaka. Contrary to German aversion, though, the BM's plans to revive the two vernaculars met with a more favourable response from British colonial officials. The Nigerian Education Code stipulated that vernaculars could be used at the infant school level, particularly where large numbers shared the same tongue (Yoruba, Igbo, Efik).[24] But the BM was left with the problem of linguistic variety and no entirely satisfactory solution for the implementation of British policy in her mission field. In spite of this dilemma, there was no question of reorienting the earlier approach. Both Duala and Mungaka were on the verge of being anchored as official church vernaculars of the BM from 1925 onwards. All the same, they were first subject to an in-depth assessment conducted at the request of the Director of Education, Southern Provinces, Lagos. The BM finally obtained permission to

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[18] Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick. *Op. cit.*, p. 123f.
[19] Fritz Raaflaub, *Op. cit.*, p. 101.
[20] BMCA E-4.7,39, F. Bärtschi to W. Oettli, Douala, 17 February 1923.
[21] BMCA E-4.7,147, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Ndoungue, November 1925.
[22] BMCA E-4.7,151, W. Oettli to C. Frey, Basel, 8 April 1927.
[23] BMCA E-4.7,183, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Fumban, 14 June 1930. Bamum, where a BM station was founded in 1906, became a new language centre. Mungaka was considered inappropriate for the inhabitants of that area who were ruled by a 'mighty lord' (Njoya). See Fritz Raaflaub. *Op. cit.*, p. 97.
[24] Fritz Raaflaub. *Op. cit.*, p. 143f.; BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, p. 13. Vernaculars enjoyed a higher degree of recognition in Nigeria than in Southern Cameroons.

include both reading and writing in the curriculum for religious instruction at vernacular schools under section 54 of the new Nigerian Education Code.[25] The debate on vernacular instruction in BM schools was subsequently shelved after a series of inquiries and reports by the British authorities in 1927. This was henceforth considered an integral component of the missionary activity as well as education at the infant school level. It was to serve its purpose, the Annual Report to the League of Nations of 1938 recognised, as the basis of a sound organisational concept upon which to develop various educational opportunities.[26] The strengthened status quo was imperative for the BM's relentless campaign in favour of a vernacular syllabus in the course of the following decades until 1956 when the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly resolved to abolish the two church languages.[27]

The dissemination of vernaculars reached its apotheosis in the 1930s and early 1940s. Bible translations, local church regulations, linguistic, ethnographic and botanical studies, literature, primers, and the catechism all reflected the increasing sophistication of written Duala and Mungaka.[28] Moreover, vernaculars such as Akoose among the Bakossi received growing attention.[29] This striking feature of Africanisation was the boldest projection of a cultural policy geared to heed regional peculiarities in the colonies. But other events soon dictated that it was not in keeping with the aim of being incorporated into a larger world of opportunities. Vernacularisation appeared anachronistic in the late 1940s and represented a source of dissonance under the impact of returning auxiliary troops, nationalism, political change, the influx of Nigerians, and a diversifying economy. A rising demand for English schools was coupled with declining vernacular school attendance during the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s. Numbers dropped from 6817 (7040) in 1944 to 191 in 1959. The latter figure included pupils at a mere two schools in the Grassfields while vernacular schools had been scrapped altogether in the Forest area in 1954.[30] Fritz Raaflaub, who was committed to mission education, regretted this lapse of vernacularisation, exclaiming,

> If this means of [vernacular] communication, not only through speech but also writing, should be transformed into a European language, then it will result in meaninglessness and contempt of oneself. Those who despise their mother tongue despise themselves. Precisely this is part of Africa's tragedy. But how the surrender of the vernacular[s] would come to bear on a young evangelical church is barely imaginable.

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[25] BNA Sd/1927/2, no. C.6/27, The Resident, Buea, to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, Lagos, 18 July 1927.

[26] Fritz Raaflaub. *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

[27] Simon Ngome Ejedepang-Koge, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Yaounde, 18 May 2000.

[28] See the BMCA E-20 series in Paul Jenkins and Waltraud Haas. *Op. cit.*, pp. 135-144, the Bärtschi papers on Duala grammar, word-lists, dictionaries, liturgical texts, hymnaries, textbooks etc. (BMCA E-20,1; E-20,2; E-20,3; E-20,5) and the Tischhauser papers on studies in Mungaka (E-20,10 to E-20,20).

[29] Simon N. Ejedepang-Koge. *The Task Ahead: A Centenary of the Gospel in Bakossiland. Yaounde: S.N.K. Publications*, 1996, pp. 65f. See also Heinrich Balz. *Where the Faith has to Live: Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion. Part I: Living Together*. Basel: Basel Mission, pp. 25-28.

[30] Werner Keller. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon*. Limbe: Presbook, 1969, p. 66. The figure in brackets is taken from BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, June 1945, p. 10.

> We cannot pursue these profound problems any further. Suffice it to have raised them and thereby illustrate the position which the Mission must maintain, not only to remain true to the vernacular[s] for missionary purposes but also for the sake of education. That could mean that she [the Mission] should keep and defend her stance towards the government and in the interest of the indigenous population, even under the prevailing circumstances.[31]

Vernacular schools had fallen prey to numerous incentives for English instruction. In 1941 education once more attracted attention in government quarters, resulting in a salary rise for certificated Elementary (English) School teachers.[32] Numerous uncertificated BM teachers recognised the opportunity to improve their prospects through further training at the Government Elementary Training Centre (ETC) in Kake near Kumba. This was again sometimes a stepping-stone towards a bright future. Solomon T. Muna was awarded the Teacher's Higher Elementary Certificate in 1942 following his employment as an assistant to Headmaster A. U. Ephraim at the BM School in Mbengwi where he also supervised the scout movement.[33] He later rose to the rank of Prime Minister of West Cameroon in 1970 under the Ahidjo regime. Another example is Eugene A. Ekiti, the pioneer Cameroonian Education Secretary of the PCC from 1963-1986. He was picked for a Higher Elementary Teacher's training course at Uyo, Nigeria, in 1943 after three years of training in Kake.[34] Other success stories emerged. The selection procedure was, however, competitive and left candidates with less talent, fortune and astuteness, often probationary teachers, frustrated.[35] Elementary certificated teachers were privileged by virtue of their status as civil servants. They were qualified to seek jobs in the increasingly popular Elementary (English) Schools with chances of making headway. And of course they enjoyed the benefits of government wages which were far superior to those of the BM.

Teachers and the quality of instruction were frequently scrutinised and criticised. Fritz Raaflaub, Principal of BM schools at the time, urged Headmaster A. U. Ephraim, who was of Nigerian origin, to select pupils judiciously with a view to grooming worthy vernacular schoolteachers.[36] Willing to comply, Ephraim affirmed, 'I am moved by visible conditions – shortages in reliable working staff and in finance – to sympathize with the Mission.'[37] Beneath the impact of changing priorities in the educational system and the need to raise

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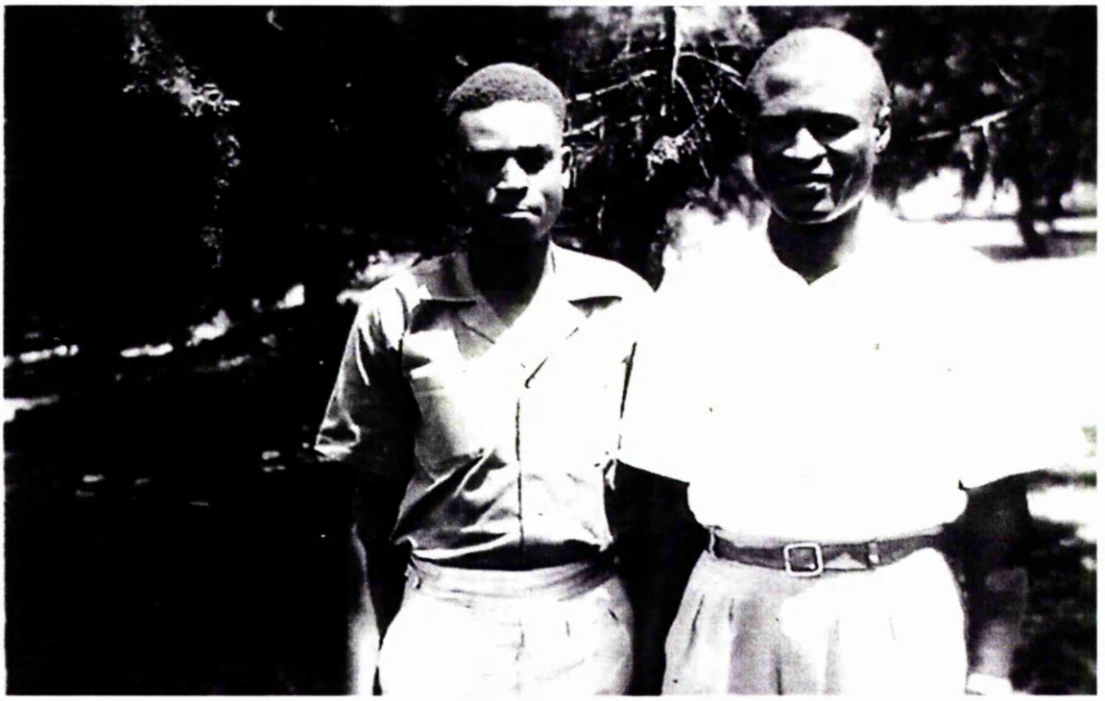
[31] Fritz Raaflaub. *Op. cit.*, p. 146. (My translation)
[32] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22 April 1942, p. 13.
[33] See PCCCAL 14, F. Raaflaub to S. T. Muna, Buea, 7 September 1942; S. T. Muna to F. Raaflaub, Mbengwi, 1 October 1942; F. Raaflaub to A. U. Ephraim, Buea, 9 January 1941; Mbengwi pupils to F. Raaflaub, Mbengwi, 1 May 1942; BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1942), Buea, 30 March 1943, p. 18 (on the scout movement).
[34] PCCCAL 14, E. A. Ekiti to F. Raaflaub, Victoria, 14 October 1943. See also interview with Eugene Ekiti, Buea, 22 July 1999, and the eulogies presented on the occasion of Eugene Ekiti's funeral service in Buea on 2 March 2000. Ekiti attended a teacher's training course in Kake from 1940-1943 before proceeding to Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and Bristol. He finally returned in 1959 to resume his duties in the service of the PCC and national education.
[35] See especially PCCCAL 14, F. Raaflaub, Testimonial for Benjamin Mudimbe, 27 January 1943, and Testimonial of Service for Martin Ngale Wole, 9 January 1943.
[36] PCCCAL 14, F. Raaflaub to A. U. Ephraim, 2 September 1941.
[37] PCCCAL 14, A. U. Ephraim to F. Raaflaub, 1 October 1941.



BMCA E-30.92.138, H. Voute, "On the left the teacher Ekiti in Batibö, on the right the teacher Muna who was elected to the parliament of Eastern Nigeria in 1952."

BMCA E-30.86.214, J. W. Zürcher, "Boy scouts in Mbengwi. (Founded by the missionary Zürcher in 1943." 1943/1945.

teaching standards lay the question of negotiating support from pupils' parents. Ephraim noted that parental approval and support were 'between the hammer and the nail,' adding,

> We should not sever our consideration from the public opinion; rural opinions are dangerous. Speaking of locality, I think the institution of our Higher Elementary School in the Grassfields, inter alia, serves as a nexus between the loyal, unsophisticated Christian community as well as the discriminate native chiefs and the solidarity of the work of our Mission. The people call it their own school and delight in appraising its achievements. If they should hear of their children's demotion at this last quarter they would stagger in the bitterness of their ignorance and withdraw their pupils and their little interests from our school and even church systems.[38]

Thus, while Raaflaub's attention focused principally on the improvement of teaching skills, Ephraim was concerned with the decisive aim of sustaining his school in an unstabil environment. The 'dangerous rural opinions' referred to represented a critical combination of factors that accounted for the legitimacy of schools. Containing hostility was crucial to this end. The main tool of BM's policy – vernacularisation – was juxtaposed by the more immediate problems of successfully publicising schools as well as rallying and keeping pupils. An overtly selective approach was considered detrimental to the target of attracting and enabling the majority of the village community – Christians and non-Christians alike – to realise and share the benefits of education. Elsewhere in the Grassfields, the favourable stance of the Fon of We towards education reveals the importance of approval by village communities and authorities. In the course of paying regular visits to the BM School, the Fon went even further to suggest that the the local Native Authority should be handed over to the Mission.[39] This was an extraordinary gesture of collaboration in an area where the BM struggled to overcome hostility. It was such interaction between the BM and her host community which inspired Headmaster John T. Dezi to exclaim that the inhabitants of the the third largest town in Bamenda Division, Fungom, 'all look up to this school.'[40]

The downside of Elementary schools, as repeatedly noted in the 1940s, was that they charged fees, however nominal. J. F. Mancho, Headmaster of the BM School in Batibö, explained that the 'omnipresent disease' was money. School fees were heavily contested, for Native Authority schools provided free or later at least cheaper education than the BM. While Mancho remarked that the Manager of Schools enforced the remittance of school fees as a condition to take the annual examinations, other cases demanded a more lenient approach. Attempting to resolve a similar controversy at the BM School in Besongabang, Raaflaub suggested the adoption of a policy to support good pupils who could not afford school fees.[41] Given the rising demand for English schools in the 1940s, Raaflaub urged Headmaster Ngilla in Kumba to call upon the inhabitants of outlying villages like Mbakwa

[38] PCCCAL 14, A. U. Ephraim to F. Raaflaub, 21 September 1941.
[39] PCCCAL 14, J. T. Dezi to F. Raaflaub, We, 7 December 1940.
[40] Ibid.
[41] PCCCAL 14, F. Raaflaub to the Headmaster, BM School Besongabang, Buea, 29 September 1942.

Supe to be patient.[42] As focal points, an asset to society and symbols of prestige, schools raised expectations. The transfer of the BM's Lower Middle School (Higher Elementary School, Standard V & VI) from Bombe to Essosong, Kumba Division, in 1936 provoked an outcry from the village community. Writing to the Proprietor of BM Schools in 1943, delegates of the NA in Southern Bakundu voiced profound anger following the removal of 'their' institution. The BM was reviled for 'punishing the tribe' by preventing its children from receiving education as a fundamental condition to develop the region:

> The present heads [of the BM] and their representatives are seeking only to oppress us and to reduce us to nothing. Will the Mission account for this? There is a lot of partiality going on. The present representatives [of the BM] are playing us out. Without hesitation we certify that the Basel Mission denomination is very unjust. We already know what is going on. We know you will say we are the cause of this because we do not believe in God. How can you prove that we do not believe in God? We also know that you will say our preachers are falling away from the church...We fall because you are the cause. The Mission is not doing anything to interest and to encourage us. The Middle School at Bombe was moved without any tangeble (sic) reason. Will you please enlighten us?[43]

Bakundu resentments towards the BM's apparent neglect provide a sense of just how intense the scramble for English schools and higher education could become. Grievances about the removal of Bombe's institution reflect the growing importance that was attached to education. The BM acknowledged the desire for English schools. Vernacular schools, established with the target of Africanising early education *and* Christian values, eventually gave way to a fully anglicised curriculum during the 1930s. Primary schools were opened in Buea, Bali and Besongabang in 1929 followed by Nyasoso in 1930. In 1932 they were turned into Elementary Schools, and the Lower Middle School was transferred from Buea to Bombe.[44] The use of both Duala and Mungaka was subsequently restricted to religious instruction, subject to relevant majorities of native speakers in every school location. These stipulations became firmly rooted in 1957, ushering in the conclusive stages of the demise of vernacular schools in the early 1960s.[45]

The major concern of E. Peyer, Supervisor of Schools, was the absence of a solid basis upon which to formulate a contingent policy for vernacular studies. The essential problem, he underscored in a memorandum in 1947, arose from the lack of expert language surveys and recommendations by a representative body of linguists and educationists who were familiar with Cameroon.[46] Peyer held that vernacular instruction ought to be continued in rural areas during year one at infant school level, whereas town schoolchildren should be

[42] PCCCAL 14, F. Raaflaub to A. Ngilla, Buea, 17 April 1943.
[43] PCCCAL 4, The Southern Bakundu Native Authority to the Proprietor of Schools, Basel Mission, 21 January 1943. The frustration was worsened by the rejection of a local candidate for Higher Teacher's Training in Kake.
[44] PCCCAL 603, A brief account of the educational work of the BM since 1926, 27 June 1933.
[45] PCCCAL 949, Report of the Subcommittee on the question of Vernacular teaching in the Primary Schools of Southern Cameroons, May 1957.
[46] PCCCAL 47b, E. Peyer, Government policy towards the use of Vernaculars, 19 December 1947.

taught in English from the onset. He proposed to reduce the period of vernacular teaching due to the limited outreach of Duala and Mungaka in Cameroon. Thus the BM language policy was being steadily eroded by the demands of an increasingly anglophone culture.[47]

Money, English schools, growing competition for jobs in Native Administration and the wider economy, political awareness and nationalism composed the new list of priorities which cast a long shadow over vernacular education in the late 1940s. If vernacularisation through education was henceforth rejected both by the colonial authorities and Africans, it proved resilient enough to survive in the BM Church. Duala and Mungaka alike provided an important means of communication in Christian families. Even today, as one interview disclosed clearly, the Lord's Prayer and Bible meditations could be recited in one of the vernaculars by all generations of some families. Joseph Chi Ngang, a retired contractor, inherited this custom from his father, Elias Ngang, who served the BM as a catechist until he passed away under mysterious circumstances in 1940. He allegedly contracted a fatal illness after turning down an offer to be initiated into the *Nggumba* society in Balikumbat where he was posted.[48] Ngang refused to become a catechist after seeing his father suffer. Today, however, he rallies his family – six wives and numerous children – every evening for Christian fellowship and devotion in Mungaka.[49] This is reminiscent of the decision by the Grassland District Synod of 28-29 January 1943 to create family prayer cells.[50] Many other contemporaries, not only clergymen and -women, have retained a remarkable level of vernacular Christian knowledge. Apart from family traditions and personal commitment to culture and language as imparted by Catherine Musoko,[51] another important vehicle for the survival of Duala and Mungaka is the large network of vernacular choirs. All the same, the the BM's vernacularisation programme had a divisive impact upon the entire BM Church as will be discussed at some length below.

The elaboration, distribution and reception of Duala and Mungaka are ingredients of a story about an enduring struggle for survival of vernacular Christianity. A critical problem of the BM's language policy laid bare by German disapproval of vernacular instruction in mission schools and by the First World War was the ambiguous response to Duala and Mungaka by non-native speakers. The BM's language policy did not only create fissures between Christians and non-Christians, but also between various peoples and polities.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] *Ng(g)umba*, the retainer association among the Bali groups, corresponds to the *Kwifoyn* in Kom, *Kwifon* among the Bafut and the *Nwerong* among the Nso. See Paul Nkwi. *Traditional Diplomacy in the Western Grassfields. A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*. Yaounde: University of Yaounde, 1987, p. 39; Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Op. cit.*, p. 64; Vincent Titanji et al. *Op. cit.*, pp. 93f.

[49] Interview with Joseph Chi Ngang, Mulang, Bamenda, 21 April 1999. Ruth Ndando, whose father was also a catechist, offers a similar account. Interview with Ruth Enanga Ndando, Muea, 18 May 2000.

[50] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract, 1942), Bafut, 15 March 1943, pp. 17f. This was a common appeal, exhorting that God can only be addressed through prayers. See for example also PCCCAL 3442, Minutes of the Presbyterial Synod held in Wum-Weh Presbytery on 28 June 1961.

[51] Interview with Catherine Musoko, Buea, 7 July 1999.

5.2 Vernaculars and Identities

Today Cameroonian Christians overwhelmingly pay tribute to their vernacular legacy. It is perhaps the most vivid expression of Africanisation amidst more universal practices of the PCC.[52] Representing the dominant feature of the particular cultural background of the Church, it is treasured as a distinct mark of identity. Indeed, the PCC is a strong lobby for the promotion and expansion of vernacular knowledge. One of the fervent proponents of a vital function of vernaculars in contemporary society is Aaron Su who recently completed a substantial manuscript dealing with this issue.[53] Vernacularisation was undoubtedly more contested during the period under study as the present section seeks to elaborate.

Christian advance occurred concomitantly with vernacular evangelisation, articulated in a 'dual authority' of the evangelist and the Bible.[54] This 'realm of the word', Paul Landau suggests with regard to Ngwato authority in Botswana, lay at the heart of social alliances between royalty, clergy and village society. The intricacy of such interplay is expressed at different levels where the concept of *thuto*, combining learning, Christianity, literacy and civic knowledge, influenced the Ngwato polity.[55] 'Language,' Landau continues, 'was the medium in which political and religious alliances were forged, and it changed constantly,' while adding on *thuto*, 'Its meanings were never divorced from its media, its texts and its supervised recitations, and it held the practice of evangelism within itself.'[56] Likewise, the 'realm of the word' of Duala and Mungaka, demarcating the BM's sphere, had a crucial impact upon what Birgit Meyer dubs the 'orality of heathendom' among the evangelised.[57] This *Kulturarbeit*, the packaging of evangelism in selected linguistic media, challenged the power and prestige of traditional authorities all over the Cameroonian mission field. John Ndozo brings this to bear upon chiefs in the Grassfields: 'These Fons must have thought that Bali, as a tribe, might enslave them if they had accepted the preaching and teaching of the Gospel in Mungaka language.'[58] It is upon this contention that the discussion about the local reception and impact of the BM's two church vernaculars shall now be centred.

Right from the onset, the use of Duala met with stiff opposition in Victoria where it was rejected as barbarous in 1889. A group of petitioners offered two reasons for their stance, namely 'that the children could never obtain employment under the German government or under any civilized person, or persons whatever when they are grown up, because they could never understand what to do. Also the Douala language is not our native tongue.'[59]

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[52] An exception is the chiefdom of Banso which has often opposed the use of Mungaka in church circles.
[53] Since the published version has not yet appeared, I withhold the title for the sake of discretion.
[54] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 454.
[55] Paul Landau. *The Realm of the Word. Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995, pp. xvi-xvii.
[56] *Ibid.*, pp. xxv (first quotation), 78 (second quotation).
[57] Birgit Meyer. 'Translating the Devil. An African Appropriation of Pietist Protestantism. The Case of the Peki Ewe in Southeastern Ghana, 1847-1992.' Amsterdam, Ph.D., 1995, pp. 124f.
[58] John A. Ndozo. 'The Theological Problems of Indigenization of Christian Faith in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.' Nyasoso, Diploma in Theology, 1986, p. 22.
[59] Petition from the Baptists in Victoria to the BM Home Board, quoted in Werner Keller. *History*, p. 85.

When the BM Home Board turned down their wish, the Baptists opted out of the alliance. While the first reason proved to be misguided once the German plantation economy began to expand along the coast from the 1890s, the second bore relevance to the entire mission field. The vernacularisation project was three-pronged, comprising schools, publications and evangelisation. However, the latter prong was effectively two-pronged itself, involving preaching in one of the official vernaculars while simultaneously translating the message into other native tongues. The rise of local vernacular expressions of Christianity during and after the First World War leads to the inference that neither Duala nor Mungaka were received and accepted as common denominators of Christian identity by different peoples and polities. They were successfully imposed but not readily assimilated. This is clearly reflected in the question of compatibility between Duala and the vernaculars of the Cross River region. In 1929 the D.O. of Mamfe Division reported that Duala lacked popularity and proposed to discard it in favour of the two local vernaculars Kenyang and Keaka.[60] In 1932 the Chief Inspector of Education reiterated the proposal, urging the BM Manager of Schools in Besongabang to introduce the two vernaculars. The Principal of the BM replied by justifying the policy of only using Duala in the Forest area. He stressed the benefits of an existing literature for students to draw upon, and the chance to read and understand the Bible jointly in one common vernacular.[61]

Further to the south, Heinrich Dorsch's work on Akoose among the Bakossi had failed to be recognised by the BM for evangelisation purposes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Dorsch accepted the decision, recognising that it would be easier for missionaries to learn one vernacular rather than two. More importantly, the two tongues were related.[62] The second point is critical to an appraisal of the distribution of Duala through missionary activity. Returning to the Banyang in Mamfe Division, Malcolm Ruel holds that regional language classification should be understood in conjunction with expressions of cultural affinity.[63] Duala became obsolete in much of Mamfe Division during the First World War once Duala BM teacher-catechists had returned to the coast. Christian village communities subsequently took to grassroots organisation and selected their own preachers, leading the D.O., J. W. C. Rutherfoord, to suspect the rise of a new Christian 'juju'.[64] The disjunction of Duala from Christianity resembled the key to liberation from a vernacular that served no practical purpose beyond the realm of the BM Church. Besides linguistic incompatibility with other vernaculars, the dissemination of Duala through instruction and evangelisation enhanced a sense of increasing Duala influence and power. All suggestions to pay heed to

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[60] BNA Ce/1929/1, no. 7/1930, Mamfe Division, Annual Report, p. 50.
[61] PCCCAL 373, The BM Principal to the Chief Inspector of Education, 20 September 1932.
[62] Heinrich Balz. *Op. cit.*, p. 27.
[63] Malcolm Ruel. *Leopards and Leaders. Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1969, p. 2. Ruel uses cultural affinity as a basis to critically assess the 'paradox of linguistic classifications', the formation of, and connections and distinctions between, language groups.
[64] BNA Sd/1920/1, 90/120, J. W. C. Rutherfoord, Mamfe Division – Cameroons Province. Report on Protestant Christianity in the Mamfe Division, Mamfe, 16 April 1923, p. 5.

Kenyang and Keaka in Mamfe Division were diplomatic attempts to subvert the growing aversion towards the BM's language policy and to the missionary presence in general. In 1925 F. Bärtschi applied to the D.O. for a catechist in Ntchang, a neighbouring village of Besongabang. However, conditions looked unfavourable. Endeavours to erect a house for the catechist were obstructed by the villagers. The local chief's initial welcoming approach allegedly turned into hostile reservation. The question was then raised 'whether the chief is free to break his word given to Mr Wunderli, and also to Mr Bärtschi,'[65] implying a good degree of insistence on the part of the two missionaries to get their way. It was eventually resolved that the matter would be subject to scrutiny by the village council. The 'foreign' agency of the BM thus posed a considerable threat to authority at the village level.

Hostility towards Duala was writ large throughout the coastal zone of the Forest area, Fritz Raaflaub remarked in 1943.[66] He reiterated the lead argument cited above in response to the Chief Inspector of Education's plans to draw upon local vernaculars: The essence, it was stressed, lay in teaching children to read the Bible and the hymnary in the vernacular. There was little appreciation for this priority in a society that increasingly regarded schools as an "investment scheme" with keen expectations for returns through employment. Ever fewer were the secluded hinterland regions such as Dikume Balue where the vernacular school system temporarily remained intact. Wherever economic development was set in motion, employment incentives that favoured English schools rapidly superseded the aim of acquiring and assimilating vernacular Christian knowledge. However, the predicament of assimilation reached beyond Christian literacy to embrace aspects of cultural identity expressed through linkages between language, origins and power.

The interplay between language, origins and power became visible in the Grassfields where a *Sprachpalaver* (language dispute) erupted in 1942. To a greater extent than Duala in the Forest area, Mungaka is, by dint of its mixed origins, alien to much of the western Grassfields.[67] Indeed, Abel Sumbele, a former Education Secretary of the PCC, points out, Duala was more readily accepted than Mungaka because it was related to most vernaculars in the Forest area except for those spoken in Mamfe Division.[68] Njoh Litumbe adds that the Bali represented a small "tribe", causing some neighbouring peoples like the Banso to feel offended when Mungaka was imposed upon them. The distribution of Mungaka was thus considered to be a form of quasi-imperialism brought on by a people that had taken advantage of early contacts with missionaries.[69] This argument is carried further by Peter

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[65] BNA Sd/1925/2, Application from F. Bärtschi to the D.O. for a catechist in Ntchang, 4 September 1925.
[66] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, p. 13.
[67] See Elizabeth Chilver and Phyllis Kaberry. *Op. cit.*, p. 11; Adolf S. Lima. *Op. cit.*, pp. 113-119; Ndifontah Nyamndi. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.
[68] Interview with Abel Sumbele, Bokwoango, Buea, 9 July 1999.
[69] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 5 July 1999. On 'Bali imperialism' see also Robert O'Neil. 'Imperialism at the Century's End: Moghamo Relationships with Bali-Nyonga and Germany 1889-1908', in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.). *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon.* Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 81-100.

Fomusoh, of Bali origin himself and still in the active service of the PCC, who explains the dwindling popularity of Mungaka as a concomitant of rising ethnicity in the Grassfields. He alludes to ethnic reconstruction – the rediscovery of ethnic group identity – which was compounded by growing political awareness in the face of emerging multi-party politics from the early 1940s.[70] Fomusoh's viewpoint echoes Chief S. M. L. Endeley's notion of the 'rediscovery of the African self' as attributed to growing nationalism.[71] This all leads to the problem addressed by Richard Fardon of fusing varied identities and, for the distinct Bali groups, of ascertaining Chamba-ness as opposed to otherness. Fardon cautions:

> Chamba identity fits the overall scheme of larger-scale ethnic identities emerging in West Africa during the twentieth century.... Of course the Chamba-ness of Bali-Nyonga is a very selective appropriation of the past.... It is difficult...to decide whose representation of whom the 'Chamba-ness' of Bali-Nyonga is.[72]

The BM grappled with the question of identity in the Grassfields, insisting relentlessly on the Mungaka-ness of Christian faith which was injected through the congenial *Balifibel*, the Bali Primer.[73] According to Victor Ama'azee, some African church workers adopted a more comprehensive approach. He demonstrates this wider perspective by citing his father Thomas Bong Ama'azee, well-known as the "Sunday School Uncle" in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s: 'My father's own idea of the church was to build a church which developed not only the spiritual aspect of man, but a church which would improve man physically and intellectually.'[74] Here, then, are two sides of the conundrum embodied by the concept of a unified and universal church and Christian community.

Monotheism and the Holy Trinity are arguably the single most unifying components of Christianity. Confessionalism and denominationalism mark the first level of division or exclusivity. Church vernaculars, used by the BM as common cross-cultural denominators in the Cameroonian mission field, had a unifying objective with a divisive impact. The wide distribution of Mungaka as a tool for evangelisation engendered, most of all, a strain upon traditional diplomacy in the western Grassfields. Diplomatic relations in this region, Paul Nkwi elaborates, can be traced to modes of conflict resolution in inter-chiefdom disputes during the 19th century, crucially involving special envoys.[75] Indeed, the BM's language policy drove a wedge between different polities engaged in configuring a new balance of power in the course of the 20th century. In the Second World War, traditional rulers of the

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[70] Interview with Peter Fomusoh, Agyati, Bafut, 5 June 1999.
[71] Interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[72] Richard Fardon. 'The Person, Ethnicity and the Problem of Identity in West Africa', in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.). *Op. cit.*, p. 36. Richard Fardon offers a very insightful discussion on the fusion and dislocation between various Chamba elements of Bali identities, referring not only to the Bali-Nyonga but also to the formation of other Bali polities that claim common Chamba parentage. On the present issue, see especially pp. 29-41.
[73] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[74] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999.
[75] On the significance, expressions and implications of traditional diplomacy in the Grassfields, see Paul Nkwi. *Op. cit.*, especially Chapter 5: The Dynamics of Inter-Chiefdom Relationships, pp. 91-107.

Grassfields other than the Fon of Bali-Nyonga had formed a lobby to oppose and rebuff the use of Mungaka in their respective spheres of authority and jurisdiction.[76]

In areas lying outside the sphere of European influence, particularly after the number of Basel missionaries in Cameroon had dropped to three, the rebuttal of Mungaka was fierce. The Fon of Banso, a personality who reputably displayed a diplomatic flair in negotiating agreements with the BM, was the first to impose a ban upon Mungaka in 1941.[77] Raaflaub predicted that a new storm was gathering over BM vernacular instruction. Zürcher, who was in charge of the Grassfields at this period, concurred, exclaiming in the same year:

> The war waged by other tribes against the Bali language has already registered victories. The Chief of Wum (We area) has strictly prohibited instruction in the Bali language. It is quite impossible to recruit even two boys from this town of 12 kings for our vernacular school.... Similarly, black representatives of the Roman Catholics and heathens in Banso are unremittingly hindering instruction in the Bali language. The parole here is "Banso language". When I enquire among the Banso about school boys I always receive the same answer: "for a Banso or for a Bali school?" It is infecting all the tribes of the Grassland: Tribal language instead of Bali language, foreign tongue![78]

Catholics joined the opposition against Mungaka in Banso, having already engaged in similar conflicts with Zürcher during previous years, notably in 1938.[79] Hostility in the We district was not new either and became more severe during the years to come according to Albert Angst in 1946.[80] Besides the main traditional bastions against 'foreign' vernaculars, the anti-Mungaka campaign also extended among Bali-Nyonga's closer neighbours, such as the Moghamo, where growing animosity was recorded in 1942.[81] The pattern was often similar: A village head – formerly employed by one of the Basel missionaries as a cook –, Jakob Tima, purportedly fanned resentments towards Mungaka. In Zürcher's opinion, the language dispute was compounded by the politics of Galega II, the new Fon of Bali, in his forceful quest for suzerainty in the Grassfields. It raged on in 1943, forging fresh dissent and intensifying existing conflicts. The Meta' contingent of catechists, who represented a sizeable community of BM Church adherents, came to the fore, claiming their own tongue as a church language as opposed to Mungaka. Zürcher rapidly put this quarrel down to a '*Neger-Kantönligeist*', alluding to petty tribal (cantonal) attitudes.[82] On a note of concern, however, he deplored the increasing number of chiefs and sub-chiefs becoming involved in

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[76] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen*, p. 326.

[77] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22 April 1942, p. 15. The relationship between the BM and the Fon and Fais (quarter-heads) of Banso had already been strained by earlier disputes over land and language. See PCCCAL 6, Correspondence on the development of the station, school etc. in Kishong (1932-1935).

[78] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1941), Bafut, 2 April 1942, p. 11. (My translation)

[79] Werner Keller. *Op. cit.*, p. 283.

[80] BMCA E-5-2,17, A. Angst, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 19 July 1947, p. 7.

[81] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1942), Bafut 15 March 1943, pp. 4f.; for a detailed analysis of the distribution of the Moghamo as well as their relations and conflicts with Bali-Nyonga, see Robert O'Neil. 'A History of Moghamo, 1865-1940. Authority and Change in a Cameroon Grassfields Culture.' Columbia University, Ph.D., 1987.

[82] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), Bafut, 10 July 1944, p. 4.

the dispute. Although the British colonial authorities attempted to restrict the influence and power of Galega II, his expansionist strategies were soon suspected elsewhere. Moghamo chiefs filed a petition, urging the colonial authorities to prohibit instruction in Mungaka in their schools. Complaints from other Grassfield dignitaries followed. Preferences entailed a combination of local vernaculars and English. The main tenet of such petitions followed the argument that 'We are not slaves of the Bali, do not want the Bali language, are under the British regime and only want the English language or our own tongue.'[83] Apparently, some petitions were written by Catholic court clerks under the supervision of two Catholic priests. It was largely teacher-catechists who continued advocating the use of Mungaka. J. Mukum, a senior BM agent in Batibö, was noted by Zürcher for having paid all Moghamo chiefs personal visits with this objective in mind.[84] The aim was to reinforce the resolution taken by the District Synod of Bafut in 1944 not to abandon the official church vernacular. Mungaka was imperative to Christian advance, not uniquely for the purpose of instruction but also for the task of evangelisation at large. Teachers and clerics were rarely educated in English at that period, and they relied, along with the other target groups of the missionary enterprise, predominantly on their local vernaculars.[85] Once more in 1947, W. E. Baer was convinced that 'In no other way could we familiarise the present young generation with the Gospel and raise and educate them according to Christian principles.'[86]

The language disputes in the Grassfields fed into mounting pressures on social reform, political stability and economic innovation. Missionary language policy and practice were opposed because Mungaka was seen as representing both a political stumbling-block and economic backwardness. African Christians who remained loyal to the BM throughout the struggle bore the brunt of attempting to transform the regional pariah status of Mungaka. Zürcher rallied support from the colonial authorities while the African agents negotiated at the local level. Thus the assimilation of Mungaka-ness stirred discord over the competitive realities of political and economic demands. Competitiveness was, ironically, epitomised in Bali-Nyonga proper, the heartland of Mungaka: Fon Galega II, a Catholic, gave priority to the 'extremely pagan' Native Authority School over the BM's vernacular school.[87]

The BM Church turned into an enclave in Bali under an ailing cleric, Elisa Ndifon, who had played a vital part in Vielhauer's translation work. Put to the test on several fronts, the BM was caught in the complicated dynamics of articulating identities, defined by political, social, economic, religious and linguistic factors. The assimilation of Mungaka was part of this process which was influenced by a set of interconnected variables. In Fardon's words,

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[83] Ibid., p. 5.
[84] Mukum was already 'Head Catechist' of Batibö in the late 1920s. See Robert O'Neil. Op. cit., p. 256.
[85] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, p. 4.
[86] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Mbengwi, 30 June 1947.
[87] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), Bafut, 10 July 1944, p. 8. Galega's predecessor Fonyonga had asked W. Schneider whether the BM would take over the NA School in Bali. He declared that he would give permission to the Catholics if the BM had not reached a decision by early 1940. PCCCAL 1659, W. Schneider to the D.O., Bamenda, 24 April 1939.

BMCA E-30.86.205, J. W. Zürcher, "Rev. Elisa Ndifon." 1932/1945.

> Identity, ethnicity and nation crystallised as a cluster in West Africa, drawing on such presuppositions as that the self-evidence of each was underlined by its analogy to the other two. Language difference, in particular, was politicised in this matrix because of the indissociable relationship it could seem to enjoy with the essences of personal identity, ethnicity and nationality.[88]

While the identity of the BM Church as a whole was based upon the policy of unifying communities through the vernacularisation of Christianity, this task was also coupled with other emerging forms of corporate affiliation. The latter involved linkages between local clergy, chieftaincy and politics. An outstanding figure who pursued the aim of shaping the BM Church as an integral component of society was Jeremiah Chi Kangsen, the second Moderator of the PCC from 1969-1985.[89] As Lina Weber, a BM teacher from 1945-1980, recalls, 'What probably attached the two of us – beside other reasons – to each other was the love of the Mungaka language, to both of us not being our mother tongue, but a means of binding Christians of the Basel Mission now Presbyterian Church together.'[90]

The BM's struggle against indifference or hostility among both colonial and traditional authorities did not end with the birth of the PCC in 1957. It was assimilated and carried on by African church workers who repeatedly drew attention to the uniqueness of Duala and Mungaka literature. Indeed, there was good reason to jubilate in 1961 when the Mungaka Bible was published.[91] In 1954 the Provincial Education Officer, Bamenda Province, wrote to the BM prohibiting the use and teaching of the Bali tongue in non-Mungaka-speaking areas of Cameroon. The General Synod of 1954 in Buea, which was under Cameroonian chairmanship, resolved to oppose the prohibition and carry on teaching in Mungaka at all BM infant schools in the Bamenda Province.[92] And three years later, in 1957, the recently appointed Subcommittee on the question of Vernacular teaching in the Primary Schools of Southern Cameroons set out a formula according to which

> Neither Duala nor Bali can rightly be regarded as a dominant vernacular. However, in certain limited areas each is used, and each has a school literature of sorts. Hence, any native agency which wishes to use Bali or Duala as the medium of instruction in infant classes should be permitted to do so in the classes where 2/3 of the pupils speak the proposed vernacular as their mother tongue or speak as their mother tongue a tribal tongue similar to the proposed vernacular. That notwithstanding, Managers of Schools should at the beginning of the school year apply to the Education Department for permission to use the proposed vernacular and at the same time show the language distribution in the classes concerned.[93]

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[88] Richard Fardon. *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

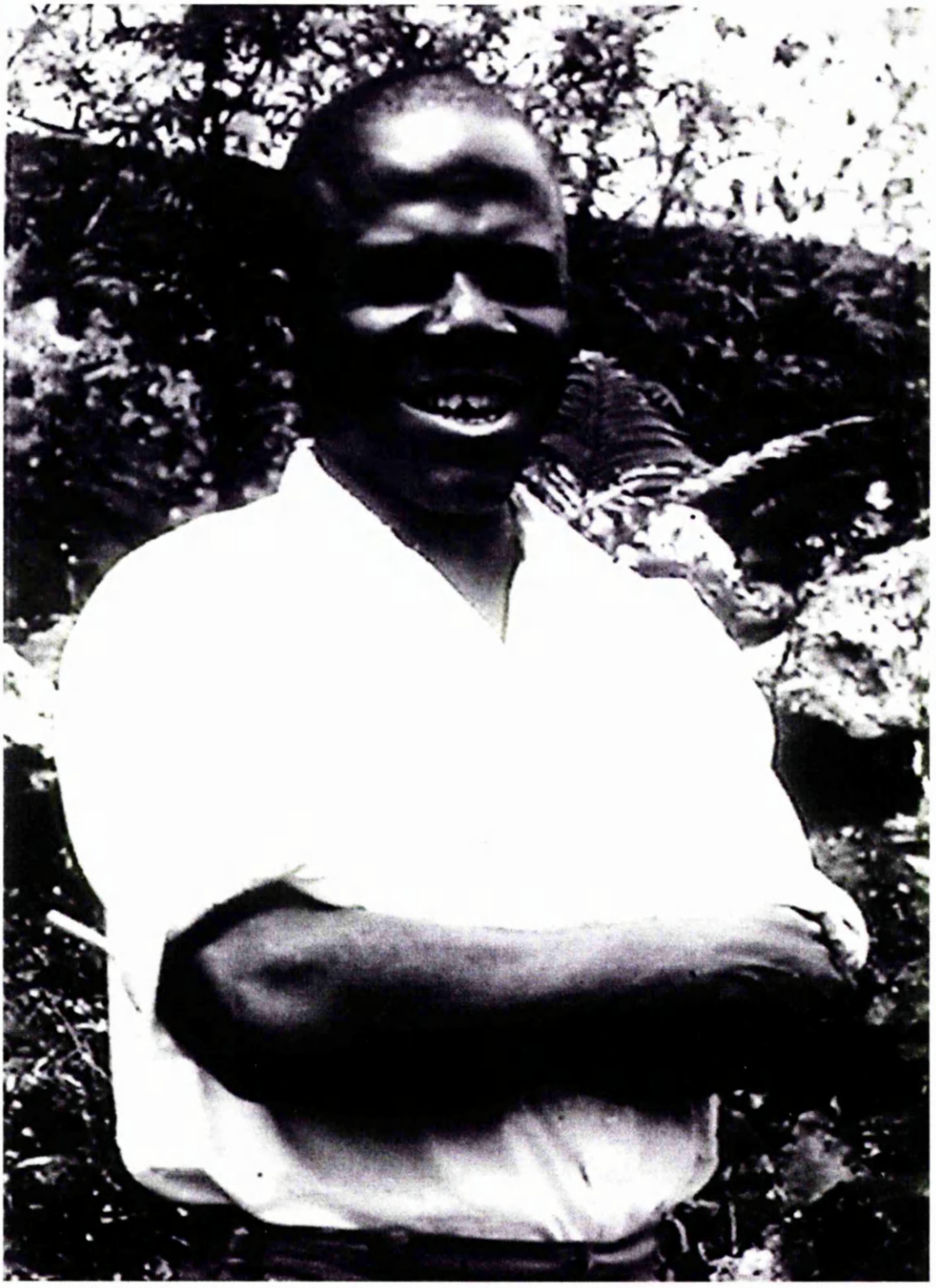
[89] Jonas Dah. *Kangsen as they saw him*. Limbe: Mencam Printers, 1989, p. 8. See also Chapter 4, p. 140.

[90] Lina Weber. 'It has happened', in *ibid.*, p. 51.

[91] PCCCAL 469, Speech (by the Moderator?) on the occasion of the Presbyterian Church Day, 13 November 1961.

[92] PCCCAL 1082, Minutes of the General Synod held at Buea, 26-30 April, 1954; PCCCAL 949, Resolution concerning the Teaching of Bali schools, May 1954.

[93] PCCCAL 949, Report of the Subcommittee on the question of Vernacular teaching in the Primary Schools of Southern Cameroons, May 1957.



BMCA E-30.92.122, P. Scheibler, "The young pastor Jeremiah Chi Kangsen who has been trained on the Gold Coast, here seen on his return [to Cameroon]." c. 1947.

Even when the Education Department turned down this proposal and imposed a general ban on vernacular instruction in 1958,[94] efforts to restore Duala and Mungaka continued. Attempts were made to publicise the church languages in the magazine *Mwendi* which was renamed *African Challenge* in 1956.[95] However, patterns of language distribution changed. Increasingly, as Thomas Ediage underscored in 1963, it was no more English but Pidgin that was threatening vernaculars, especially in the cosmopolitan environment of growing towns and suburbs.[96] Ediage's argument was endorsed at the General Synod where Pidgin was acknowledged as a swiftly spreading *lingua franca* in the coastal zone while Mungaka was challenged by Lamnso, the Banso tongue, in the Grassfields.[97]

The conclusion of the drawn-out debate over the BM's vernaculars is twofold: On the one hand, their official use was in a process of continuous decline from the 1940s. On the other, their survival resulted from a long, varied process of assimilation by those Africans who recognised their usefulness for evangelisation. They consequently raised Duala and Mungaka as hallmarks of a very particular brand of missionary legacy that left its imprint on a distinctly dual identity of the Church. According to Samuel Feh Titamangwa, a retired BM catechist and farmer from Bali-Nyonga, 'In our African *parlance* people are socially identified. I see myself as a member of a tribe. This is because we have common ancestors, history, language, and culture.'[98] To what extent, the question arises, is the notion of being 'socially identified' rooted in the shaping and composition of BM Church congregations?

5.3 "Foreigners" and "Strangers": Patterns of Exclusiveness

Peter Fomusoh alerts to the proposition that the deployment of vernaculars produced a dividing line between the Mungaka-speakers and the Duala-speakers of the BM Church. He asserts the distinctiveness of the Mungaka Church and the Duala Church in the Forest area, represented by various congregations in Fiango-Kumba, Strangers Quarter-Buea and New Town-Victoria (Limbe) among others.[99] The formation of "Strangers Quarters" and separate congregations was enhanced by labour migration from the Grassfields to Kumba and Victoria Divisions in search of employment in the plantations. While some plantation workers eventually returned to their areas of origin after completing their terms of contract, others chose to remain in the south. John Musumbe from Mbengwi is one of those who settled close to the plantations. He left his village in 1939, returned for a year, got married and then headed back southwards for a job in the Mabete banana plantation. He continued for 15 years, transferring from Mabete to Tiko, then to Muea, before moving to Molyko,

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[94] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen*, p. 328.
[95] PCCCAL 846, Minutes of the General Synod held at Buea, 14-16 April, 1956.
[96] PCCCAL 716, Forest District Report (1963) by District Secretary Rev. Thomas Ediage.
[97] PCCCAL 1347, Report of a speech and discussion at the General Synod held in Buea, 25 November 1966.
[98] Samuel Feh Titamangwa, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Bali, 12 July 1999.
[99] Interview with Peter Fomusoh, Agyati, Bafut, 5 June 1999.

Buea, in 1956. Musumbe, a BM Christian and itinerant lay preacher, became the head of the "strangers" community in his quarter. He was instrumental in raising the local church, which earned him the nickname 'Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Molyko.'[100]

Efforts were undertaken to register visiting Christians from other congregations for the purpose of levying church contributions. However, the statistics for the contingents of BM Grassfield Christians in Victoria and Kumba Divisions are patchy. The main point here is to explore the ways in which the influx of Mungaka-speakers, along with the immigration of Nigerians, influenced the BM Church. Musumbe represents an expanding Grassfield community that moved from plantation labour into private farming and trade around Mt. Cameroon and on the coast. But Nigerians soon constituted a more prominent "stranger" element engaging similarly in various trades, albeit on a more expansive scale than all other migrants.[101] The appearance of "Foreigners' Congregations" provoked much concern in BM circles about their separatist propensity, although 'sects' and 'independent' churches from Nigeria had yet to set foot in Cameroon, as Raaflaub emphasised in 1942.[102]

Competition could easily increase in plantation settlements near the border with Eastern Nigeria. A typical palm oil production community of this kind on the western fringes of Kumba Division in the 1930s was Ndian, an outstation of Dikume Balue. Church activities in Ndian were initially reported by Th. Authenrieth who observed a decline in membership due to the fluctuating labour force which reached a *baisse* in 1933.[103] In 1937 E. Pfenning encountered a growing number of Christians who assented to adopt the BM's regulations while awaiting a teacher. But before a candidate could be posted, the community had come under the influence of the Nigerian "pastor" Davies. Having returned from studies in the USA, Pastor Davies declared his intention to establish a 'Science' church, the National Church of Christ.[104] The Christians said they had joined Davies in order to receive Holy Communion four times a year. Pfenning rebuked this, branding their whole set-up a fraud.

> First, the basis of co-operation you suggest I should establish with Mr. Davies is out of the question. Second, everybody who takes Holy Communion there [in Mr. Davies' congregation] will be excluded. Third, anyone who has been excluded can be readmitted on condition that he comes to me for a discussion under four eyes.[105]

This case demonstrates the extent to which the levers of the BM's religious authority and social control could be employed. According to the BM, innovation, albeit a necessary prerequisite to spiritual, social and economic development, had to be monitored. Jon Miller

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[100] Interview with John Teghen Musumbe, Molyko, Buea, 25 May 1999.
[101] "Foreigner's Congregations" such as that in Bamenda were typically composed of clerks, teachers, warders, police, farmers, traders and others. See PCCCAL 1660, Petitions against market days on Sundays, 1 July 1936.
[102] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1942), Buea, 30 March 1943, p. 7. See also BMCA E-5-2,17, A. Angst, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 19 July 1947, p. 3.
[103] BMCA E-5-1,1, Th. Authenrieth, Annual Report (extract), Dikum, 1933.
[104] BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Pfenning, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1937.
[105] Ibid. (My translation)

adds: 'In addition to its charismatic religious underpinning, the Mission's structure was also grounded in the notion that people born to traditional privilege are naturally entitled to make decisions for those of lower estate.'[106] Much as this principle reflects the hierarchies instilled among missionaries trained in Basel, it was also the premise for a social advantage over Africans in the mission field. However, the rigid practice of social control by the BM during the 1930s changed in the 1940s.

The focus of the BM's worries about the development of local congregations shifted to the coastal society in the early 1940s, particularly to Tiko 'Where we have many enemies,' as Ekese wrote in 1941.[107] Ekese's observation reflected the secession of the "Foreigner's Congregation" which had boldly proclaimed its independence from the BM as the CMS Church Tiko, claiming its affiliation to the Church Missionary Society in Onitsha, Nigeria. The bone of contention lay in the agreement between Protestant Missions in Nigeria not to intervene in each other's spheres. When a CMS pastor showed up in 1942 to attend to the main congregation in Tiko, along with a smaller one in Victoria, Raaflaub therefore firmly recommended that he should convince their members to become affiliated to the BM.[108] By 1943 a basis of co-operation had been established between the BM and the "Foreigner's Congregation" in Victoria where the BM Church regulations were approved in exchange for permission to continue following the Anglican liturgy.[109] But misunderstandings flared up again in 1945 and provoked a schism in the community. This in turn resulted in the secession of some members who founded an independent congregation.[110]

In 1950 BM Inspector Hermann Witschi commented on the increasingly problematic task of spiritual care among Nigerian Christian immigrants:

> The leadership of both our Church and Mission are urging the growing communities of Nigerian Christians to avoid becoming colonies and subsidiaries of their mother church in Nigeria. This is in the interest of unity among all congregations. Taking into account the concessions they enjoy both with respect to language and worship, they are requested to consider themselves members of the Cameroonian congregations.[111]

Terms of collaboration came into effect in Tiko and Victoria in the late 1950s. The General Synod Committee approved an application from the "Foreigners' Congregation" in Tiko for assistance from the BM Church in 1956. The requirements for collaboration stipulated that the "Foreigner's Congregation" would be placed under the financial stewardship of the BM Church in accordance with her constitution. Further, an Igbo-speaking pastor was to be recruited by Bishop Patterson in Nigeria and remunerated through the BM Church

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[106] Jon Miller. *The Social Control of Religious Zeal. A Study of Organizational Contradictions*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994, p. 89.
[107] Quoted in BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22 April 1942, p. 12.
[108] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1942), Buea, 30 March 1943, p. 6.
[109] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, pp. 8f.
[110] PCCCAL 674, Petition letter to the Magistrate Calabar-Aba Area against seized property of the Victoria Foreigners Church, Victoria, 25 April 1945.
[111] Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 29.

treasury.[112] A similar concord was met in Victoria where the "Foreigner's Congregation" was among the first of its category, founded by Nigerians, Ghanaians, Sierra Leonians and others who converged to form a Christian community in the mid-1920s. The membership was composed of Anglicans, Qua Iboe Mission followers, Methodists and adherents of several other denominations. They all belonged to the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) among whose members the BM featured nominally since 1932.[113] By the late 1950s, the worship life of the congregation was still in keeping with the constitution of the CCN 'in co-operation and oneness in God with the local [BM] church.'[114]

Even if relations between the BM, later PCWC, and the "Foreigners' Congregations" appeared to be stabilising, internal divisions recurred as the Nigerian communities grew. While the Executive Committee of the renamed St. Andrew's Church Tiko entertained a 'cordial and mutual' agreement with the BM in 1955,[115] it confronted sharp protest from its own ranks one year later. Committee members were reproved for pride, selfishness and arrogance, misleading elders, and taking decisions single-handedly. Moreover, the teacher-catechist was alleged to have squandered offerings.[116] The complainants threatened with a breakaway, should the committee not be dissolved.

The reasons for turmoil varied, but the inclination in "Foreigners' Congregations" towards retaining their vernacular heritage often seemed paramount. This became apparent when the emergence of the CMS Church in Tiko was paralleled in 1967 by the formation of a CMS Church in Likomba. The members insisted upon deep affinity to their Christian origins which were rooted in the practice of vernacular – Igbo – Anglicanism.[117] Curiously, the denominational factor appears to have been less pertinent despite the alleged majority of Igbo Baptists and Presbyterians in the congregation. The emphasis was simply on Igbo as the medium through which to proclaim, receive, and understand the Christian message.

Lack of tact as displayed variously by the leaders of the "Foreigners' Congregations" often resulted in exclusivity and secession. This was also noted in BM Church quarters. In 1953 three catechists from Ndum in the Nyasoso district resigned after falling out with the local church authorities. They subsequently joined the Native Baptists from Douala and thus contributed towards extending their outreach further into the Forest area.[118] Another example is the emergence of the "Bangle Church" among the Bakweri in the early 1960s.

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[112] PCCCAL 1884, The General Secretary of the Synod to St. Andrew's BM Foreigners' Congregation Tiko, Buea, 4 December1956.
[113] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 3 April 1944, p. 5.
[114] BNA Sd/1959/1, no. MLS. 113, Basel Mission Land Matters, p. 1.
[115] PCCCAL 593, The Executive Committee of St. Andrew's Church Tiko to the Principal, BM, 8 December 1955.
[116] PCCCAL 593, Members of the Foreigners' Church Tiko to the BM Church Authorities, 15 February 1956; Women Christian Association of the Foreigners' Church to the Authorities of the BM, 15 February 1956.
[117] PCCCAL 723, S. K. Ewang, Parish Pastor, Tiko, to the Moderator PCC, 25 July 1967.
[118] PCCCAL 3442, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. A report presented to the General Synod on the 27th of April, 1960, p. 2. See also Samuel Ngome Ejedepang-Koge. *Op. cit.*, pp. 58-61, and reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Yaounde, 18 May 2000.

Tension arose over copper bangles that were believed to be conducive to reproduction and were traditionally worn by pregnant women. Obscure symbolism was attached to these ornaments which were said to have been cooked in dog's blood to raise their reproductive stimuli.[119] They were earlier interpreted by missionaries as fetishes with occult forces. This is a telling case through which to discern distinct perceptions of Europeans and Africans, for ornate bangles had a different symbolic value to the Bakweri. Njoh Litumbe points out that the bangles represented a commodity of medicinal power that could fetch a price: 'The fetish priest [traditional medicine man] would add a few extra trimmings [little feathers etc.] in order to increase his fee for the production and prescription of such bangles.'[120] The usual explanation that copper bangles regulate the blood pressure and therefore served a medical purpose was ignored by the missionaries. Bangle-wearing women subsequently left the BM Church on the grounds that 'If you [the missionaries] take our bangles away from us we will no more reproduce. And therefore this missionary teaching is intended to seek our extermination as a people.'[121] In response, some of those who either left or were excluded from the BM community, including men, immediately converged to form the "Bangle Church", formally known as the Cameroon Church in Christ (CCC).[122]

Another breakaway occurred in Muea near Buea where a delegation of the local PCWC congregation filed petitions to the D.O. and to the S.D.O. of Victoria Division respectively against the leadership of the Church in 1961. The dissonance prompted the complainants to establish an independent body, the Native Presbyterian Church in Victoria Division. They deplored that elders were not respected by officers of the PCWC; that officers of the PCWC took money for burial, baptism and Communion rites and readmitting backsliders; that officers of the PCWC could attend Sunday markets while prohibiting others from so doing; that many clergymen drank [palm] wine before preaching; that the church workers' burden was too heavy to bear; and that the wearing of copper bangles by Christians was condemned. The object of the Native Presbyterian Church Muea was to create a more just and humane church that was to be founded on 4 June 1961 as set out in the constitution.[123]

Such instances of seclusion, resulting from the perceived rigidity of, and apprehension towards, mission doctrine, were contrasted by patterns of internal division, arising from the bi-vernacular foundation of the BM Church. "Stranger's Congregations" in the Forest area occupied distinct locations of worship according to their linguistic origins. Strangers' communities started forming their own congregations after the First World War and were

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[119] Interview with John Teghen Musumbe, Molyko, Buea, 25 May 1999.
[120] Interviews with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May and 5 July 1999.
[121] Ibid. and interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[122] On the "Bangle Church", see Gustav Efange. *The Bangle Church*. Kumba, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, thesis, 1990. The CCC is placed within the context of contemporary church development by Paul Gifford. *African Christianity. Its Public Role*. London: Hurst & Co., 1998, p. 292.
[123] BNA Sd/1958/6, no. V.3307, Native Presbyterian Church Muea to the D.O. Victoria, 'A seperation or a break out from the Presbyterian Church because of wicked activities of the present workers', 25 March 1961; Native Presbyterian Church Muea to the Senior Divisional Officer (S.D.O.) Victoria, 'A cut away from the Presbyterian Church', 28 April 1961.

officially recognised once European BM personnel started returning to Cameroon from 1925 onwards. Some of these congregational cells brought local Christian communities to assume that they were facing competition. This argument surfaced in 1958 when the BM "Strangers' Church" Muyuka, founded in 1923, was threatened by the local village head who sent a letter to the members instructing them to demolish their church house within a fortnight. Reasons advanced for the harsh view centred on the "strangers'" reluctance to familiarise themselves with Duala which was used in the local "Balong" Church. Instead, it was lamented, they were alienating themselves from the community by using Mungaka. In reply, the "Strangers' Congregation" decided to stand firm, vowing not to destroy their church under any circumstances. Suspected expansionist intentions were denied. Finally, the existence of the community and the use of Mungaka were justified on the grounds of strength in numbers of the congregation which totalled 357 members.[124]

The founding members of "Foreigners'" and "Strangers' Congregations'" launched a movement that survived so long as it was required to accommodate distinct vernaculars. If Thomas Ediage, Synod Clerk of the PCC from 1969-1985, holds that 'One negative element of Protestantism is always the tendency to secede,'[125] then the proposition should be added here that two vernaculars within one church heightened this tendency. The crucial nexus between both Mungaka-speakers from the Grassfields and Duala-speakers from the Forest area was the Catechist's Training Institution (CTI) in Nyasoso. In 1952 this base of the BM's local *clerus minus* was replaced by the Theological Training Centre (TTC) which was transferred to the present site in Kumba-Kosala in 1988. In 1944 Raaflaub had a vision of the bridge-builders between the two vernaculars of the BM Church: 'These Ex-seminarians who master both languages [Duala and Mungaka] would eventually constitute the best link between the two parts of our church which is supposed to be <u>one</u>.'[126] At that time, however, he still had every reason to be pessimistic about his hopes, bearing in mind that the numbers of seminarians from the Grassfields were progressively dwindling. In the long run, however, the Grassfields contingent surpassed that from all other areas of origin put together. From 1952-1994, 159 students from the North West Province (Grassfields) underwent theological training in the TTC compared to 84 from the South West Province (Forest area) as well as eight others.[127] Moreover, a significant step towards dislodging the linguistic barriers was the translation work from one vernacular into the other, for instance on the hymnary from Duala to Mungaka.[128] This was a task that underpinned the common reaction to secessionist tendencies as stated in a report on the Ngemba Presbytery in 1965

[124] BNA Sd/1958/6, no. V.3307, Complaints by members of the Basel Mission Strangers' Church Muyuka and Muea, letter of 28 July 1958.
[125] Thomas Ngwane Ediage, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Nyasoso, 29 December 1999.
[126] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, June 1945, p. 9. (My translation)
[127] J. Dah. *History of the Theological College Kumba*. Owerri: Nnamdi Printing Press, 1991, pp. 77-85.
[128] PCCCAL 313, Minutes of the Buea Presbyterial Synod held at Muyuka, 22-23 January 1969.

when several Mendankwe and Banja parishes sought alternative affiliation to Bafut/Ndop Presbytery: the Church of Christ transcends tribal boundaries.[129]

The relevance of this rhetoric is self-evident, given Christianity's claim for universality. But the organisation of church administration created stumbling-blocks for the realisation of such ideals. Petitions against the hegemony of a church leadership committee and for affiliation with another presbytery testify to the notion that the Church of Christ was also a Church of the people. Indeed, we should say peoples with diverse interests, objectives and traditions, only partially sharing the common identities of Mungaka-ness, often interpreted as a tool of 'cultural imposition',[130] and Duala-ness.

5.4 Conclusion

Jonas Dah, one-time Synod Clerk of the PCC from 1985-1989 and currently Dean of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS), entitled one of his publications 'In Search of a Soul.' The soul represents collective worship of Christian faith. Dah's experience as a child who attended church service in a language he did not understand but then learnt at vernacular school is a chapter in many BM Christians' biographies.[131] Acquiring Christian knowledge was, until well into the 1960s, almost indispensably coupled with vernacular instruction. From the onset, this was the BM's argument for an enduring vernacularisation programme irrespective of all objection and defiance. Duala and Mungaka were regarded as characteristic features of Christian identity in BM quarters in Southern Cameroons. Yet Duala-ness and Mungaka-ness defined two if not many more souls. This was contrary to the teachings of collective worship and church unity through which the two vernaculars were expected to be assimilated. The division was enhanced by separate District Synods in either part of the mission field, the Grassfields and the Forest area. Christianity, as argued above, consequently found two distinct expressions in two different churches. The trend towards divergence was compounded by the complications of translating Bible imagery and terminology into relevant local concepts of religious belief and articulation. The codes of translation were based upon approximating analogies to the original meaning of the text material. The analogies were derived from African worldviews, perceptions and available vernacular vocabulary.[132] Vernaculars were superseded in education by English as from the 1930s. But it was only later, in the 1970s, that the use of English in Christian worship was reinforced, bringing the two wings of the PCC closer to each other, at least linguistically.[133]

The distribution and use of vernaculars were among the factors that must be attributed to the concept of 'churchianity'. This is a catchword employed by Njoh Litumbe to single

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[129] PCCCAL 1035, Minutes of the Grassfield District Synod Committee, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 October 1965.
[130] Thomas Ngwane Ediage, reply to the questionnaire on 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Nyasoso, 29 December 1999.
[131] Jonas Dah. *In Search of a Soul*, pp. 60f.
[132] This crucial *problematique* is raised by John Ndozo. Op. cit., pp. 24f.
[133] See for example PCCCAL 589, Workshop on the creation of new hymns, 15 May 1973.

out the difference between Christianity as one religion and singular churches as religious bodies.[134] In his statements 'churchianity' transgresses the confines of denominationalism to mark out broader patterns of divergence among Cameroonian adherents to Christianity. As such, it embraces trends of separation and reconfiguration within the BM Church, later PCWC/PCC. It also relates to the "Foreigner's Congregations" which were associated with the BM. Dissonance and ensuing schisms revolved around the administration of the church, particularistic forms of worship and a wide struggle for and with self-governance.

'Unity in Diversity' is a befitting slogan for a country so diverse in customs, traditions and vernaculars as Cameroon. It has been widely propounded to invigorate the politics of belonging in the process of shaping nationhood. It also lies at the core of all endeavours to establish a coherently run church. European missionaries of the BM and their African co-workers grappled with this objective throughout their joint (ad)venture. The course of their interaction suggests an uncompromising conflict between the incompatibility of the two official vernaculars and the oneness of the church. All that challenged the different foci on the Forest area and on the Grassfields – language disputes, breakaways and the decline of Mungaka and Duala – eventually produced a solution in the 'magic formula': Except for the period from 1985-1989, the two highest offices of the PCC, that of the Moderator and that of the Synod Clerk, have never been occupied simultaneously by two people from one and the same region. This is the most symbolic trait of the PCC's fragile balance of power between the Forest area and the Grassfields; or, as Ejedepang-Koge puts it,

> church administration bequeathed to [the] PCC was based on competence and a harmonious balance between the two main culture traits of its population: the forest and Grassfields. Unfortunately, the house was shaken in its very foundation in 1985 when the topmost positions of the church were held with impurity by people from the same culture zone. Everyone knows the consequences. Let this never happen again.[135]

[134] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 5 July 1999.
[135] Samuel Ngome Ejedepang-Koge, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Yaounde, 18 May 2000. During this four-year term of office the Moderator of the PCC, Henry A. Awasom, and the Synod Clerk, Jonas N. Dah, both hailed from the Grassfields.

6. The Quest for Church Autonomy: "Native" Agency, Nationalism, and Protest

The rising spirit of nationalism in Cameroon during the 1940s and early 1950s became a decisive force for the development of the BM Church. Apart from constituting a network of sanctuaries, the latter provided a hotbed for political ambitions. Even if the missionaries were not favourably disposed towards the marriage of faith and politics, their itinerary took precisely that direction. Initially, and clearly for other reasons than to fan nationalism, they secured opportunities for Cameroonian staff – notably Jeremiah Chi Kangsen and Samuel Ando Seh – to receive further training abroad. However, they subsequently decided to give their approval when Kangsen and Solomon T. Muna, then a BM school teacher, stood for the elections into the enlarged Eastern House of Assembly in 1953. Ando Seh followed. Another candidate, Aaron Su, the first Synod Clerk of the PCC, changed his mind about canvassing for elections in 1954 for private reasons and not because of the BM's denial.[1]

Chances for Cameroonian BM members to engage with politics and nationalism arose from educational privileges, not from the BM's explicit encouragement. This is reinforced by attacks of the Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP) on the BM in 1954 for indoctrinating her pupils. The BM subsequently resolved to declare the neutrality of her schools in politics.[2] The base of the anglophone Cameroonian *élite* was widened when the BM College – later renamed Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) in 1960 – was opened in Bali in 1949. But it was not only on the higher echelons of church hierarchy that nationalism caught on as a means of defying colonialism. The rhetoric of nationalism, notably its focus on liberation, inspired the rank and file of the BM Church to formulate their ideas of selfhood. In laying the foundation for political and social changes at distinct levels, Mission and Church could have provided a formula to bridge the gap between Native – traditional – Authorities and post-colonial rule.[3] But this calls for caution because nationalism in its militant, doctrinal, sharply anti-colonial shadings provoked defensive, critical reactions in missionary circles.

Ndi observes that local church 'helpers' made up 'mostly of schoolteachers, catechists, pastors and evangelists...were generally fervent followers and zealous propagandists for the missions' in the 1940s.[4] As for the BM Church, this needs to be reviewed against the backdrop of the changing political *Zeitgeist*, new economic challenges, and local trends towards ecclesiastic self-reliance. Indeed, as Jeremiah Ozimba points out, there was a good level of synchronicity between the plans of political constituencies and local clergy to gain

[1] Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999; see also PCCCAL 1082, Synod minutes, 26-30 April 1954.
[2] PCCCAL 1082, Minutes of the meeting of the General Synod, Buea, 26-30 April 1954.
[3] Emmanuel Chiabi. 'British administration and nationalism in the Southern Cameroons, 1914-1954', in Martin Njeuma (ed.). *Introduction to the History of Cameroon: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989, pp. 190-192.
[4] A. Ndi. 'The Second World War in Southern Cameroon and its Impact on Mission-State Relations, 1939-1950', in David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (eds.). *Africa and the Second World War*. London: Macmillan, 1986, p. 217.

independence.[5] Thomas Ngu adds that the Second World War had a unifying effect upon Christians, which bolstered the formation of a self-reliant church.[6] Ndi's account stresses the high degree of collaboration between missions and government. However, his study reveals little about the ways in which the varied responses among African church workers, reflected in an agenda filled with new demands and aspirations, influenced the missionary enterprise itself. Bearing the perspectives of Ozimba, Ndi and Ngu in mind, the interplay between rising nationalism and church developments requires further exploration. To what extent did nationalism affect the activities of the BM Church community and vice versa?

This chapter deals with attempts by African Christians to contest European missionary supervision through campaigns for authority and control in British Southern Cameroons. Local approaches to the question of church autonomy are investigated. The drive towards autonomy is considered in the light of African initiatives and within the broader framework of political and cultural nationalism during and particularly after the Second World War.

6.1 The Second World War: Putting Christian Faith to the Test

As Fritz Raaflaub, Field Secretary of the BM, noted in 1943, that era was characterised as one of *Sturm und Drang*, featuring a strong wind of change throughout West Africa.[7] After phases of stagnation and recession, British Southern Cameroons witnessed growing economic activity and political awareness in the 1940s. The process was enhanced through new development policies put in place by the colonial administration under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. The British authorities, it is generally agreed, had displayed considerable indifference in the Cameroons Province, which was governed as part of Nigeria, between the World Wars.[8] Britain's reluctance to increase her investments in order to develop Cameroon reflected her appraisal of the territory as a 'liability – a mere appendage to Nigeria' with an uncertain future.[9] In contrast, Britain engaged more actively in boosting Southern Cameroons' economy during the second half of the 1940s once the economic 'uncertainty' factor was eliminated by curbing German influence.

The fact that German entrepreneurs found new inroads to assume a dominant position in the plantation economy after the First World War is a remarkable facet of the inter-war era in the Cameroons Province. Throughout the 1930s German planters and traders clearly outnumbered British officials and amassed an impressive arsenal of arms and ammunition 'far in excess of those normally required for self-defense and sporting activities.'[10] But the

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[5] Interview with Jeremiah Anyangwe Ozimba, Molyko, Buea, 21 July 1999.
[6] Interview with Thomas Sona Ngu, Azire, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[7] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 1945, p. 3.
[8] See A. Ndi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 210, 215; A. Angst and E. Peyer of the BM reaffirm the view that Britain engaged vigorously in developing Cameroon in 1940. BMCA E-5-2,14, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 15 July 1946, p. 1; BMCA E-5-2,17, E. Peyer, Annual Report, Buea, 1947, pp. 3f.
[9] Victor Bong Ama'azee. 'The 'Igbo Scare' in the British Cameroons, c. 1945-61', *Journal of African History*, 31 (1990), pp. 283.
[10] A. Ndi. *Op. cit.*, p. 207. In the late 1930s there were approximately 90 British and 300 Germans in British Southern Cameroons.

Germans, who seemed to be fully aware of their economic and numerical advantages, were cautious not to put their considerable assets in the plantations at stake by attempting to supplant British rule. All the same, the *modus vivendi* between the two sides reflected a degree of confidence among the Germans – predominantly members of the Nazi party[11] – that it was largely a question of time before they would regain control over Cameroon. A supportive view can also be traced among Cameroonians. Jeremiah Ozimba, for example, notes that 'Many Cameroonians admired Germans and wanted them to come back.'[12] The British were intent on maintaining the fragile equilibrium, equally aware of their military inferiority. This worried onlookers, notably the authorities in French Cameroun. Besides military security measures, the Jeunesse Camerounaise Française (Jeucafra) was formed in 1939 on the initiative of Governor General Brunot 'largely to oppose German demands for the return of Cameroon.'[13] Jeucafra served French interests and propaganda as well as providing a hotbed for local politics to ferment into various shadings of East Cameroonian nationalism. The staunch pro-French and anti-German stance adopted by Jeucafra had no echo in the British zone. It took a threatening turn in the course of the Second Word War, the French capitulation in mid-1940, to provoke the long-awaited reaction of the British. Negotiations between the French and British colonial authorities subsequently resulted in an agreement on military co-operation which survived throughout the war years.

As soon as the Germans were in the process of being expelled from Cameroon in 1940, the British abandoned their tight-fisted stance towards promoting economic advance. The crucial step (discussed in Chapter 3) was the inauguration of the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) in 1947. This was to revive the plantations after they were stripped of German management. Moreover, projects for the improvement of the communication system materialised. The emphasis was on large-scale road construction geared to relieve remote enclaves within the colony of their isolation and to bring additional cash crops to the market.[14] As in the rest of West Africa, the British started to recruit Cameroonians for the colonial administration's Senior Service in the late 1940s.[15]

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[11] Ibid., p. 208. Ndi does not give a precise account of the missionaries' position. There is evidence of Johannes Ittmann, Field Secretary of the BM from 1932-1934, being a member of the Nazis from 1934-1938/39. See Andreas-Martin Selignow. 'Evangelium, afrikanisches Volkstum und geistiger Volksbesitz im Denken des Missionars Johannes Ittmann.' Berlin, MA thesis, 1996, pp. 4, 51f., 57.

[12] Interview with Jeremiah Anyangwe Ozimba, Molyko, Buea, 21 July 1999. See also BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Peyer, Annual Report (extract), Fotabe, 1937; Simon J. Epale. *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975. A Study in Agrarian Capitalism*. New York: Vantage Press, 1985, p. 114. According to Peyer, the popularity of Germans stemmed from the notion that they would 'bring money.' Epale notes that older generations of Cameroonians were 'nursing nostalgic memories of the German era.' In the same vein as Peyer, he also attributes the considerable degree of sympathy towards the Germans to the mixed labour force in the plantations.

[13] Mark W. DeLancey and H. Mbella Mokeba. *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. Metuchen, N. J./London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990 (2nd ed.), pp. 111f.

[14] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Mbengwi, 30 June 1947, p. 1; see also BMCA E-5-2,14, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 15 July 1946, p. 1; BMCA E-5-2,17, E. Peyer, Annual Report, Buea, 1947, p. 1, and BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report, Bafut, 1943, p. 15.

[15] BMCA E-5-2,17, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 1949, p. 1.

The economic upswing and political activism during the Second World War repeatedly provoked reservation in European quarters. In the African Christian community, the boost evoked a mixed sense of excitement, despair and deprivation. Going by the few Swiss left in the BM's ranks after the internment of their German colleagues at the beginning of the war, the wind of change heralded an urge for emancipation among colonial subjects. It was common for these missionaries to reduce the effects of new opportunities in the expanding colonial economy on Africans to growing individualism, greed and corruption, coupled with a quest for liberation.[16] A widespread opinion, F. Raaflaub stressed in 1943, held that 'Where there is money, there are Christians.'[17] For many Africans, A. Angst concurred in 1946, 'Being a true Christian is a burden, true joy, however, is money and freedom.'[18] At the core of both remarks lay the notion that African Christians were increasingly devoting themselves to the pursuit of Mammon after the economic strain of the early war years.

Here lies a central theme for missionaries and local Christian communities alike. It was, however, a domain that was contemplated from a different angle by either group. On the one hand, Raaflaub and Angst, along with their missionary colleagues, argued that African BM adherents were to support the institutional set-up of the church through their practical – financial – commitment to Christian faith and worship. This was the pillar of ecclesiastic survival strategy when funding from Europe dwindled during the war years. On the other hand, some African Christians were wary of sustaining a cause they were not completely in charge of. Consequently, the co-ordination of the missionary enterprise throughout and following the Second World War turned out to be a tough bone of contention, subjected to unprecedented controversies between the African and European parties involved.

By contrast, the earlier war experience was not only characterised by the total absence of the BM's European missionaries but also by very diverse and experimental strands of selfhood as shown in Chapter 1. Organisation came to rely upon the skills and credibility of teacher-catechists and elders at the congregational level. The hierarchy of the BM was dissolved within the framework of fragmented Christian communities. It gave way to new forms of authority defined by the relationships between social and political institutions and the locally recruited sub-clergy. Much depended on whether the latter – teacher-catechists, the flagbearers of the Christian movement – were recognised by traditional authorities and society. This sub-clergy, often spontaneously and haphazardly appointed by kinsmen, had to make up for the absence of ordained pastors – with the exception of J. L. Ekese – at the time. It ended up spearheading a resilient wave of Christian adherence and expansion.[19]

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[16] BMCA E-5-2,16, W. Meier, Tertiary Report, Besongabang, 20 September 1948, p. 1. Similar traits are ascribed to members of the Igbo community in Cameroon by Victor B. Ama'azee. *Op. cit.*, pp. 281-283.
[17] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1942), Buea, 1943, p. 8. (My translation)
[18] BMCA E-5-2,17, A. Angst, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 1947, p. 3. (My translation)
[19] See for example Fritz Raaflaub. *Die Schulen der Basler Mission in Kamerun. Ihre Geschichte und Gegenwartsaufgabe.* Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1948, pp. 43f.; Verkijika G. Fanso. 'The First World War and the Survival of Christianity in the British Southern Cameroons – the Role of Local Catechists and Visiting Missionaries', *Cameroon Panorama*, nos. 346-348, October-December 1990.

As noted in Chapter 2, appeals for support were occasionally sent to Switzerland in the 1920s, mainly by Ekese.[20] There was generally a favourable response to the BM's return to the mission field. By contrast, the BM Home Board predominantly received letters of protest in the 1940s and early 1950s. Evidently, the face of the mission field had changed considerably during the inter-war years, and with it the expectations of many BM affiliates about their positions and roles. The approach to Christian adherence was being subjected to a test of reorientation. Rather than resting solely upon the basic premise of legitimising and consolidating the very existence of Christian congregations, it now centred on how to transform foreign missionary authority into local, indigenised organisation and control.[21] The distinct *mouvements indigènes* that had emerged in the 1920s were thus superseded by new concepts of corporate responsibility and identity. This is critical to the perception and apprehension of missionary encounters in their *longue durée* as a sequence of distinct episodes involving changing relations and hierarchies. The subordinate status of "native" agency was on the verge of being transformed in the late 1940s – not strictly as a result of mission policy but to a considerable degree through the initiatives of those labelled by the term. The course of transformation ran through numerous attempts to rethink, reformulate, and cultivate mission diplomacy, and new forms of collaboration as demonstrated below.

The Second World War caused the second major disruption of the BM's activity since its inception in Cameroon in 1886. But unlike the orphaned communities during and after the First World War (1914-1925), African Christians were not completely abandoned in the 1940s. Following the expulsion of all German personnel in 1940, a dwindling number of Swiss were left to cope with the supervision of the missionary enterprise, led by Field Secretary Fritz Raaflaub.[22] Germans were not permitted to join the BM in Cameroon again before 1959. Besides, only three of 13 BM stations in British Southern Cameroons were operational during the war. The fact that European presence was maintained in Cameroon by no means represented a guarantee for continuity in itself. The missionary enterprise depended more than ever on the participation and initiatives of African mission workers.

In comparison with the scanty nature of thinly distributed Christian communities in the interior during and after the First World War, a far more complex situation presented itself 15 years later. From 1914-1926 the number of BM Church adherents in what became British Southern Cameroons increased from 1837 to 8913. In 1914 the BM had posted 79 indigenous teacher-catechists in the same region, while the figure climbed to 390 teacher-catechists, 17 evangelists and one African pastor in 1928. By comparison, the period from 1939-1945 experienced a rise in church membership from 26229 to 33817. The BM's

[20] Chapter 2, p. 87. See also Chapter 1, p. 59.

[21] In the Gold Coast this problem was solved between 1918 and 1926 with the formation of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast. Noel Smith. *The Presbyterian Church in Ghana, 1835-1960. A Younger Church in a Changing Society.* Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966, pp. 155-164.

[22] Werner Keller. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon.* Victoria: Presbook, 1969, pp. 79f. In 1940 six Swiss ordained missionaries remained in Cameroon; by January 1943 the figure had dropped to four. For more detail, see also Basel Mission Annual Reports, 1940-1946.

enterprise featured 717 African BM Church workers including 656 teacher-catechists and evangelists as well as 10 ordained pastors in 1939. By 1945, 14 indigenous pastors were dispersed throughout the mission field along with 632 catechists, 41 evangelists and 138 teachers.[23] Broadly viewed, these statistics reveal a shift from the dominant concentration of manpower in the coastal zone of the Victoria District during the earlier period to a more even distribution over the mission field during the later years. The expanding network of Cameroonian congregations now had more qualified clergy in their own ranks. Werner Keller considers the major part played by the ordained African ministry in sustaining the missionary enterprise during the Second World War a clear indication of the shift towards the autonomy of the BM Church.[24] It must be added that the ordained ministry relied on the large constituent of local catechists who manned the frontline of Christian expansion.[25]

The energetic approach taken by the African vanguard of opposition to foreign control turned out to be one that severely marred missionary *Selbstverständlichkeit.* This assertion underpins the argument that the BM Home Board and the European field staff came under great pressure as they faced challenges by increasingly vocal Christians. The appointment of large numbers of African church workers to run the outstations complicated missionary organisation. Above all, they imposed a substantial financial burden on the BM. Here was a problem that eventually turned out to be insurmountable to missionary funding capacity. Consequently, the BM was compelled to reinvigorate the issue of financial responsibility towards the self-reliance of the mission church. Such a target seemed to be predestined to jeopardise collaboration not only with local church workers but also with ordinary church members. The former faced fluctuating wages which depended heavily on the latter in that they were expected to sustain the local church treasuries through prescribed contributions. This constellation gave the African BM staff – and not, initially, European missionaries – a strong reason to table the fundamental question of the BM Church's self-government. The process could have been accelerated if the Resident had paid attention to a suggestion by a D.O. in 1945 that all memories of German culture ought to be wiped out and 'the removal of the Basel Mission would be a progresssive step [in that direction].'[26] The proposal fell on deaf ears, though, and the BM was permitted to continue pursuing her task.

While the remaining missionaries continued to co-ordinate the BM community, African catechists and their followers stepped up their protests against poor salaries, rising church contributions and European missionary control. Their plight intensified on the background of the escalating cost of living during the war, which provoked rising public disapproval.[27]

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[23] For a statistical overview of the entire period, see the Basel Mission Annual Reports, 1914-1945.
[24] Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun.* Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, pp. 350f.
[25] For further details on the fast-expanding literate class in Cameroon, see the BM school statistics in Chapter 7, p. 218.
[26] BNA Sd/1940/2, No. kc. 33/3, The D.O. to the Resident, 1 November 1945, cited in Anthony Ndi. 'Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons, 1922-1962.' London, Ph.D, 1983, p. 229.
[27] Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

Reactions to post-war hardship were articulated as a political cry, stimulated by nationalist propaganda among whose exponents the Nigerian scholar and politician Nnamdi Azikiwe rose to prominence. "Zik", as he was widely called, attracted sympathisers through rallies co-ordinated jointly by the Zikist Movement and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) which was formed in 1944.[28] *Inter alia*, the NCNC also served as an umbrella for leading Cameroonian politicians, political parties, associations and numerous pressure groups. The *West African Pilot*, a popular newspaper both among Nigerians and anglophone Cameroonians, was Zik's main public mouthpiece.[29]

Although missionaries were commonly instructed not to actively engage with politics, Adrian Hastings points out, politics and religion were hardly ever separable.[30] It would be going too far, however, to suggest that missionaries became actively involved in politics in the same way that traditional rulers embodied links between political and religious spheres of authority. There is, however, reason to assume that there were well-kept secrets about sympathies towards – if not membership in – the Nazi party.[31] The tendency in European BM circles of adopting a distinctly critical position against nationalism was more visible. Nationalism was commonly railed by employing radical political overtones as in the case of Ernst Peyer when he branded Zik a 'communist agitator' who defamed foreign rule and the whole white race.[32] Hailing progress through the slogan 'Africa to the Africans', Zik's campaigns were also seen as attacking the missionary enterprise. In 1946, he addressed a large crowd in Victoria, reportedly exclaiming, 'When your missionaries came, they taught you to pray and raise your eyes. While your ancestors obeyed innocently and raised their eyes towards the sky, the missionaries seized your land.'[33] Such propaganda coming from a personality with Zik's background might appear surprising, bearing in mind that he later heaped praise on the CMS for the mission education he himself had received as a youth.[34] However, irrespective of his real leanings, the speech punctuated the gist of disillusionment nurtured by the impact of the Second World War in that 'Wartime experience widened the horizon of many Cameroonians and accelerated the growth of nationalism.'[35]

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[28] See PRO CO 763 (34), no. 30658, correspondence relating to the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (1946); PRO CO 763 (38-39) and PRO CO 763 (40-41), no. 30658, correspondence relating to the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), including the constitution of the Zikist Movement; PRO CO 763 (40-41) and PRO 763 (42-43), no. 30824, correspondence relating to the Zikist Movement. Some of these items have been destroyed under statute. See also Verkijika G. Fanso. *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges. Vol. 2: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods*. London: Macmillan, 1991 (2nd ed.), pp. 131-133, and Victor Julius Ngoh. *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*. Yaounde: Navi-Group Publications, pp. 188-197.

[29] BMCA E-5-2,17, Fritz Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 1949, p. 2.

[30] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 408.

[31] On the controversial case of Johannes Ittmann, see footnote 10 above.

[32] BMCA E-5-2,17, E. Peyer, Annual Report (1946), Buea, 1947, p. 2. See also Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 17.

[33] BMCA E-5-2,17, E. Peyer, Annual Report (1946), Buea, 1947, p. 2 (my translation); see also BMCA E-5-2,16, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 1948, p. 3.

[34] See 'Zik on the Church Missionary Society', in Nnamdi Azikiwe. *Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961, pp. 335-344 (chapter 18).

[35] Mark W. DeLancey and H. Mbella Mokeba. *Op. cit.*, p. 206.

Zik's outreach also extended to other pockets of British Southern Cameroons. Again in 1946, a delegation of the NCNC convened a meeting in Nyen, Meta', in the Grassfields, to attract support for their cause. The object was to collect funds for Zik's forthcoming visit to England where he was intending to report grievances about the colonial regime to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The delegation received £10 from the audience. This was criticised by W. E. Baer who commented: 'The Bameta knew and felt nothing of the supposedly new and unbearable subjugation of the colonial population before this trouble-making group appeared to collect money which will probably never be accounted for.'[36]

As resentments against foreign control and the missionary enterprise continued to be whipped up, this provoked several assertive reactions in mission circles. Hermann Witschi, Inspector of the BM Home Board, wrote in his report on an extensive tour of the BM's Cameroonian mission field in 1950: 'Similarly to the economic context, one [the Africans] simply lodges complaints and demands on the political plane without accepting to suffer, sacrifice and work for a big idea while striving towards the hour of fulfilment.'[37] This was an expression of general concern that alluded to a letter Witschi had received from twelve catechists whilst still on tour. The latter aired their grievances in ten paragraphs, the second of which confronted the BM's enterprise with profound, fundamental criticism:

> It is quite true that as the workers of the church, the world will look down upon us, but we are sorry that our missionaries do take part in such even greater (sic) e.g. There is much colour-bar descrimination (sic) and we wonder whether there is space for such in the kingdom of Heaven. We are called black monkeys, apes and bushmen. To create a Christain (sic) African there is a great need for the missionaries who have Christain (sic) minds, Christain (sic) attitudes and Christain (sic) ways of co-operation to build it. We pray that you with the help of God look out for such missionaries to send to us.[38]

The church workers' petition presumably reached Witschi as an unpleasant surprise since it raised problems that had supposedly been resolved. This was quite obviously not the case, for the sustained dissatisfaction among the local BM agents resurrected a severe dispute in 1948, referred to in the following as the "Money-Box Affair". Witschi's tour was certainly not merely intended as a courtesy visit, and even though he might well have expected less dissonance, he was clearly prepared to confront the lingering controversies. Indeed, his trip had been planned in order to stem the tide of discontent which resulted not merely from the Money-Box Affair but also from a wide range of additional destabilising factors that seriously affected the missionary enterprise in Cameroon. Before turning to the Money-Box Affair and other relevant incidents, a brief overview of previous related conflict scenarios involving the BM's European and African staff is called for.

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[36] BMCA E-5-2,7, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Mbengwi, 30 June 1947, p. 2. (My translation)
[37] H. Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 16. (My translation)
[38] The Delegates of the Catechists, Basel Mission Congregations, Bamenda Province, to the Inspector, Rev. H. Witschi, 9 March 1950. Jonas A. Tumban, a retired pastor, possesses a copy of the letter.

6.2 African Church Workers and Protest: Individual versus Collective Interests

From 1925-1940, lobbying and pressuring were uncommon among local agents of the BM except for the years following the return of European missionaries to Cameroon in the 1920s. One instance in 1928 involved a group of teacher-catechists in Dikume Balue in the Forest area.[39] It revolved around the negative repercussions of dwindling support from villagers. This case illustrates the contributions expected from village communities towards the local church workers' upkeep. Congregations were meant to play a major part in assuring the well-being of teacher-catechists appointed in their midst.[40] Remuneration through a system of salary parts paid from the church treasury and allocated by the BM was considered no more than a supplement by the second half of the 1940s.[41] Stressing the weakness of this degree of reliance on benevolence, the complainants submitted an appeal comprising three points. First, they requested full salaries from the BM as opposed to mere allowances in order to meet up with rising costs of living. Second, they accused the BM field headquarters in Buea of offering better pay to their own workers. Third, they threatened to go on strike if their requirements remained unfulfilled. The missionary-in-charge, H. Dorsch, firmly repelled their demands, explaining that he was acting on church regulations. However, he promised to attend individually to each of the village teacher-catechists' situations in the future, which appears to have met with their general approval.

At the time, such protests had a moderate impact with little chance of posing a serious challenge to mission hierarchy. Yet, by responding to alleged disparate treatment with an ultimatum, the disenchanted teacher-catechists sent out a distinct signal of self-assertion. Commenting on a group of teacher-catechists in the Grassfields in 1926/27, A. Vielhauer recalled that they had subscribed to similar claims and methods of exerting pressure. He compared them with their successors some ten years later, observing that the latter earned about a third of their salary but rarely engaged in 'palavers' (disputes).[42] This also applied to teacher-catechists in Besongabang in Mamfe Division during the same period (1936). P. Wöhr lamented a massive loss of local recognition and support for indigenous mission workers who faced rising pressure to secure the upkeep of their families.[43] Ironically, the standards of teacher-catechists were raised at the BM's Catechist's Training Institutions (CTIs) in Nyasoso and Bafut while their remuneration deteriorated. Higher qualifications could have been expected to provoke a rising demand. By and large, however, compliance,

[39] BMCA E-5-1,4, H. Dorsch, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1928.
[40] This point is also emphasised by Paul Shu Ndanka, a retired tailor and trader from Bamenda, who stressed that catechists were usually 'poor financially but rich in material things [kind]'. Interview with Paul Shu Ndanka, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 April 1999. Ndanka's view is corroborated by Jonas Tumban's account of his experience as a village catechist. Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 24 April 1999.
[41] On salary allotments, see BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1944), Bafut, 1945, p. 28; BMCAE-5-2,15, Fritz Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, 1945, p. 8; PCCCAL 28-33, Grassfield Basel Mission Church Workers to E. Kellerhals, Bamenda Division, 10 May 1948. See H. Witschi. Op. cit., p. 19 on average salaries and a comparison thereof in the Forest area and Grassfields respectively.
[42] BMCA E-5-1,2, A. Vielhauer, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1937.
[43] BMCA E-5-1,2, P. Wöhr, Annual Report (extract), Besongabang, 1936.

perseverance or resignation appear to have prevailed among African BM workers in the 1930s. The incidents in Dikume Balue and the Grassfields were two of the rare precursors of the rancorous disputes that flared up and put foreign control to the test in the 1940s.

The Dikume area with a new BM station and much of the Grassfields in the late 1920s resembled islands of pioneering missionary activity, far removed from the turbulent 1940s. Missionaries like Dorsch and Vielhauer, it appears, still exercised sufficiently recognised authority to retain control during controversies. But a fundamental issue surfaced: Would mission policy and practice adapt as new political and economic factors began to bear on colonial society in Cameroon? The administration of church funds was the most delicate area of responsibility Basel missionaries began to share with their African co-workers. It became common practice in the1930s to supply clear information on the financial situation of the BM Church to teacher-catechists.[44] The decentralised management of church funds was run through district treasuries until 1940/41. The BM subsequently decided to pool all revenues from the Forest area and the Grassfields so as to support financially weaker districts.[45] A finance committee was established in either portion of the mission field. Each committee comprised two European and several African members. The question crops up whether this configuration reflected more than a nominal increase of local influence in the church treasury since income and expenditure continued to be closely monitored by the BM. The reorganisation of local funds sometimes provoked agitation. In 1941 a group of BM Church elders in Victoria threatened to instigate a boycott involving all communicant members unless they were properly informed about the church treasury and represented in the local finance committee. F. Raaflaub attributed this demand to an 'ambitious mentality of superiority amidst elders...[who] did not want to serve but rather rule and dominate.'[46]

Victoria represented a hotbed for upheaval among African church workers in the 1940s. As Manasse Esungu, a teacher who had been decried by the BM, exclaimed, 'We are used to causing palaver.'[47] Reasons for discontent included low wages compared to plantation labour, salary increases – that were deemed discriminatory – for government-paid mission (English [Elementary] School) teachers and the perennially rising church contributions.[48] In the given context such arguments were linked to the question about whether and to what extent the critical bone of contention was the problem of collective self-determination. This was often denied. Esungu, for instance, was seen as a typical example of an individualistic ringleader. He ostensibly incited his colleagues to overthrow a Synod decision on sharing cost-of-living allowances for teachers among African church staff. His ploy failed, causing his dismissal, and he subsequently lost his case in court.[49]

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[44] BMCA E-5-1,2, W. Häberle, Annual Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1937.
[45] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1941), Bafut, 1942, p. 5.
[46] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 1942, p. 11.
[47] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 1945, p. 12.
[48] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, 1945, p. 3; E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Mbengwi, 1947, p. 4; E-5-2,16, W. Keller, Q'ly Report, Victoria, 15 June 1950, pp. 1f.
[49] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1943), Buea, 1945, p. 12.

Raaflaub's interpretation of the case, ascribing selfish motives to Esungu, ties together with W. Meier's view in 1948 'that I am not yet confronted with the "African struggle for freedom" in the Mamfe area...but merely with interest groups who are fighting for their own private interests, for a 'better life', rather than for the people's independence or for an autonomous government.'[50] Meier's observation was echoed by reports from other parts of the mission field. They dwelt on expanding employment opportunities that were said to be prompting bribery. An incident was reported in Bamenda Division where an overseer of roadworks was jailed for such machinations.[51] But Mr. Mayn, D. O. of Bamenda Division, pointed out to A. Angst that the critical problem lay elsewhere. Indeed, he advocated rapid advances of the very same road network in order to facilitate access to remote areas. His argument stressed the necessity to intensify the investigation of Native Courts which were apparently in particularly deplorable shape and fraught with 'unbelievable corruption'.[52] It was this kind of exchange which reflected the concerns of the Development Committee in Bamenda, a body composed of government officials, the divisional engineer, forester and medical doctor as well as three missionary delegates who convened at bi-monthly intervals.

The BM's preoccupation in the 1940s initially centred on expressions of individualism that affected community work and church development. It was later that concerted action, mass-movements and the notion of collective self-determination were taken into account. In BM circles the ruling opinion on such trends drew attention to aggressive nationalism. Reviewing Cameroon's development in the late 1940s, Raaflaub noted a tendency among 'extremely nationalistic natives' to turn against whites – including European missionaries – and relish only their achievements.[53] Likewise, Messrs Angst and Baer saw their efforts to cope with the reorganisation of the church treasury in the Grassfields thwarted by 'old ethnic rivalry' and 'ethnic nationalism'.[54] Such labels, along with fear of ideas influenced by atheistic communism, ranked missionaries among the vocal critics of hasty change and reform. They exposed defensive reactions to quests of "native" agents for more freedom and responsibility. Their reluctance contributed towards setting off the Money-Box Affair.

6.2.1 The Money-Box Affair

A. Angst and W. E. Baer were the two BM missionaries at the helm of the Money-Box Affair which revolved around the management and allocation of church funds. The other party was made up of catechists, initially from Bafut, a major chiefdom in the Grassfields and one of the strongholds in the BM's Cameroonian mission field. It is important to note that Bafut had become a stronghold of Christianity long before playing host to a station of

[50] BMCA E-5-2,16, W. Meier, Tertiary Report, 20 September 1948, pp. 2f. (My translation)
[51] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Mbengwi, 1947, p. 1. See also Victor B. Ama'azee. *Op. cit.*, p. 283, on the bribing of headmen and overseers.
[52] BMCA E-5-2,14, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 15 July 1946, p. 3.
[53] BMCA E-5-2,17, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 1949, p. 3.
[54] BMCA E-5-2,16, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 13 July 1948, p. 1, and BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 1947, p. 5.

the BM's in 1935. Angst was wary of a pervasive 'spirit of separatism' among the Bafut who requested full autonomy for their congregations, purportedly reasoning: 'The Chief [Fon] has nothing to say to us, we are Christian and have our own rules, our king is Jesus Christ.'[55] As this case shows, Christianity was considered as having turned into a powerful institution by the 1940s. The earlier importance of consent between the BM and traditional authority, which had variously been instrumental for Christian advance, was in a process of dissolution. The decline of local and foreign social control is a vital theme of the Money-Box Affair. Although it was not unique, considering that similar complaints were lodged elsewhere in the mission field, the Money-Box Affair evolved into the most drawn-out of these debates, producing far-reaching consequences.

An early reason for disagreement between the two opposing camps emerged from their diverging ideas about the central church treasury which was instituted in 1940. During the Second World War, Pastor Jacob Shu repeatedly reminded J. W. Zürcher that the Bafut community had been declared self-reliant and should therefore be entitled to dispose of its funds.[56] In 1945 he turned to Angst on behalf of the Bafut church workers. He said they considered the central church treasury to be a provisional solution to alleviate the financial strain of the war years and explained that they wished to return to the old system of district treasuries. Angst suspected that the Bafut, along with the neighbouring Meta', were trying to reinforce their financial autonomy by shedding responsibility for weaker communities.[57] But this defeated the BM's aim to forestall the emergence of distinct ethnic satellites of the Church. Therefore Angst denied any concessions and turned down Shu's request.

The situation worsened as the central church treasury was unable to sustain a salary increase for Africans. A new concept of salary allotments was introduced by Zürcher in 1945, but Angst soon reversed the scheme, fearing that it would rapidly deplete the church treasury.[58] This stood in contrast to the Forest area where catechists allegedly continued to receive their full wages.[59] In 1946 a Synod Council meeting was convened in Mbengwi to tackle the financial crisis. It resulted in an agreement to raise church contributions by 50% from 2-3 shillings for women and 4-6 shillings for men so as to meet the church workers' demands for higher salaries. Nevertheless, disillusionment intensified among a growing number of catechists as their expectations were flawed again. They now contended that the treasury was being handled dishonestly by the responsible missionaries. Their plight was aggravated by the Harrigin Commission's decision to raise the wages of local government employees including teachers working at English Elementary Schools by 50-100%. This measure concurred with a rise of up to 50% in the general cost of living in two years,[60] for

[55] BMCA E-5-2,17, A. Angst, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 19 July 1947, p. 3. (My translation)
[56] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1942), Bafut, 1943, p. 8f.
[57] BMCA E-5-2,16, A. Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 13 July 1948, p. 2.
[58] Ibid., p. 3 and BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1944), Bafut, 1945, p. 28.
[59] On the potential of this source of tension, see Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
[60] BMCA E-5-2,17, A. Angst, Annual Report (1946), Bafut, 19 July 1947, p. 2.

> Market prices increased as soon as it was revealed that the government and the Mission were paying higher salaries. After all, why should the women who plant food crops and bring them to the market not divert a trickle of the growing cashflow in the country into their pockets? It is simply taken for granted that the missionary is also paid according to "Harrigin" and new demands are consequently made on him.[61]

At the Synod gathering in Babungo in January 1948, Angst and Baer reiterated their suggestion either to increase church contributions or reduce the number of African staff. The first option was flatly rejected by the African participants while the second remained unresolved. Distressed by the exigencies of the BM, an anonymous group of catechists and evangelists in the Grassfields proceeded to address the BM Home Board, exclaiming:

> We the Basel Mission Church workers in the Bamenda Division are highly dissatisfied with the treatment given us by our present missionaries in the way of salaries.... Hard conditions have compelled us to demand reasonable salaries and the missionaries are not prepared to help the situation. On account of this, cessation of work by the church workers took place between March 29th and April 28th 1948. In a meeting of the Synod Council in the Grassfield on the 28th April...no actual solution was arrived at. States of affairs are still very alarming and almost to a stand still. An appeal has been made to the Secretary Basel Mission Buea, but of no success.[62]

By mobilising a strike, the African church workers added an unprecedented dimension to their protest. Dan Tunyi, a retired catechist who was involved in the Money-Box Affair, considers the strike a watershed in church development which subsequently witnessed a rising degree of African participation in church administration.[63] The fact that the claimants did not resign once the strike had failed underscores the gravity of their cause. This point is supported by Paul Shu Ndanka's view that the catechists, inspite of engaging in a strike, were fundamentally very committed to serving God.[64] In contrast, it appears, they began to doubt whether their European missionaries were equally devoted to the spiritual side of the task. The catechists saw their last resort in Europe where they appealed for an intervention by the Africa Inspector of the BM, Emil Kellerhals. Clearly, missionary supervision and attempts at conflict resolution in the field had failed to inspire confidence. Again, however, the local agents' hopes were contained by BM Field Secretary F. Raaflaub who affixed an explanatory letter to the petition, insisting, 'The workers must face the tough fact that their financial situation will only improve through increased revenues of the local church.'[65] But

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[61] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. E. Baer, Annual Report (1947), Mbengwi, 15 May 1948, p. 1 (my translation); see also E. Peyer, Annual Report (1946), Buea, 1947, pp. 2f. The commission, headed by Chief-Justice Harrigin, was appointed by the British Labour government to suggest appropriate measures to benefit local government officials and workers in Nigeria and Cameroon following the introduction of the COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) in 1942. On the COLA, see also Simon J. Epale. *Op. cit.*, p. 131; H. Wildi. 'Die Neue Zeit in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, June 1946(6), p. 59.

[62] PCCCAL 28-33, Grassfield Basel Mission Church Workers to E. Kellerhals, Bamenda Division, 10 May 1948.

[63] Interview with Dan Tunyi, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.

[64] Interview with Paul Shu Ndanka, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.

[65] PCCCAL 28-33, F. Raaflaub to E. Kellerhals, Buea, 15 May 1948. (My translation)

the complainants did not give up and sent another letter reiterating their plight. They seized the opportunity to charge Angst with displaying a considerable lack of concern for their problems, which had caused them to lose interest in church work. Stating plainly that racial discrimination had generated a spirit of hatred between 'the whites and the blacks,' they resolved that Angst and Baer ought to be dismissed in order to conclude the matter.[66] On a more radical note, Jonas A. Tumban, one of the catechists posted in a financially weaker area, helped rally colleagues to 'fight against Angst and what he stood to implement.'[67]

At that stage neither camp seemed prepared to seek a consensus. The BM authorities continued justifying the argument of striving towards a self-supporting church that had to raise sufficient funds to cater for its catechists. On the other hand, African church workers argued categorically that the missionaries were confusing and betraying them. Raaflaub believed they faced an African front that was likely to qualify everything as a 'total failure' that was not based upon 'more money from outside.'[68] Surprisingly, local church workers were quick to disprove his forecast by writing to Kellerhals in Basel that they agreed to the policy of self-reliance. They declared themselves willing to take this step on condition that they would manage their own funds. In a conciliatory masterstroke, the BM Home Board was acknowledged for having 'always fed us spiritually and financially. And as it can no longer do so, we see that it is now our chance to help it by managing certain things on our own, thereby showing our gratitude for all that it has done.'[69] The turn towards diplomatic negotiations was engineered by two mediators from the Forest area, Pastors J. L. Ekese and P. Essoka. But it was by no means a conclusive step as the deal remained unsettled.

After a Synod Council meeting in Bafut, Ekese and Essoka protested that their role in the Money-Box Affair had been played down by Angst and Baer who were reproved for not seeking further advice on dealing with 'indigenous brothers'.[70] The two Cameroonian clerics were also appalled at being deprived of important decisions on staffing matters and of participating in the closing Communion ceremony. This provoked all the more distress as Holy Communion was considered a symbol of union between black and white mission personnel. The fragile *modus vivendi* looked like it was running the risk of being shattered when Ekese and Essoka resolved to cancel any future attendance at such gatherings unless they obtained full information about relevant decisions. Their vexation prompted Raaflaub to appeal for a fresh approach to the practice of co-operation and involvement of Africans in missionary organisation. His reaction to the pastors' letter boosted the BM's enterprise in that it clearly aimed to reinforce the process of empowering African church workers.[71]

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[66] PCCCAL 28-33, Grassfield Basel Mission Church Workers to E. Kellerhals, Bamenda Division, 18 June 1948.
[67] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 24 April 1999.
[68] PCCCAL 28-33, F. Raaflaub to E. Kellerhals, Buea, 20 July 1948.
[69] PCCCAL 28-33, The Basel Mission Church, Grassfields, to the General Synod Council, 10 August 1948.
[70] PCCCAL 28-33, J. L. Ekese and P. Essoka to the General Synod Council, Kumba 28 November 1948.
[71] PCCCAL 28-33, F. Raaflaub to the General Synod Council, 5 January 1949.

The agenda for the District Synod in Bafut in 1950 reflects the altered stance at the levels of congregational organisation and working relations. The main items included improved training facilities for pastors and catechists, salary rises for catechists, racial discrimination and the necessity for improved cultural and theological training of missionaries.[72]

6.2.2 Between Protest and Reconciliation

The new course of reconciliation featured prominently on the itinerary of BM Inspector H. Witschi's visit to Cameroon in 1950. It finally envisaged a constructive response to the concerns enumerated by the Grassfield catechists in their letter of appeal sent to Witschi during his tour. Indeed, the District Synod in Bafut dwelled on the very key points raised by these complainants. Their letter to Witschi offers a succinct overview of the problems surrounding the drawn-out dispute with Angst and Baer. Most importantly, the signatories indicated several shortcomings that had to be clarified. They were not involved in settling the strike of 1948; they were not familiar with how to run the church treasury as opposed to African staff employed in Native Authority treasuries; they had not received a 33.3% salary increase to meet up with rising living costs; they lacked up-to-date training facilities; vernacular schools were neglected in defiance of the government code of education. They subsequently demanded redress of these issues, stipulating a three-pronged formula that stressed future co-operation, equality and unity between African Christians and European staff.[73] Affording terms of mutual respect and support, the catechists' initiative pioneered a development that European missionaries were henceforth compelled to come to grips with.

Paul Scheibler already declared in 1948 that missionaries should engage more actively in generating a sense of awakening through evangelisation rather than succumbing to the role of missionary-administrators.[74] Witschi, however, suspected that the catechists were still filled with an 'unabated spirit of bitterness'. Linking this to the impact of nationalism, he added: 'Especially this circle [of church workers] is turning earlier financial autonomy [of the BM Church] into a state of complaints, demands and threats that reaches far down to the grassroots, just like labour unions.'[75] Witschi's observation was echoed by Angst who argued that evangelists, catechists and elders had converged to form a 'Preachers' Union' of the Grassfields, 'an anonymous mass which is currently celebrating one victory after the other. We are faced with a proletariat that is partly to be blamed on the [Basel] Mission.'[76] Such strands of criticism expose the troubled course of mission diplomacy.

Charges also came from other areas where the local *élite* was under-represented in the supreme executive body of the BM Church, the Synod. During the period of reorientation

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[72] PCCCAL 28-33, Agenda for the District Synod in Bafut, 1950.
[73] The Delegates of the Catechists, Basel Mission Congregations, Bamenda Province, to the Inspector, Rev. H. Witschi, 9 March 1950.
[74] BMCA E-5-2,17, Paul Scheibler, Annual Report (1948), Kumba-Nyasoso-Dikume, September 1949, p. 5.
[75] H. Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 25. (My translation)
[76] BMCA E-5-2,16, Albert Angst, Tertiary Report, Bafut, 13 July 1948, p. 7.

in the late 1940s, delegates from Mamfe district joined the chorus of protest. In contrast to the Grassfields with its high degree of activism in church circles, Mamfe was in a state of considerable neglect according to three leading members of the central congregation. The President, the Secretary and an elder of Mamfe Town congregation put forward a petition, lamenting the ill-representation of their large division at the Synod gathering in Bafut.

> In a gathering as you now have, at least one of the two Pastors and a member from the church at Mamfe could have been nominated to represent this large Division. But to our astonishment, we understand neither the Pastors nor the Evangelist nor a member from the leading church which is Mamfe town Church has been called to attend; rather, an illiterate, unexperienced elder from Akak, the most minute congregation in the Division was taken up to Bafut to attend such an important Synod at which the welfare of all the congregations in the Division will certainly be discussed.... By ignoring us we feel the mission has no more interest in our affairs and is not prepared to reason with us for the salvation of this Division. We could have put forward the following complaints and solicit a redress from the Synod; but since we are not considered worthy of being represented, we could only yearn and swallow our grievances.[77]

Although W. Meier was stationed in neighbouring Besongabang, Mamfe Division was portrayed as a church district without a resident pastor. Later on, Meier was acknowledged, albeit not fully since he was ostensibly 'more or less concentrating on the Technical (sic) work of the Mission and therefore does not find much time at his disposal to speculate otherwise.'[78] Put differently, Meier did not correspond to the picture of the BM's spiritual leaders. He quickly anticipated that the Church Committee members in Mamfe were intent on seeking chances to raise their finger against the disparate salary scales between Kumba and Victoria in the plantation areas and their own workers further inland. We find a *dejà-vu* of the case mentioned above concerning the dissatisfied teacher-catechists in Dikume Balue in the late 1920s. The channels of interaction and of lodging complaints now took a different course. The platform for debates was no more a local committee but the General Synod which was meant to wield the power of taking and implementing decisions. Meier believed the Money-Box Affair was about to spill over into the Forest area. He exclaimed:

> I personally will equip myself for a fight against the old practice whereby the wealthier districts [of the BM Church] support the "poorer" ones through church contributions. I am not prepared to open up the avenues for a church treasury battle in the Forest area. I will not oppose this because my work could be threatened but because the co-operation we have achieved thus far would be destroyed.[79]

The local church committee members in Mamfe either ignored Meier's view or refused to accept it. In their second petition, this time directed to the General High Synod in Buea,

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[77] PCCCAL 28-33, the President, the Secretary and an elder of Mamfe Town Church to the Synod (Bafut), Mamfe, 25 October 1949.
[78] PCCCAL 28-33, Basel Mission Committee, Mamfe, to the General High Synod (Buea), Mamfe, 1 May 1950.
[79] PCCCAL 28-33, W. Meier to F. Raaflaub, Besongabang, 13 February 1950. (My translation)

the envisaged consequences of a rapid development formed the core of their arguments. 'Development' involved the growth of Mamfe which 'would in the near future become a central town for aliens and suburbs.'[80] Their proposal for improved church structures was outlined in four recommendations: to recruit a resident pastor for Mamfe Town, to appoint a qualified catechist who could influence the community through his 'spiritual aptitude', to establish an Elementary School that would benefit 'future generations of this church', i.e. church members' children, and to install a 'Resident Minister or Missionary whose duty only should be towards the religious welfare of the church in all its aspects.' Rather than demanding Cameroonian leadership, this scheme was designed to reinforce the position of 'aliens' – Nigerians – amidst the indigenous Banyang and Keaka peoples. Indeed, as H. Witschi noted on his extensive tour of the mission field in 1950, the Christian community was principally made up of Nigerians whereas indigenes and their neighbours from the Grassfields formed a minority. In a replay of the 1920s, Mamfe confirmed its reputation as a problematic church district owing to the lack of qualified catechists and the fact that Duala, the BM's official vernacular in the Forest area, had failed to impose itself.[81]

The reverberations of the Money-Box Affair also reached Victoria Division, albeit with more delay. It was in 1951 that the local Finance Committee in Victoria set about lodging a complaint against the availability and disbursement of salaries. It must be remembered that the church treasury in Victoria benefited hugely from Christian plantation labourers.[82] In contrast to the petition from the Mamfe Town congregation, the Secretary of the Finance Committee in Victoria stressed the difference between the cost of living on the coast and in the rest of the Forest area.[83] This case illustrates the alarming degree to which disparities opened up between the different districts of the BM Church and between their respective financial committees. In spite of the more egalitarian approach to collaboration between European missionaries and African agents adopted at the Synod Council meeting in Bafut in 1950, the reality of financial pressures outweighed planned improvements. Writing to Meier prior to the gathering, Raaflaub suggested to debit the districts according to their numbers of Christians, if their church contributions – here in particular 'Synod pennies' – did not arrive on time. It would then be left to the responsible church committees to fill the gaps and make up for the 'scandal' of delaying the submission of their congregations' dues.[84] The 'scandal', A. Lüthy explained in relation to the situation in Dikume Balue, was characterised by never-ending haggling over church contributions and other collections, and over school fees. Like Raaflaub, Lüthy intended to exert pressure at the congregational level with an 'either-or' ultimatum, implying the withdrawal of catechists and the fusion of

[80] PCCCAL 28-33, Basel Mission Committee, Mamfe, to the General High Synod (Buea), Mamfe, 1 May 1950.
[81] Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 17.
[82] See Chapter 3, pp. 111-120.
[83] PCCCAL 28-33, The Secretary, Finance Committee Victoria, to the Central Finance Committee, Buea, 15 February 1951.
[84] PCCCAL 28-33, F. Raaflaub to W. Meier, Buea, 24 August 1950.

congregations in case of extended delays. This was contrary to the supposedly democratic structure of the General Synod, the supreme body of the BM Church and main platform for joint resolutions by Africans and Europeans. Lüthy's vital point was that the General Synod was simply not in the position to exert its authority over individual congregations.[85]

Such was the dominant European view of the BM Church, firmly backed by Raaflaub's interim successor as BM Field Secretary, Ernst Peyer.[86] African church workers thought differently and responded in their distinct ways. Already in February 1950, 17 petitioners, members of the BM Grassfield Church congregation in New Town-Victoria questioned the increase of church contributions which were considered a form of income tax. They resolved to withhold any further contributions 'unless we know the use of it' and 'while the money is stored and preachers are suffering [because of poor salaries].'[87] And why, they argued, should they provide for their pastor's transport when the BM had sufficient vehicles? Since European proposals were constantly rejected, it was up to Africans to find a solution. Even a circular by Raaflaub enumerating the levels and purposes of 'income tax' (church contributions) to be levied from the congregations could not dismantle the prejudice of the BM's central control of the treasury.[88] In early 1951, a leading delegation from the Grassfields composed of nine ordained pastors, five evangelists and six laymen (presumably elders) addressed a short, crisp letter to the BM:

> We have the honour most respectfully to inform you that the choosing of many members for the General Synode (sic) Council is a great waste of money as our congregation is unable to give out such a sum yearly. At[s] such, we have considered to always send two missionaries and four Africans. We the Synode (sic) Council in Grassfield shall always pay the Transport (sic) of these four Africans.[89]

Heinrich Bächtold, the new BM Field Secretary, was not willing to accept this proposal which he considered an attack on the new congregational rules of the BM Church. Indeed, the Synod Council was supposed to include 12 members each of the Grassfields and the Forest area together with the chairman. Bächtold criticised the petitioners for establishing their own Synod Council and for seeking to set out separate rules in dissonance with the Forest area.[90] He later regretted that a meeting of the General Synod Council could not be held as planned owing to further reluctance among African Christians to raise the cash for their delegations on time.[91] Thus far, attempts at reconcialiation had been flawed. That does not imply, however, that the process failed. Since autonomy was on the agenda, it was not taken lightly by either side. The key problem lay in the different angles from which it was

[85] PCCCAL 28-33, A. Lüthy to F. Raaflaub, Dikume Balue, 22 September 1950.
[86] PCCCAL 28-33, E. Peyer to J. W. Zürcher, Buea, 24 August 1950.
[87] PCCCAL 28-33, Members of the Basel Mission Grassfield Church, New Town – Victoria to the Inspector of Churches [presumably Hermann Witschi], General Meeting, Kumba, 15 February 1950.
[88] PCCCAL 28-33, F. Raaflaub to all Missionaries on the church treasury, Buea, 16 August 1950.
[89] PCCCAL 28-33, The Grassfield Synode (sic) Council to H. Bächtold, Mbengwi, 6 January 1951.
[90] PCCCAL 28-33, H. Bächtold to W. Bachmann, Buea, 16 March 1951.
[91] PCCCAL 28-33, H. Bächtold to all Cameroon Missionaries, Buea, 31 August, 1951.

approached. While the BM dwelled on comprehensive structures and administration, her African agents pursued a set of objectives geared to advance the Christian community at the local level. This perspective throws light on Jeremiah Ozimba's view of empowerment and independence. The community was critical to the African BM staff since it constituted a foundation both for their clerical authority *and* for their individual aspirations and social mobility. Their positions in the BM Church were potentially instrumental to the two ends.

6.3 Church Autonomy and Nationalism: an Appraisal

It seems misleading to conclude that the Money-Box Affair could ever be considered closed. Rather, it is suggested here, attempts at reconciliation between the opposed parties merely marked the end of the beginning of a new era of relentless pressuring and lobbying among African church workers. The climax of their self-assertion in 1948 coincided with the establishment of a Labour Office and a Land Claim Committee in Buea as well as the widespread emergence of improvement unions, all of which envisaged pressing demands.[92] Strikes became the order of the day. In February 1950, the BM Boys' and Girls' Schools in Victoria went on strike to oppose high school fees. It was rumoured that their protest would spread to other divisions, fuelled by the notion that 'Discontent inside the Basel Mission has prevailed for some time now.'[93] Money matters were given as the chief cause of dissatisfaction, just as discord over the management of church funds was a catalyst for the Money-Box Affair. However, that episode gradually broadened to become a catalyst in itself, highlighting various grievances with a common background. The latter was tellingly characterised by Ekese and Essoka who feared that the BM was reverting to the status of a 'pure mission of the white man'.[94] This statement by no means emanated from a unique outburst of disenchantment employing the code of race. Race also lay at the heart of the longest letter sent to Witschi by the Grassfield catechists. Indeed, it underlay the string of arguments that surfaced repeatedly in attacks on the white supremacy of the BM.

Not only did disagreement define a rupture between white staff and black Christians, it also reflects distinct patterns of church development in the Grassfields and the Forest area. The more assertive stance of "native" agents in the Grassfields resulted from a history of indigenous evangelisation that steered wide of the intensive missionary supervision in the Forest area, notably in the coastal zone. The task of uniting the BM Church had a paradox in common with nationalism: While on the one hand the Church and nationalism shared the aim of articulating a recognised African identity, they forged divided representations of this ideal on the other. Thus attempts to promote self-determination turned out to be most successful at the local level before the BM Church attained her autonomy in 1957.

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[92] BMCA E-5-2,17, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 1949, p. 2.
[93] BNA Sd/1924/4, SS. 108, The Cameroons Club to the D.O., Victoria Division; the Provincial Education Officer, Buea; the Secretary BM, Buea; the Manager, BM School, Victoria; the Principal, BM Girls' School, Victoria, 9 February 1950.
[94] PCCCAL 38-43, F. Raaflaub to the General Synod Council, 5 January 1949. (My translation)

The sparks of nationalism fanned by Nnamdi Azikiwe, nicknamed the 'Black Gandhi' by a Swiss newspaper,[95] certainly inspired African BM agents to step up their demands as well as criticism of European supremacy. But a distinction can be drawn between 'Zik, the political pioneer' and 'Zik, the Igbo'. In his latter capacity he represented a community of Nigerians who gained wide influence in Cameroon's economy and Native Administration, thus embodying what Victor Ama'azee styles the 'Igbo Scare'. This paraphrases growing resentments among anglophone Cameroonians at being marginalised in their own territory by their western neighbours. In a similar vein, Victor J. Ngoh suggests that Igbos – along with fellow Nigerians – exacerbated Cameroonian feelings: They dominated much of their hosts' commercial sector and occupied a considerable segment of plantation labour as well as numerous blue collar jobs and civil service positions in the 1950s.[96] Aaron Su, a leading figure in the BM Church's struggle for full selfhood, goes on to point out that nationalism in Southern Cameroons combined earlier anti-Igbo sentiment with anti-British opinion. He re-emphasises the all-pervasive Igbo presence in business and the civil service.[97] Ama'azee concurs, noting that Nigerian nationalism inspired Southern Cameroonian nationalism and the formation of political parties in the 1950s partly by invoking an anti-Nigerian spirit.[98] Such processes, Joseph Ebune adds, triggered a mass-movement, involving the populace:

> Southern Cameroonian nationalism in this respect was thus something more than the activities of a few disgruntled party leaders. It was indeed the inevitable product of western imperialism and modernization in African societies. It was also the inevitable assertion by the Cameroonians of their desire to shape their own destiny under the banner of party politics.[99]

Consequently, anglophone Cameroonians were formulating particular demands for a separate path towards independence, detached from 'modernising' Nigerian influences. The notion of the 'Igbo Scare' has, however, provoked frowns, especially among the Igbo themselves.[100] Nonetheless, it appears fair to suggest that they acted as a stimulus for the Southern Cameroonian interpretation of what Chief S. M. L. Endeley poignantly dubs the 'Rediscovery of the African Self'.[101] The Southern Cameroonian offshoot of nationalism thus resembles a double-headed spear aimed at eastern Nigerian acumen, both political and economic, and at foreign colonial power. If the separate political development from that of Nigeria grew out of such tension, this did not imply a general anti-Nigerian stance among anglophone Cameroonian politicians. From the beginning of political activities relating to Cameroonian interests, their leading proponents frequently converged in Lagos where the

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[95] BMCA E-5-2,17, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1948), Buea, 1949, p. 1.
[96] Victor Julius Ngoh. *History of Cameroon since 1800*. Limbe: Presbook, 1996, pp. 188f.
[97] Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
[98] Victor B. Ama'azee. *Op. cit.*, pp. 289-293.
[99] Joseph Ebune. *The Growth of political Parties in Southern Cameroons*. Yaounde: CEPER, 1992, p. 206.
[100] Professor Ogbu Kalu from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, drew my attention to the controversial nature of this thesis in several informal chats at Cambridge and London in September 2000.
[101] Interview with Paramount Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.

protonationalist Bakweri Union and the Bamenda Improvement Association were born.[102] While these bodies pursued similar objectives of ensuring 'political distinctiveness' and 'autonomy' in British Southern Cameroons, they also typified currents of regionalism and ethnic particularism. Such traits mark the division between the Grassfields and the Forest area which became the North West and South West Provinces in the post-colonial era.

The extent to which West Cameroonian strands of nationalism influenced the shaping of the BM Church can best be assessed in three perspectives. First, it is reflected in Dmitri van den Berselaar's remark that most Igbo who migrated to Cameroon were Christians, a number of whom became affiliated to the BM.[103] As such, the Igbo factor had a significant impact on many congregations of the BM Church. Second, nationalism variously coloured trends of transformation and division in individual congregations. This is, amongst others, exemplified above by the petitions from the BM Church congregation in Mamfe Town. Third and more generally, nationalism stimulated progress towards autonomy through a broad-based front of criticism and protests largely directed against European hegemony.

Cameros Helias summarised the latter point in response to the proclamation of the new church constitution by the BM in 1957. While noting that 'the Basel Mission promises to abandon its traditional aversion to devolving responsibility to African priests and also promises to do all in its power to train Cameroonians abroad for executive posts in the priesthood,' Helias viewed this step as a 'belated atonement for the grievous neglect which church work in the territory has suffered at the hands of Christian Missions.'[104] Contrary to Nigeria, he wrote, white missionaries made themselves look indispensable in Cameroon. The BM had remained self-directed for too long as compared to most missions in Nigeria. Once more, the undertones of race and white supremacy can be discerned in the discourse.

Paul Scheibler, who experienced the 1940s and 1950s in Cameroon, confessed that the missionary corps faced great difficulties adapting to change. Aversion to transformation, he agrees, was clearly reflected in the task of drawing up a constitution for the BM Church in the early 1950s.[105] H. Kraemer, Director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, sized up the draft version in 1954 as an attempt 'to prescribe the law for a church ruled by pastors and church workers, a church whose congregational and lay members usually appear as obedient followers of church regulations.'[106] Kraemer's criticism pointed at the danger of repressing dialogue and consent under rigid rules and hierarchy. This obstacle to mission-church relations which caused tension in the 1950s and later on, and was already the key reason for some "native" agents to retaliate from the late 1940s, is indeed still waiting to be removed.

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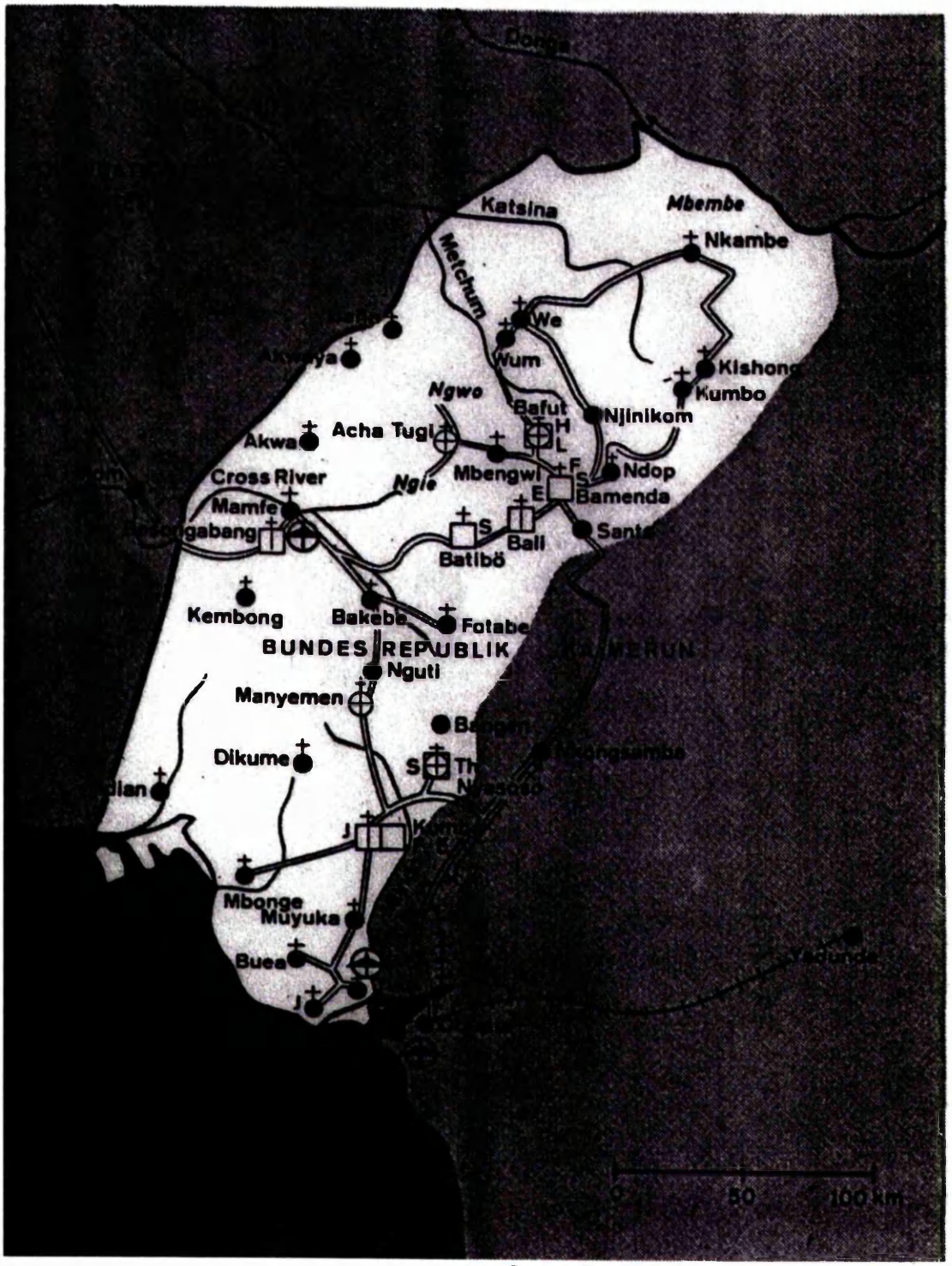
[102] Mark W. DeLancey and H. Mbella Mokeba. *Op. cit.*, pp. 35, 37.
[103] Dmitri van den Berselaar. *In Search of Igbo Identity. Language, Culture and Politics in Nigeria, 1900-1966*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1998, p. 166. See also Chapter 5, pp. 172-174.
[104] BNA Sd/1924/4, SS. 108, Cameros Helias, *Daily Times*, 25 September 1957.
[105] BMCA E/10-2,8, P. Scheibler. Die neue Kirchenordnung der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun. 1959, pp. 10ff.
[106] H. Kraemer quoted in ibid., p. 12.

Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon in 1968



Source: Basel Mission Annual Reports, 1964-1968

Much as catechists belonged to the 'great new figures of rural Africa', they were not equipped with the ability to assume the leadership and administration of large churches.[107] One elder of the BM Church in Bamenda Division, J. Abomie, spelt out this problem very clearly in an appeal he sent to Scheibler in 1956. Contrary to Helias' view of the liberated, autonomous and victorious church, Abomie suggested that the transfer of responsibilities should be postponed. He remarked that an African Church Secretary (Synod Clerk) would be far too costly for a financially weak church to maintain. Perhaps more importantly, he commented that the church was still weak as a whole. This was, in his opinion, reflected by insufficiently trained clergy incapable of harmonising their preaching to the advantage of unifying the many Cameroonian Christians with distinct traditions and linguistic origins:

> I myself have seen that if the white missionaries leave or go away now, the African pastors will mess the field of preaching. Some will become like bishops and some as popes with different traditions not at all coroborate (sic) with another [successor] church [of the BM].
> The fact that they can read the Bible well does not mean that they can hold heavy responsibilities. Some of them preach only vernacular and even they cannot see what may come tomorrow.[108]

The only way out of the stalemate, Werner Keller had already observed in 1950, was to start by raising standards of the catechist ministry as a whole. He presented a concept that foresaw fewer and better qualified candidates capable of contributing towards the growth and formation of a worthy autonomous BM Church in Cameroon.[109] And it was this plan which foreshadowed the transformation of "native" agency into the indigenous leadership of the PCC in the 1950s and 1960s. To conclude, the Money-Box Affair and its corollary marked a crucial chapter in the discourse on selfhood. It is a chapter that did not evolve under, but in response to, the BM at the grassroots of an African Christian movement.

6.4 Conclusion

Elder Abomie's view cited towards the end of the chapter captures the spirit expressed by Jeremiah Ozimba. Both approaches dwell on the argument that the debate over church autonomy was staked out by a quest for empowerment, similar to other forces involved in nation-building. The BM Church, with the educated elite it raised and the political parties which drew on the latter, engaged in a forceful struggle towards selfhood in the 1940s and 1950s. If autonomy was at stake, it depended essentially on empowerment and authority. The process of empowering the "native" agents who participated in the BM's enterprise saw both parties involved proceeding at different strides. The European missionaries chose to take the slower pace of caution, scepsis and diligent planning while the African workers

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[107] Adrian Hastings. *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 43, 46.
[108] PCCCAL 554, Petition letter against the total handing over to the PC (Presbyterian Church) by the BM, J. Abomie to the Principal P. Scheibler, Bamenda Division, 14 December 1956.
[109] BMCA E-5-2,17, W. Keller. Die Reorganisation des Katechistenamtes und deren voraussichtliche Auswirkung (Quarterly Report). Victoria, 15 June 1950, p. 4.

selected the higher gear of protest and pressuring. Debates centred mainly upon finances. This was not merely a delicate domain in itself but also one that received marginal support from the colonial authorities whose attention was confined to Elementary School teachers, a minority among the BM's staff. The latter often felt deprived. Other factors also affected progress. Membership in the executive body of the BM Church, the General Synod, was sought after to influence vital decisions, as were key posts relevant to local church affairs.

Although the course of events in different parts of the mission field seems to have been synchronised, particularly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, concerted endeavours did not occur throughout. Local demands differed. However, they collectively intensified in the aftermath of the Money-Box Affair. This is reflected in evolving patterns of exchange and mission diplomacy that featured remarkable levels of courage, persistence and negotiation skills among the petitioners. The delegations from Christian communities who stood up to challenge the mission hierarchy were obviously not self-proclaimed nationalists. Yet they were undoubtedly influenced by nationalist ideologies that had spread from Nigeria and fermented on Cameroonian soil throughout the 1940s and 1950s. And they certainly fell directly under the banner of nationalism in the eyes of European missionaries if they were not branded ringleaders. In either case their quest for autonomy was a cause for concern.

In terms of immediate results the Money-Box Affair and other petitions from Victoria and Mamfe Divisions achieved limited success. But far more importantly, they shed new light on the notion that the time had come to confront the question of responsibility and selfhood. What appears to have been a well-prepared and -timed handing-over procedure in 1957 was effectively propelled by a growing spirit of awakening and uprising under the cloak of nationalism. The impact of this African – Christian and non-Christian – initiative on the missionary enterprise prompted a new approach to collaboration and empowerment. It also exposed the problematic nature of the centrepiece of the BM's policy: church unity. At the time, the BM Church appeared to be a far cry from this goal. It likened a body with many limbs and no trunk – dissociated communities that were about to be transformed into a coherent web of self-governed units by adopting the present Presbyterian structures.

7. Growing in Faith: Conversion, Adherence, and Propagation of the Word

Notably over the past three decades, much scholarly attention has been paid to religious conversion in sub-Saharan Africa. Robin Horton's article 'African Conversion' sparked a debate that reformed analytic approaches during the early 1970s, ranging from his revised 'Intellectualist Theory' to Caroline Ifeka-Moller's social-cultural model. The tenets of the two authors, and those of others who followed, merit consideration here while pursuing the vital questions about motives for, and patterns of, conversion to Christianity. The paths of inquiry converge in what J. D. Y. Peel terms the 'social identification of converts,' which is rooted in 'the process by which people come to regard themselves, and be regarded by others, as Christians.'[1] Bearing this aim in mind, the present chapter attempts to illuminate the meaning of conversion idioms to African Christians. Moreover, it addresses the impact of conversion on their livelihoods by blending varied biographical evidence with data on trends and loci of conversion and adherence. 'Conversion' denotes religious reorientation while 'adherence' is proposed as a corollary to illustrate subsequent stages of religious integration. The relevance of this distinction is discussed in the first sections of the chapter which explore conversion from the angle of education, acquiring religious knowledge and becoming members of Christian congregations. The last part examines how African agents participated in propagating the Word and thus precipitated religious and social change.

The First World War and the British colonial reforms during its immediate aftermath instigated considerable modifications of the BM's enterprise and sphere of activity. Most of this newly demarcated realm of Christian advance represented virgin terrain. Pre-war evangelisation in the Grassfields concentrated mainly on one powerful hub, Bali-Nyonga. Mamfe Division in the Forest area was abandoned two years after the only mission station in the region had been set up in Besongabang in 1912. The remaining posts of the former mission field with a pre-war record were Nyasoso in Kumba Division as well as Buea and Victoria in Victoria Division. In the absence of European personnel, many of the Christian communities reconfigured themselves. Congregational structures were altered. There was a powerful trend toward mass-baptism. Guidelines for adherence were relaxed. Membership boomed. Alternative interpretations were attached to the Gospel by its African proponents.

The situation which confronted returning European missionaries from the mid-1920s prompted the BM to re-evaluate her evangelistic strategies, goals and outreach. Conversion called for careful instruction of selected candidates. Adherence – becoming *and* remaining affiliated to the BM Church – was eventually traced out in a catalogue of congregational regulations. New African staff – locally appointed teacher-catechists – were harnessed to mission policy, practice and control. Conversion, adherence and propagation defined the

[1] J. D. Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 216.

process by which a myriad of Christian congregations was to be fused into some coherent structure of a mission church. While the remainder of the study relates this development to contexts of shared African and European concern, this chapter focuses more narrowly on the baseline of religious encounters: the formation of Christians and congregations, along with "native" agents. It also seeks to throw light on the extent to which the appropriation of Christianity influenced the shaping of identities, statuses and opportunities.

7.1 The Dynamics of Conversion: Expectations, Limitations, and Experiences

Conversion accounts abound in the missionary narrative, epitomising some of the most gripping, dramatised and controversial moments in the discourse on faith. Despite a degree of continuity, the determinants of Christian advance during the era of missionary presence under review differed largely from the conditions before the First World War. Continuity rested essentially in the commitment of earlier converts who, acquainted with the old BM, remained loyal to her cause. Discontinuity was largely associated with the adherence of the majority of young converts, who lacked such familiarity with the BM, to a variety of quasi-autonomous Christian grassroots movements. The BM's objectives were also challenged under the influence of 'modernity' on African proselytes, old and new, from the 1920s.

The profound imprints of modernity through trade and migratory labour stood out as external features of Christian converts against their less visible internal characteristics. The three Cs – Christianity, Civilisation, Commerce – of the 19th century were scaled down by the BM in British Southern Cameroons to three Rs – Reading, (W)riting, and Religion – in order to reinforce teaching and evangelisation by local catechists.[2] There is an inherent connection with Horton's 'microcosms' and 'macroscosm'. The broader goal of the BM, like other Christian missions, was to integrate local 'microcosms', defined by distinct sets of social, cultural, religious and ecological features of African communities, into the larger 'macrocosm' with its wider economic activity, social interaction and religious orientation. Accordingly, the BM Church was a component of the macrocosm, the dimension ascribed by Horton to the 'supreme being' as opposed to the 'lesser spirits' of the microcosms:

> The salient feature of the system is its two-tiered arrangement of unobservables. In the first tier we find the lesser spirits, which are in the main concerned with the affairs of the local community and environment – i.e. with the microcosm. In the second tier we find a supreme being concerned with the world as a whole – i.e. with the macrocosm. Just as the microcosm is part of the macrocosm, so the supreme being is defined as the ultimate controller....[3]

While Horton's theory has been criticised for its inelasticity in dealing with differences in African reactions and its neglect of social factors, it can also be questioned on two other counts: It omits variations of adherence to spiritual beings and ignores the twilight zones

[2] Adrian Hastings. *The Church in Africa 1450-1950.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 581.

[3] Robin Horton. 'African Conversion', *Africa* 41(2), 1971, pp. 101. For more detail, see pp. 101-105 and Robin Horton. 'On the Rationality of Conversion', Part I, *Africa* 45(3), 1975, pp. 219-220, 234.

between the micro- and macrocosms.[4] Indeed, as Jack Goody notes, 'religious systems... are not structured into some tightly formal pattern.'[5] His point of flexible and ambiguous cosmologies mirrors the missionaries' ambiguities in formulating compromises between assimilation and the rigidity of conversion. In 1926 C. Frey exposed the core argument

> that it is not about the existence of one God; their [the Bamum's] fathers knew this before the arrival of Islam and the [Christian] missionaries. The big question from the bottom of people's hearts is as follows: How does this God become my father? *Nyinyi* means God, the king of kings, the judge of the whole world who will pronounce his sentence over Christians, Jews, Pagans and Muslims; but only those who see Christ as their saviour can pray: Our Father. Jesus merely tells his disciples, not the whole world, when you pray, then say: Our Father. All the Bamum are the king's subjects, but only those who are his sons can rightfully say: Father.[6]

Carefully selecting his words to elucidate his notion of the essence of Christianity, Frey stressed the distinction between biological kinship and faith: While kinship is theoretically rooted in blood ties, faith – along with salvation – overcomes all limitations set by social institutions and norms. Faith was propounded as the more propitious of the two options as it appeared to be accommodating in a competitive, selective and highly centralised society. This choice was all the more remarkable as it occurred in a tradition so adept at generating strong bonds in associations. Frey's interpretation, however, shuns the complex of social organisation and centred upon the salience of comparing the Father of one people with the Father of mankind as a whole. Elsewhere, as hinted in Chapters 2 and 4, he introduced his ideas of substituting Christian communities for traditional associations.[7] His premise was the intermediary role of Jesus. Jesus' capacity as a leader and a saviour marks a separation between the two realms of traditional and Christian authority, illustrating the path to God.

In 1934 J. W. Zürcher presented an idea of conversion on similar grounds, suggesting: 'It appears that the pagans must convert twice, first from their brute paganism to the law that "thou shalt not", second from the law to the redeeming and liberating Gospel of the New Testament.'[8] The catechist Jona Mbu was among those who were perplexed by the distinction between the 'Law' and the Gospel. Praised for his assistance in translating the New Testament to Mungaka, Mbu found a good solution in Paul's letter to the Galatians.[9] As Chapter 4:3-5 reads, 'During our minority we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe, but when the term was completed, God sent his own Son, born of a woman, born

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[4] Humphrey Fisher. 'Conversion Reconsidered. Some Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa', *Africa* 43(1), 1973, p. 29; Caroline Ifeka-Moller. 'White Power: Social-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8(1), 1974, p. 59.

[5] Jack Goody. 'Religion, Social Change and the Sociology of Conversion', in Jack Goody (ed.). *Changing Social Structure in Ghana: Essays in the Comparative Sociology of a New State and an Old Tradition*. London: International African Institute, 1975, p. 106.

[6] BMCA E-4,7.148, C. Frey to W. Oettli, Foumban, 23 August 1926. (My translation)

[7] See Chapter 2, pp. 88, and Chapter 4, pp. 146-150.

[8] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1934. (My translation)

[9] A. Vielhauer. 'Das Neue Testament für das Balivolk', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, November 1931(11), p. 169.

under the law, to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons.'[10] So the liberation from secular 'law' paved the spiritual path to God.

All three views of Zürcher's and Paul's prescribe a succession of stages of turning to Christianity – like the phases of 'quarantine, mixing, and reform' in Islam, put forward by Fisher[11] – that stress the renunciation of worldly constraints. The rhetoric was, however, trapped in the paradox of Christians expecting their *Schöpfungsbestimmung*, an ostensibly spiritual vocation, to yield profits. Walter Meier reached this verdict after a futile attempt to elaborate the biblical 'command of labour' with a group of African BM Church workers in 1948. The participants protested against the precept that 'God wanted them to work in order to serve each other rather than for the sake of profit' and broke off the discussion.[12]

Why then aspire to enter the Kingdom of God? Much as combinations of motives were inclined to vary according to individual experiences of turning to Christian faith, several common themes can be traced. To begin, it is worth taking note of René Bureau's analysis of conversion among the Duala, which suggests a third triple formula made up of three Ps: Power, Protection, and Prosperity. Bureau attributes such motives to a phase of a dominant Christian presence, stability, and peak conversion rates from the early 20th century, which reached their apogee at the outbreak of the Second World War.[13] Once again, the paradox of material gain looms large in Bureau's passages on the reflux of the conversion boom. First, the much acclaimed 'secrets' of the Europeans remained obscured. Second, neither through baptism, nor through instruction had Africans succeeded in emulating the power of whites. And third, as an old Christian commented, 'money has become our God.... We produce Christians, then life takes them away.'[14]This hint is reminiscent of Maia Green's coinage, the 'religion of business,' which brands the Catholic Church among the Pogoro in Tanzania a 'this worldly provider of goods and services.'[15] The 'ritual and practices' of African tradition contrast with European religion with its overtly bureaucratic procedures which can render conversion an exterior appearance.[16] Gregory Maddox, however, holds that Catholics in another Tanzanian setting, Ugogo, domesticated the new belief system by forging linkages between the 'new faith' and the 'old ways of life.'[17] Green's concession

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[10] Quoted from the New Testament, New English Bible. Oxford: University Press, 1970, p. 242; in the annotations 'elemental spirits of the universe' correspond to 'elementary ideas belonging to this world.'

[11] Humphrey Fisher. *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

[12] BMCA E-5-2,16, W. Meier, Quarterly Report, Besongabang, 20 September 1948, p. 5. (My translation)

[13] See René Bureau. *Le peuple du fleuve. Sociologie de la conversion chez les Douala*. Paris: Karthala, 1996, pp. 25-36. Bureau discusses three phases: encounters with Christian faith at school; isolation of the Christian sphere from non-Christian elements; mass-'adhesion' (the 'saturation point') to Christianity.

[14] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 38. (My translation)

[15] Maia Green. 'Why Christianity is the 'Religion of Business': Perceptions of the Church among Pogoro Catholics in Southern Tanzania', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 25(1), 1995, p. 37.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 42f.

[17] Gregory Maddox. 'The Church and Cigogo. Father Stephen Mlundi and Christianity in Central Tanzania', in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo (eds.). *East African Expressions of Christianity*. Oxford: James Currey, 1999, p. 162.

– to the Protestants – of an 'inner conversion' and Maddox's concern with 'instrumental' versus 'effective' conversion are explicated by Peel:

> While its credited power was the main general ground on which people might be persuaded to leave one cult or religion for another, three other classes of factor are also relevant to the explanation of conversion. These were the expressive or otherwise non-instrumental appeals of Christianity, such as its ethical teaching or its cultural style, the social advantages of belonging to the Christian community, as such; the system of rewards and controls in society at large, which made the costs and benefits of conversion socially so variable; and the freedom to convert if one wanted to.[18]

Essentially, and pragmatically, the test and trial of conversion confronted its candidates with rationales of the compatibility and usefulness of, and the personal spiritual affinity to, Christianity. By penetrating cultural realms in varied ways, as the two previous examples from Tanzania demonstrate vividly, Christian advance proved to be enormously resilient, adaptive and insistent at once. This is highlighted by the Comaroffs in a tense conversation between a rainmaker and Livingstone that revealed parallels between, and also fostered the exchange of, Tswana and Christian symbols.[19] Such reciprocations were indeed imperative for successful negotiations in religious encounters, embodying crucial techniques to entice the targeted subjects. Similarly, the BM missionaries drew upon characters in the Old and New Testament and models of biblical settings made of sand, soil, clay, moss, grass etc.[20]

Two interrelated problems lay in vernacularising scriptural vocabulary and conveying an idea of the Kingdom of God.[21] 'Light', for instance, a pervasive component among the conversion idioms, lacked an accurate equivalent in Mungaka as opposed to 'darkness'. Jesus' address to the Pharisees in John 8:12, 'I am the *light* of the world,' was therefore transposed into 'I am the *sun* of the world.'[22] Furthermore, the Mungaka word for 'God', *N(y)ikob*, was associated with the forest ('spirit of the bush') and 'spirit' or 'Holy Spirit' were approximated by 'breath', whereas the Duala refer to God as *Loba* which translates into sky.[23] Consequently, recognising Christian faith was about adopting, comprehending, and developing the appropriate vocabulary. Bible stories were intended as popular themes. Communicating the Gospel in intelligible terms was an essential means by which to instil a sense of familiarity with the Scripture and with the lifestyle it elicited. This process evolved slowly, like the consolidation of Christian faith itself, throughout the BM Church.

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[18] J. D. Y. Peel. *Op. cit.*, pp. 225f.

[19] Jean and John Comaroff. *Op. cit.*, pp. 210f. See also, on the LoDagaa in Ghana, Jack Goody. *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

[20] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1941), Bafut, 2 April 1942, pp. 8f.

[21] On *signifiés* (orginal word and meaning) and signifiants (intended word and meaning) in the Christian discourse, see Birgit Meyer. 'Translating the Devil. An African Appropriation of Pietist Protestantism. The Case of the Peki Ewe in Southeastern Ghana, 1847-1992.' Amsterdam, Ph.D., 1995, pp. 115-124.

[22] A. Vielhauer. 'Das Neue Testament für das Balivolk', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, November 1931(11), p. 169.

[23] John A. Ndozo. 'The Theological Problems of Indigenization of Christian Faith in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.' Nyasoso, Theological College, thesis, 1986, p. 24.

Illuminating the local relevance, order and outreach of the Kingdom of God proved an equally daunting objective. Its conceptual underpinnings had to be grafted on to numerous precepts of geography, time, authority, and social organisation. In the absence of proper nationhood, J. Ittmann observed in 1932,

> The Negro of Cameroon simply cannot imagine the size of the all-embracing Kingdom of God. He lives purely within the confines of his tribe.... Nor can a people that does not have a proper idea of time, of history, firmly grasp the meaning of eternity....
> So God is perceived as a being who has withdrawn into the distant sky and does not care for people with their sufferings and sorrow. One seldom prays to him and expects all that is required for life from the spirits. God can be deceived and his might is nullified by witchcraft. The sun, the eye of God, looks upon the earth during daytime, but in the darkness of the night there is no hindrance.[24]

By the time Ittmann's article appeared, the underlying historical processes suggest, the limitations of locally perceived spatial and temporal dimensions were at least exaggerated. Of greater relevance here are the separation between earth and sky and between light and dark, the notion of the eye of God, and God's indifference and remoteness. Put together, these features point to a combination of acknowledging God's presence while at the same time qualifying his ability to intervene in everyday matters as insignificant. What prevails instead is a sense of the immediacy of more powerful forces -- spirits and witchcraft – that governed the course of life. The restricted gaze of the eye of God accounts for the dualism of Christians who professed their faith by day and came under the influence of darkness – the domain of supernatural forces, evil and fear – by night. The latter were often articulated in traditional ritual dances that represented a form of bonding against negative elements of magic.[25] Fears were often remedied through *Ngambi*, oracle divination, 'a form of village psychotherapy that often tended to look for reconciliation where spirits were low.'[26]

Reconciliation defines a mutual target of traditional belief and Christian faith, or, to use Chief S. M. L. Endeley's correlation, a 'traditional base which has been strengthened by Christian teaching.'[27] It was reconciliation, paired with Christian teachings of redemption and salvation, which tended to render divine intervention attractive after all in view of local customary images of death. In V. Y. Mudimbe's opinion, 'Missionary speech and praxis prove that no human enterprise can succeed as long as the true God is not acknowledged. The Christian God's spirit appears, therefore, as history's only force.'[28] Thus the human

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[24] J. Ittmann. 'Wie dem Kameruner das Reich Gottes verständlich wird', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1932(3), pp. 34, 36. (My translation)
[25] See E. Keller. 'Kampf mit dem Heidentum', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, August 1930(8), pp. 130; P. Wöhr. 'Unter der Knechtschaft der Furcht', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, October 1931(10), p. 158.
[26] See W. Schneider. 'Menschen auf der Flucht', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1934(1), pp. 10-11; Jonas N. Dah. *Chieftaincy, Widowhood and Ngambi in Cameroon*. Pforzheim-Hohenwart, p. 37.
[27] Interview with Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[28] V. Y. Mudimbe. *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 51f.

enterprise does not conclude with death according to the Scriptures, whereas in the present context, John Musumbe says graphically, '*Man i die, i die one time*' (when a human being dies, he dies for good).[29] Death is thus equated with finality as opposed to the partition of body and soul in line with the biblical foundation of everlasting life. Richard Gray stresses the cardinal value of Christian eschatology for the propagation of everlasting life through catechisms with the juxtaposition between the 'fear of hell and the beauty of heaven.'[30]

Surveying 40 essays written by BM students in 1937, E. Lamparter noted that, contrary to Musumbe, the authors unanimously painted a picture of afterlife in the city of the dead, an idealised alternative to their present existence. Their common concern, Lamparter added, stemmed from the uncertainty of their visions, leading them ultimately to seek consolation in an 'awakening to everlasting life.'[31] As Christian advance penetrated deeper into remote pockets not only of the mission field but also of the missionised minds, it became harder to distinguish original African ideas from those generated under missionary influence.[32] A series of stories about life after death among the Barue in 1951 revealed similarities to the promises reserved for Christians. A. Lüthy concluded: 'In spite of all the weaknesses of our Christians, something has changed quite fundamentally with regard to these questions [about death], that is, they [their ideas] have been renewed.'[33] The trend was to *re*-form, not to *trans*-form views, which begs the question how real conversion could be:[34] 'Some people believe that institutional and other modernizing inducements have been responsible for the massive numerical growth of Christianity in Africa. If these factors are removed, this religion will be revealed as a fragile, alien, superfluous and temporary aberration.'[35]

This brings us back to the external characteristics of modernity and the internal signs of conversion. The authenticity and relevance of Peel's non-instrumental motives remained as varied as the intentions of their subjects, the converts. The depth of their experiences, along with mounting social pressures, were probably what counted most. Their span was wide-ranging. On the one hand, tendencies of collectively turning to Christianity occurred, such as the spontaneous gatherings in Bali-Nyonga, Santa and Bagam induced by the eclipse of the sun in 1947.[36] On the other hand, it appears more common for religious encounters to have evoked personal inspirations. Among the latter, two categories prevail, one figurative and psychological, the other concrete and pragmatic.

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[29] Interview with John Teghen Musumbe, Molyko, Buea, 25 May 1999.
[30] Richard Gray. *Black Christians and White Missionaries*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 68.
[31] E. Lamparter. 'Aus Schüleraufsätzen über das Leben nach dem Tod', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, September 1937(9), pp. 126.
[32] Interview with Aaron Su, Bafut, 20 April 1999. The only religious novity, Su insists, was Jesus.
[33] A. Lüthy. 'Wie stellen sich die heidnischen Barue das Leben nach dem Tod vor?' *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, April 1951(4), p. 43.
[34] See V. Y. Mudimbe. *Op. cit.*, p. 55.
[35] Richard Gray. *Op. cit.*, p. 75
[36] Interviews with Daniel Gana Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999; Susana Yepeh Gana, Baligashu, 7 April 1999; Emmanuel Mbing Fenji, Bagam, 23 August 1999. Fenji also refers to the eruption of Mt. Cameroon in 1958 as a stimulus for villagers to turn to Christianity.

The first category includes visions in dreams[37] as well as witnessing an inner calling.[38] Concomitantly, Njoh Litumbe suggests that 'conversion was more an act of faith than a reasoned conclusion,' thereby implying a dominant propensity to imbibe Christian signs or symbols.[39] Conversion, as George Nkweti concurs, is 'a way of life in the light of the Gospel, not a sudden event.'[40] Individual motives for a new way of life were often shaped by experiences as house-boys, assistants and bearers for teachers, catechists, evangelists, pastors and missionaries. Christol Foncham, for example, spent two years living with his schoolteacher in Mbengwi during the 1950s and emulated the example of his host 'who was considered a model to be followed.'[41] He fondly remembers his grandfather, Thomas Seta, the pioneer African evangelist in neighbouring Ngie, as a remarkable personality who was deeply respected by his extended family. Representing the third generation of Meta' Christians, Foncham is among the sons and relatives of the local clergy or sub-clergy who gained insights about literacy, fellowship and congregational life at the core of the family household. He was born into Christian faith, unlike others such as Thomas Ama'azee, one of the first converts in Bu, who hailed from the palace of his village. He, too, was given the opportunity to reside with the teacher-catechist who had started work at the request of his father, the chief. When Ama'azee was transferred to Bali in the early 1930s,

> there was already a kind of mafia. The older evangelists like John Fube of Bafut knew the advantages which would accrue to somebody who had an English education, so they usually wanted to limit the number of people going into the English-speaking school. But my father used what in Pidgin you call 'open eye', went and wrote the entrance exam, passed, and transferred to the English-speaking school.[42]

Competition, among Christians or between Christians and non-Christians alike, is vital for conversion and underpins the second category of concrete and pragmatic motives. It must be taken into account that schools in the early 1930s were generally less popular than they became a decade later. A common opinion held that schools were centres for corporal punishment.[43] Initially, therefore, children were mainly selected outside the realms of royal palaces and nobility.[44] In Bali-Nyonga, Fon Fonyonga reportedly captured children, many of whom came from Mbengwi.[45] From the late 1930s, education served, in Alfred Aboh's words, to 'mould the characters of a certain class of people towards gainful ventures.'[46]

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[37] Interview with Eugene Mote-Ndasah, Buea, 28 June 1999.
[38] Interview with Ida Mallett, Bota, Limbe, 22 June 1999.
[39] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 28 June 1999.
[40] Interview with George Mebafu Nkweti, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.
[41] Interview with Christol Fombat Foncham, Buea, 6 April 2000.
[42] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999.
[43] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999, and interview with Abel Sumbele, Bokwoango, Buea, 9 July 1999.
[44] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kejom Keku (Big Babanki), 24 April 1999.
[45] Interview with Daniel Gana Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi 23 April 1999; Jeremiah Ambeh Ngusum, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Ngie, June 1999.
[46] Alfred Etchu Aboh, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Assam, November 1999.

Much like the BM's syllabus in the Gold Coast during the same period, the new focus at BM Primary (Elementary) Schools in Cameroon was on four – compared to Hastings' three – Rs: 'reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and religion.'[47] As in other mission fields, schools became a nexus of future church membership, bringing together baptismal candidates both of Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. To some, this development created the basis for a sceptical stance to overzealous proselytising and the transformation of Christians into replicas of the white man.[48] Mamfe Division, for instance, experienced particularly trying times in the 1930s when the number of vernacular schools collapsed from 50 in the late 1920s to two in 1934.[49] In 1938 Christian advance reportedly remained stagnant due to its lack of fit with local practices such as customary marriage and the inheritance of wives and children, which persisted.[50] Money shortfalls during the Depression probably contributed to this inertia. Elsewhere, it was a matter of using Christian faith and mission education as a means of survival and improvement in the process of adjusting to the modernising world. In Bamenda Division, the late 1930s allegedly witnessed a decline of 'pagan beliefs [that] are rapidly being abandoned for Christian teaching,'[51] and Christianity was praised as the 'greatest factor in cultural advance.'[52] From 1936-1939, reports on Victoria Division were unequivocal about the point that the 'majority of the natives are converts to [Catholic and Protestant] Christianity.'[53] By 1939, owing to continuous expansion, missionary presence and European influences – 'individual independence, women's emancipation, imported foodstuffs, clothing and other articles of European origin, the village school and church house' – were said to be conspicuously sign-posted all over Kumba Division.[54]

Brendan Carmody argues in the same vein that socio-cultural factors constituted critical motives for conversion.[55] His approach offers a variant of Ifeka-Moller's social structural model. He suggests that 'It is changes in the fabric of society, and of the local community, which provided the old cosmology with the raw material for rearticulating its premises.'[56] Relating the distinct contexts of the present study to this premise is a major preoccupation that is elaborated here by establishing linkages between the broader dimensions, individual experiences and statistical data. Before embarking on the analysis, though, conversion and adherence need to be illuminated briefly within the framework of the BM regulations.

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[47] F. Yao Boateng. 'The Catechism and the Rod. Presbyterian Education in Ghana', in Edward H. Berman (ed.). *African Reactions to Missionary Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1975, p. 81.
[48] Francis Yiambu Gwain, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Anjin-Kom, September 1997.
[49] BNA Ce/1934/1, Mamfe Division, Annual Report, 1934, pp. 49f.
[50] BNA Ce/1938/1, no. 2483, Mamfe Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1938, p. 21.
[51] BNA Cb/1937/1, no. 2270, Bamenda Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1937, p. 36.
[52] BNA Cb/1938/1, Bamenda Division, Annual Report, Part II: Native Administrative Affairs, 1938, p. 9.
[53] BNA Cf/1936/1, no. 2097, Victoria Division, League of Nations Report, 1936, p. 36; BNA Cf/1937/1, Victoria Division, Notes of the League of Nations Report, 1937, p. 39; BNA Cf/1940/1, no. 2926, Victoria Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1940, p. 20.
[54] BNA Cd/1939/1, no. 2731, Kumba Division, Annual and League of Nations Report, 1939, p. 22.
[55] Brendan Carmody. 'Conversion and School at Chikuni, 1905-39', *Africa* 58(2), 1988, p. 193.
[56] Caroline Ifeka-Moller. *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

Baptism, one of two sacraments besides the Lord's Supper, was a milestone along the trajectory of converts. Once they had been baptised, converts and those born into Christian faith as, say, second or third generation members of Christian families became adherents according to the congregational regulations for the BM Church, the *Gemeinde-Ordnung*, of 1935.[57] A key to the historical appraisal of baptism is the distinction between infant and child/adult baptism and, for the latter, a review of the prescribed catechumenate and code of conformity. Baptism was 'a sign of washing off the sins and of the resurrection to a new life. According to God's command (Matthew 28:18-20), we receive new members in his community through baptism, believing that the Lord himself shows us that he receives us as members of his body through this external sign.'[58] A baptised adult was to renounce all 'ungodly customs' and to 'wholeheartedly' follow Jesus.[59] The aim of the catechumenate was to enhance the baptismal candidates' personal choice of following Jesus and taking to Christian ways. Catechism classes had to be attended for at least two years. They centred on the Christian principles laid down in the *Katechismo*, the catechism manual, and on the 'suffering, death and glory of Jesus as well as the great examples of faith in the Old and New Testament.'[60] Infant baptism was encouraged in Christian families and non-Christian families where the parents also decided to accept baptism.[61] Polygamists could be baptised on their deathbeds once they promised to dissolve their marriages if they recovered.[62] The act of, and conditions for, baptism constitute a powerful thread of continuity in the more recent constitutions of the PCWC and, later, the PCC.[63]

It has been emphasised in the case of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) among the Kaguru in Tanzania that Christian names represent the essential mark of conversion.[64] For Green, the foreign Christian name was a first key step towards becoming an 'official' Christian.[65] Being recognised as an official Christian implied passing into a distinct realm of brotherhood, analogous to bonding in age groups. As Max Fohtung, one of the pioneer BM schoolboys in Bali, who was baptised with a group of 30 in 1908, remembers, 'Dr. Vielhauer declared us to be his brothers, and to show that he meant what he said he took me, his houseboy, to dine with him for the first time, wearing shoes and a tie.'[66] Fohtung was baptised four years after being caught by Fonyonga in 1904 to attend school in Bali. Elias Cheng chimes in with his experience, claiming that the conversion of school-children

[57] The *Gemeinde-Ordnung* of 1935 was the first broad set of guidelines for the BM Church in Cameroon.
[58] BMCA E-10.24,2, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, 6 February 1935, § 40, p. 9. (My translation)
[59] 'Customs' included idols, secret societies, witchcraft, charms, ancestral veneration etc. Ibid., § 41, p. 9.
[60] Ibid., § 42, p. 9. (My translation)
[61] Ibid., §§ 45bb)-46, p. 10.
[62] Ibid., § 44, p. 10.
[63] The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon, n.d., Part I, § 7 and Part III, § 75; Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Book of Orders. Procedures and Practice of the Church. Limbe: Presbook Press, 1995, Part 2, §§ 1.1-1.4, p. 9 and § 2.2, p. 10
[64] Thomas Beidelman. *Colonial Evangelism. A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 139.
[65] Maia Green. *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
[66] Peter Kalle Njie. 'Max Gabana Fohtung. Self-Portrait of a Cameroonian', *Paideuma* 38, 1992, p. 222.

manifested itself most clearly in the white man's dress code, language and the mastery of 'writing which was magical.'[67] In broader terms, the symbol of dual identity became one of converts adopting a joint African and European status and 'negotiating between the two systems simultaneously.'[68] In 1967, Catechist Simon Ikome was rebuked for resorting to 'country fashion', offering sacrifices after he had lost his wife, child and brother at once.[69]

Writing often provided a strong stimulus, entailing one of the mysteriously intriguing secrets of Europeans. In another graphic illustration Jeremiah Ozimba remarks that he was most impressed by the ability 'to make paper talk, to produce a sound from paper' when a text was read out aloud.[70] Whilst acquiring this skill, pupils successively learnt to read the Duala or Bali Primers, along with the catechism and the Bible, which, according to Jonas Tumban, provided the foundation for locally formulated laws of the church.[71] Catechumen classes were not held all over the mission field. In some cases, the school-children received continuous training in religious education through doctrine and moral and mental drill.[72]

Schools initially represented islands of otherness in an ocean of local traditions. While otherness, however, increasingly turned into the inescapable reality of modernity, it beame increasingly recognisable and desirable. Those who began classes in the late 1930s and in the 1940s were no more branded outcasts, captives or slaves, but came under the influence of mass-education instead. Opportunities were finally also offered to girls who had rarely made their way into school during the 1920s and 1930s unless their father was one of the Cameroonian BM agents.[73] Catherine Musoko was among the fortunate few. In 1933 she was accepted into the BM Elementary School in Nyasoso at the age of seven. Thereafter, she continued at the BM Higher Elementary School in Esossong where she received a Std. VI certificate as a 16-year old, one of four girls in her batch. She subsequently obtained a government grant of £4 and was admitted into Quality Girls School in Nigeria to train as a Grade III teacher. One of the most remarkable aspects of over 40 years in her profession was that she became the first girl teacher and African headmistress.[74]

A similar example is that of Ida Mallett who upholds the motto that 'every woman is a teacher.' She was trained to become a Grade III teacher at the Teacher Training College in Shagamu, Nigeria, having successively passed through the BM schools at Nyasoso (1937-1940) and Kumba (1941-1942) as well as Edgerley Memorial School in Calabar (1943-1945). After ten years as a teacher, she married in 1955 and then became wholly engaged

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[67] Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church histrory', Wum, 11 March 1998.
[68] Maia Green. *Op. cit.*, p. 26, and Adrian Hastings. *Op. cit.*, p. 460.
[69] PCCCAL 723, Minutes, Victoria Presbytery, 1953-1967. Minutes of the Presbyterian Synod, Bota Middle Farm, 5 January 1967.
[70] Interview with Jeremiah Anyangwe Ozimba, Molyko, Buea, 21 July 1999.
[71] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[72] Interview with Meshack Tiku Akanji, Buea, 13 July 1999.
[73] 'Life Stories. The Life Story of an Influential Mother: Ma Johana Ndoh Epie', in *1995 CWF-CMF Study Material* by the Department for Women's Work and Lay-Training & Evangelism, PCC, April 1994, p. 105.
[74] Interview with Catherine Musoko, Buea, 7 July 1999.

in various BM Church activities, focusing mainly on women's work and education. This commitment earned her the Certificate of Meritorious Service at the Silver Jubilee of the PCC in 1982 as well as a Certificate for Outstanding Contributions towards the growth of the PCC on the occasion of the BM's Centenary in 1986.[75] Brought up 'in the fear of the Lord,' she stresses: 'The church has done a lot for me. The church has given me courage. I am a little bit bolder. I can speak my mind without fear. It has empowered me to point out...something that has to be said when it is there.'[76] She exposes the dual significance of fear, thus articulating one of the key themes of conversion idioms: the polarity between fear as a sign of respect and loyalty and fear in terms of distress and anxiety – a polarity between 'liberated' Christians and, in Zürcher's words, non-Christian 'slaves of fear'.[77]

Elizabeth Mbonifor, born in 1934, also succeeded in education with the support of her father, Joseph Fofang. She became a pioneer leader of the Christian Women's Fellowship (CWF) after she was posted to Ndop in the late 1950s; her teaching career in government schools remained closely linked to women's affairs, both in the ranks of the PCC and in Sudan where she participated in an evangelisation tour in 1970. She went on retirement in 1989 after over 30 years as a teacher.[78] Likewise, Ruth Ndando grew up in an environment where women became the centre of attention. Following Elementary School in Buea, she enrolled at the BM Girls School in Limbe (Victoria) and reached Std. VI at the age of 16 in 1951. Her varied career as a domestic science demonstrator for CDC, a council worker from 1959-1975 and in various trade union posts from 1975-1997 was usually tinged with women's concerns. This has its background in the vital role played by her mother, Sophie Limunga Ndando, as a founding member of the CWF in 1961. The local seedbed of the CWF was another movement called *Ndola penya* ('new love') which established branches in many congregations in order to foster choral activities and evangelisation campaigns.[79]

The personalities introduced above suggest the critical part women played in enhancing the Christian movement. The situation, however, varied in space and time, as a comparison between the Grassfields and the Forest area in 1932 demonstrates: Regarding the former, W. Schneider reflected on the poor attendance of women in the activities of the Christian community of We, asking: 'When will light penetrate the darkness of the woman's soul who has resigned to the destiny of slavery?'[80] In the same period J. Ittmann wrote of the Bakweri: 'Just as women comprise the main contingent of our Christian community and bear the enterprise with their church contributions, so it is notably mothers who send their children to school and support them there.'[81] A. Hummel and A. Maurer independently mentioned a good attendance in women's courses in 1939 despite the participants' time-

[75] Ida Mallett, Curriculum Vitae.
[76] Interview with Ida Mallett, Bota, Limbe, 22 June 1999.
[77] J. W. Zürcher. 'Knechte der Furcht', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, February 1934(2), p. 25.
[78] Interview with Elizabeth Mbonifor, Nsem, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
[79] Interview with Ruth Enanga Ndando, Muea, 18 May 2000.
[80] BMCA E-5-1,4, W. Schneider, Annual Report (extract), We, 1932.
[81] BMCA E-5-1,4, J. Ittmann, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1932. (My translation)

consuming preoccupation with farm work.[82] Female biblical characters served to establish analogies and set examples, such as Sarai and Hagar, Hanna, Rebecca, Ruth or Phoebe and the many women mentioned in Romans 16, 'who worked so hard.'[83] Later, as the number of local clerics faltered during the early 1960s, the CWF, together with the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF) and the choirs, was considered the central pillar of evangelisation in the Grassfields.[84] Furthermore, the rapid expansion and the activities of the CWF throughout the Forest area prompted enthusiastic reactions at a District Synod Committee meeting in 1967.[85] But women required more than institutional support.

Elsewhere, a passage on Bali by F. Steudle in 1930 reiterated the importance of women at the informal level of prayer group meetings.[86] The central issue is Steudle's insistence upon internalising the contents of prayers and thus going beyond the purely dramaturgical posture of praying with a view to displaying profound commitment to Christian faith. For this purpose, *Gemeindemütter* ('community mothers') were trained to assist catechists in conducting small-scale evangelisation in their neighbourhoods. The Christian community grew out of such initiatives as chains from families to prayer groups, catechumen classes and congregations to form the larger Christian movement.[87] If women appeared to express deeper commitment to Christian faith than men, G. Tröster observed in 1939, girls tended more than boys to show interest in Christianity by abandoning increasingly fashionable 'club' membership in the coastal area in favour of attending catechumen classes.[88]

The 'awakening of the female youth' in the late 1930s troubled the Fon of Bafut,[89] and other worries also prevailed. One chief in Dikume explained in 1935 that he had decided to stop sending children to school as 'Our teacher not only taught regular classes but also catechism. We desire a school and do not want him to baptise our people since he will destroy our village and land.'[90] There seems to be a paradox: Christians were 'a neglected minority that, however, was basically feared by pagans.'[91] Such were the rather ambiguous precursors of a later consensus whereby both boys and girls were able to attend school in greater numbers and boosted BM Church membership. However, this foundation did not fullfil the expectations of the European BM personnel after the wave of optimism which had surged during the 1930s. In 1934 BM Inspector Emil Kellerhals described Christian advance in a militaristic fashion, employing terms like 'front line', 'points of attack' and 'lost positions'.[92] While he showed confidence in the rejuvenated movement, the 'spiritual

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[82] BMCA E-5-1,2, A. Hummel, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1939; A. Maurer, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.
[83] BMCA E-5-1,2, M. Walcher, Annual Report (extract), Victoria, 1938.
[84] PCCCAL 716, D. S. Ayongwa, District Secretary, Grassfield District Report, 23 March 1964.
[85] PCCCAL 718, Minutes of the District Synod Committee Meeting, Mamfe, 14-15 March 1967.
[86] BMCA E-5-1,1, F. Steudle, Annual Report (extract), Bali, 1930.
[87] BMCA E-5-1,2, A. Hummel, Annual Report (extract), Mbengwi, 1936.
[88] BMCA E-5-1,2, G. Tröster, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1939.
[89] BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Bühler, Annual Report (extract), Bafut, 1938.
[90] Quoted in BMCA E-5-1,2, E. Pfenning, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1935. (My translation)
[91] BMCA E-5-1,4, H. Bächtold, Annual Report (extract), Dikume, 1931. (My translation)
[92] BMCA E-5-8,5, Emil Kellerhals. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, 1933/34, pp. 10f.

awakening' and a sense of perceiving oneself in a global context, the BM Africa Inspector Hermann Witschi displayed considerable scepticism in 1950. Central to his critique was the view that 'The absence of a foundation in the congregations becomes more apparent with the disappearance of the pre-First World War generation. The biblical and spiritual revelation of old members is [currently] scarcely reflected in action and behaviour.'[93] This was linked to 'spiritual malnutrition', alongside trends towards secular world-views.

Witschi's concern was certainly not new. It was like the gist of a (self-)critical mission anthropology that was conceived in BM circles and eventually gave way to growing self-confidence in the 1930s. In 1931 F. Glöckel attempted to evaluate the BM's approach in line with Hastings' leading question formulated more than 60 years later: 'How far were the [African] structures of culture inimical to the spread of Christianity, how far did they favour it or were, at least, capable of serving it?'[94] In Glöckel's mind,

> One cannot say that the economic depression has obstructed missionary activity or that it has caused the natives to turn a deaf ear to the Gospel.... There are occasional crises, smaller set-backs, stagnation, as in the area of Besongabang. This has various reasons like the reawakening of heathendom, disappointment, struggles against the detrimental influences on the old beliefs of the fathers. But the reasons might lie with us, in the lack of wisdom when preaching the Gospel, in insufficient understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the natives, which makes the missionary appear as one whose duty is to destroy. This impression arises even if greatest care is taken to pay due consideration to the prevailing conditions.... We must continuously ask ourselves if we have "dissolved" rather than "fulfilled" [communities]. Our failure to reach entire groups since our work is geared to winning over individuals and form "congregations", which naturally disintegrate the existing social structures, gives us a lot to think about.[95]

Glöckel's words were echoed in the same year by Frey who pinpointed the disruption of clan unity through the conversion of individuals. To become a Christian, candidates detached themselves from their past and changed from mere members of the community into 'personalities with a free will.'[96] The main concern, Frey insisted, lay in avoiding the destruction of traditional structures. Glöckel and Frey simultaneously spelt out what can be labelled the central dilemma of the whole missionary enterprise: the dualism between cultural imperialism and indigenisation. Indigenisation was an ongoing process from the onset of religious encounters between BM missionaries and the African target groups. But it was most manifestly unleashed once the PCC was subjected to 'Cameroonisation' in the 1970s and 1980s.[97] Evolving models of conversion – which were more than offshoots of modernity – entailed 'asserting cultural autonomy and...defining Christianisation as a way of accomplishing in Christ a spiritual heritage authentically African.'[98]

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[93] H. Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 22. (My translation)
[94] Adrian Hastings. *Op. cit.*, p. 306.
[95] BMCA E-5-1,4, F. Gloeckel, Annual Report (extract), Buea, 1931. (My translation)
[96] BMCA E-4,7, C. Frey, Annual Report, Foumban, 1931, p. 2. (My translation)
[97] Interview with the Rt. Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, Buea, 18 May 2000.
[98] V. Y. Mudimbe. *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

7.2 Conversion and Organic Growth: Baptism, Schools, and the Expansion of Christianity

Table 2 Baptismal Statistics of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, 1926-1951[99]

Year	Baptisms						Baptismal candidates[102]		
	Adults and infants from non-Christian households/families[100]			Infants from Christian households/families[101]					
	Forest area	Grass-fields	Total	Forest area	Grass-fields	Total	Forest area	Grass-fields	Total
1926	393	199	592	-	-	-	1791	1837	3628
1927	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1928	594	791	1385	18	-	18	2937	3173	6110
1929	1401	684	2085	344	-	344	3158	2759	5917
1930	1182	347	1529	308	119	427	2844	2795	5639
1931	708	480	1188	279	169	448	3030	3021	6051
1932	810	352	1162	179	146	325	3296	3436	6732
1933	709	351	1060	143	115	258	2847	4157	7004
1934	749	481	1230	229	185	414	2696	4859	7555
1935	652	699	1351	187	292	479	3002	6550	9552
1936	821	975	1796	333	317	650	3190	8484	11674
1937	1125	1043	2148	327	308	635	3177	9473	12650
1938	1342	889	2231	358	420	778	3748	9049	12797
1939	1362	944	2306	618	369	987	3675	9068	12743
1940	1087	878	1965	331	487	818	4085	9991	14076
1941	-	-	1367	-	-	784	-	-	12584
1942	788	395	1183	471	349	820	3081	8228	11309
1943	769	690	1459	533	527	1060	3169	7194	10363
1944	850	710	1560	575	606	1181	3382	7464	10846
1945	1120	851	1971	563	729	1292	3622	7029	10651
1946	910	639	1549	628	825	1453	3238	7707	10945
1947	768	720	1488	591	843	1434	2637	9484	12121
1948	784	892	1676	517	1057	1574	2331	7129	9460
1949	792	1083	1875	678	1319	1997	2105	7106	9211
1950	713	1069	1782	656	1304	1960	2214	6403	8617
1951	617	1087	1704	447	1254	1701	1352	5370	6722

[99] Compiled from the BM Annual Reports, 1926-1951.
[100] These columns include those referred to as converts since they come from non-Christian backgrounds.
[101] These columns include those referred to as adherents since they were born into Christian households.
[102] These columns include those who had been approved and registered by the BM as catechumens.

Table 3 Non-Christian and Christian attendance at BM Elementary and High Schools[103]

Year	Number of schools	Basel Mission pupils/students[104]				
		Boys		Girls		Total
		Christian	Non-Christian	Christian	Non-Christian	
1926	114	-	-	-	-	3207
1927	-	-	-	-	-	-
1928	299	-	6397[105]	-	758	7155
1929	255	328	5070	131	527	6056
1930	253	537	4403	186	490	5616
1931	252	642	4159	156	314	5271
1932	210	547	3464	145	269	4425
1933	212	591	2685	142	311	3729
1934	137	572	2704	178	330	3784
1935	139	605	2936	217	388	4146
1936	162	820	3404	278	412	4914
1937	208	889	3871	343	401	5504
1938	309	893	4817	296	376	6382
1939	265	1135	4755	279	466	6635
1940	249	1052	4244	260	479	6035
1941	-	-	-	-	-	-
1942	378	970	4850	233	426	6479
1943	388	1026	5930	213	507	7676
1944	383	1824	6223	303	628	8979[106]
1945	402	1775	7684	724	783	10966
1946	485	2626	7433	930	979	11968
1947	-	-	-	-	-	-
1948	369	2515	6507	746	701	10469
1949	312	2488	5762	726	626	9602
1950	248	2887	5659	861	894	10301
1951	143	2943	5158	791	793	9685

[103] Compiled from the BM Annual Reports, 1926-1951

[104] The figures in this column exclude seminarians and teacher-students. The original statistics do not separate the different levels of schools.

[105] The figures for 1928 are not divided consistently into Christians and non-Christians.

[106] This total features one Muslim who does not appear in the breakdown of the figures displayed here.

Figure 1

Baptism of adults and infants from non-Christian households, 1926-1951

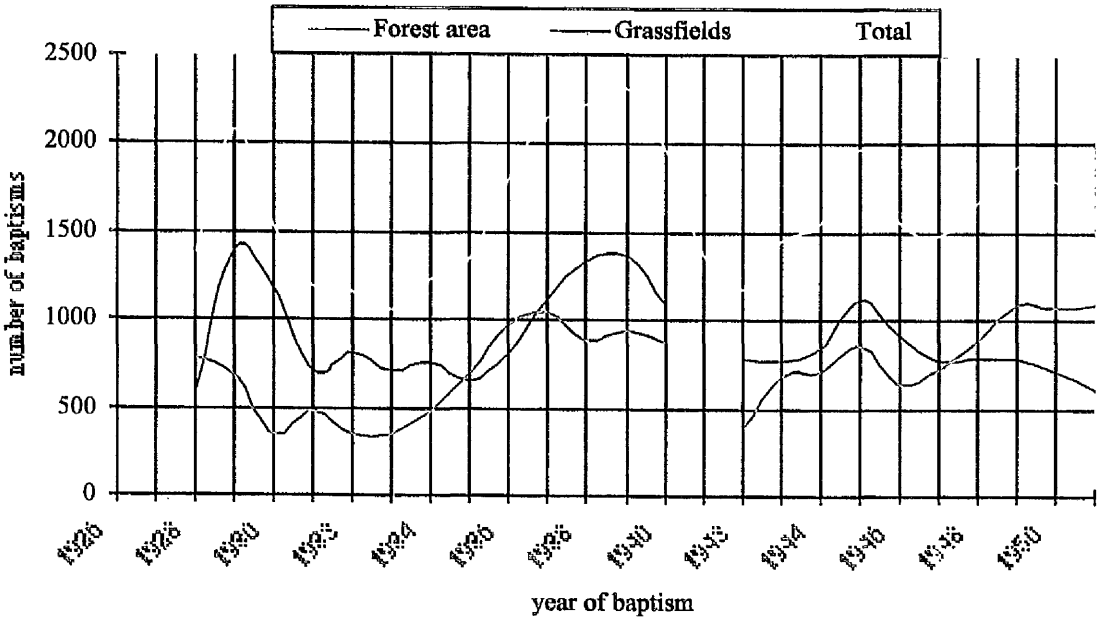


Figure 2

Baptism of infants from Christian households, 1926-1951

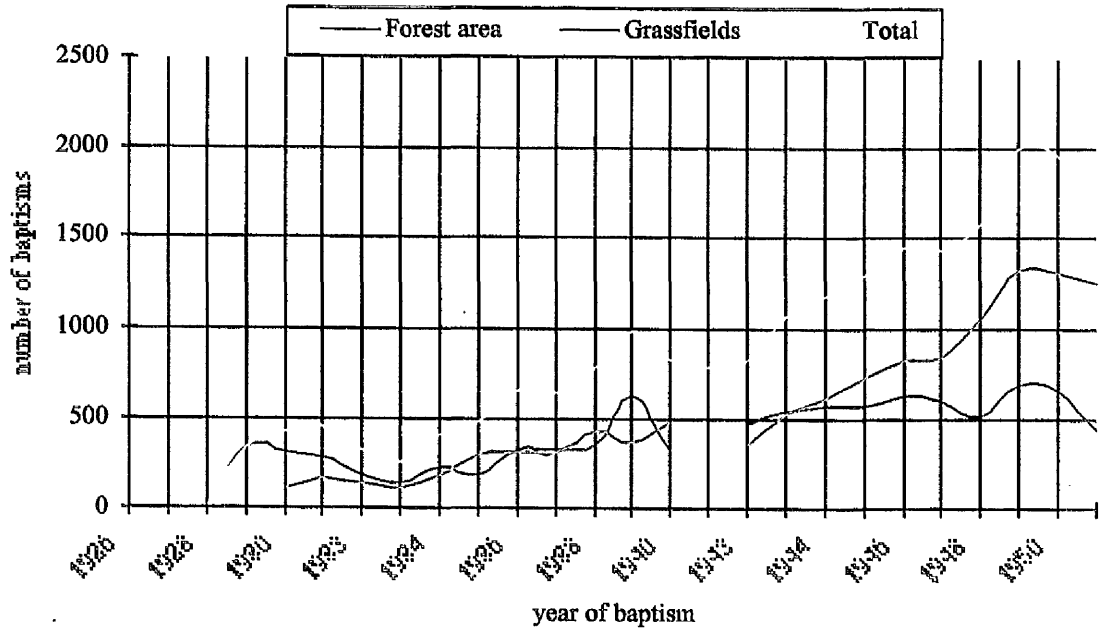


Figure 3

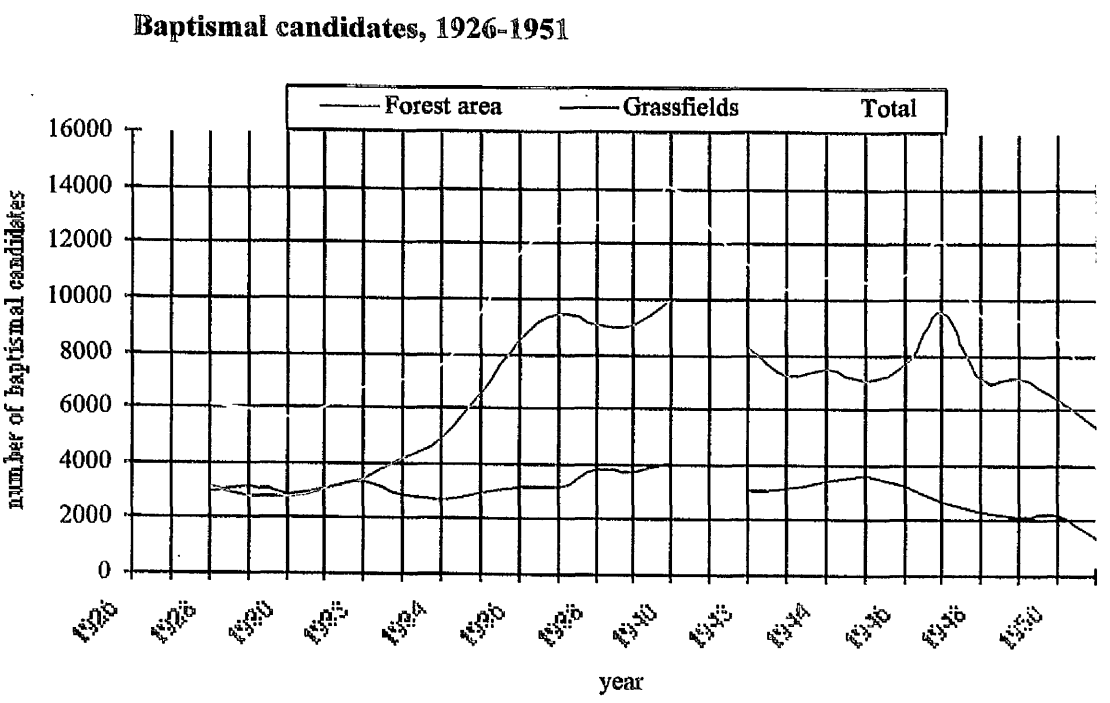
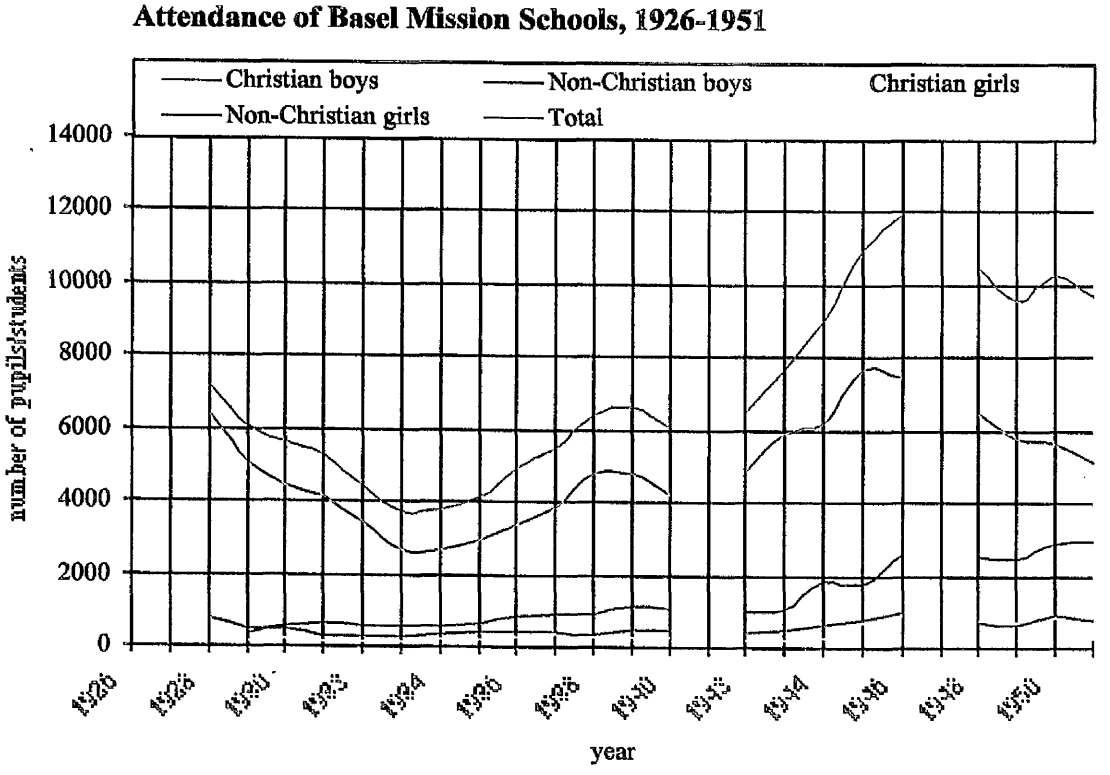


Figure 4



Baptismal and school statistics are presented with a view to establishing some general correlations. The summary reports on the BM's mission field display the data in different styles and layouts. They provide a comprehensive set of figures for a limited period of the present analysis from 1926-1951. Detailed statistical overviews are unavailable from 1914-1925. Later on, they were presented as totals in all areas of the BM's presence after 1951. Although the compilations from 1926-1951 divided the geographical area of research into small units – districts –, thus offering insights on a local scale, my distinction concentrates on the Grassfields and the Forest area. Additional separations – between boys and girls, and between Christians and non-Christians – have been left unchanged.

What interested the European missionaries more than the annual numbers of baptisms were the corresponding figures for catechumens, mainly referred to in reports as baptismal candidates. The catechumenate represented the gateway into the realm of Christian faith and a tough endurance test. Candidates who did not hail from Christian households along with others who had not received infant baptism underwent periods of religious instruction often much in excess of the minimum two years prescribed by the *Gemeinde-Ordnung*. Religious instruction was already incorporated into the BM's evangelisation programme as a centrepiece of the vernacular school syllabus under the Germans.[107] The same policy was adopted under British trusteeship in consonance with the provisions made in 1927 to register BM schools under Regulation 54.[108] A common view suggests that catechumens were vetted more intensely in the BM's era than in recent decades under the PCC.[109] This reflects the prevalence of earlier dualisms between Christianity and traditional institutions.

There is a degree of continuity, however, in the development of hybridity – polytheism, 'Christopaganism' or syncretism[110] – and increasing numbers of 'nominal' Christians.[111] Here lies the root cause for considerable confusion. On the one hand, Christianity might have promised more convincingly to constitute a liberating force in the 1930s and 1940s than it appears today. On the other hand, it was not an isolated experiment and fitted into a larger category of markers of religious orientation and identity. In 1939 the congregation of Bekondo in the district of Dikume celebrated a double Christmas, attempting to please both Christians and non-Christians. Several BM affiliates insisted that since they had been baptised as infants without their consent, they should be accepted as they were, adhering to Christian beliefs and traditional customs at once.[112] Such standpoints beg questions about congregational membership, supervision, and the locally perceived value of Christianity.

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[107] Fritz Raaflaub. *Die Schulen der Basler Mission in Kamerun. Ihre Geschichte und Gegenwartsaufgabe*. Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1948, pp. 34-37.

[108] *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the British Cameroons for the Year 1927*. London: HMSO, 1928, p. 56, § 180.

[109] Jeremiah Ambeh Ngusum, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Ngie, June 1999.

[110] Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Wum, 11 March 1998.

[111] PCCCAL 427, Minutes of the meeting of the Synod at Ntundib, 1 October 1955.

[112] BMCA E-5-1,2, R. Hungerbühler, Annual Report (extract), Kumba, 1939.

Hungerbühler's account raises the issue of choice as a decisive factor in the formation of strong congregations and committed Christians. The offspring of Christian parents, as represented separately in tables 2 and 3, compose a category of adherents who were not in a position to choose. Morning devotion and evening prayer were forms of early doctrine in family circles.[113] In addition, schools gave baptised infants such as Paul Shu Ndanka and others a chance to grasp their faith.[114] Henry Awasom holds that affiliation to a particular church 'depended on which missionary body was in your environment; you automatically belonged to that church.... This particularism we attach to churches, to denominations...is simply unnecessary because it is a question of chance who came to you first.'[115] While referring to his children as 'children of the church', he says he 'belongs to it by chance.'

The organic evolution of Christianity through previously converted segments of society was contrasted by growth through conversion proper. Generational conflicts were the most common contests over the transformative potential of the world religion.[116] Catechumens became prominent icons of reform of, and rebellion against, the traditional social order. In parts of Akwaya, adherence to Christian faith was considered a threat because it enabled local clergy to expose women to the "secrets" of society.[117] This stance reveals a sense of powerful opposition to women's emancipation. Thomas Ngu recalls that many girls were denied education in favour of being groomed for marriage in individual households – with returns expected to accrue in the form of bride price payments.[118] Until 1945, however, the enrolment of schoolgirls from non-Christian backgrounds remained considerably higher than the attendance of girls from Christian families. Thereafter, the contingents were quite balanced and reached their peaks in 1946. The distinction between the two corresponding categories of boys was even more striking. Christian pupils formed a minority throughout, albeit with a sharp increase in the second half of the 1940s. The trends show that schools were the central loci for engaging with Christian faith, an inference that is corroborated by the data for catechumens, notably during the latter decade. Another level of comparison is the ratio between catechumens and non-infant baptisms. The glaring disparities between the two columns, notably from the mid-1930s, can prompt the conclusion that the majority of candidates never attained baptism.[119] Preparing for baptism was a selective undertaking that challenged kinship ties and upset relationships in general as soon as family heads and village authorities denied their support. Daniel Tita Yebit, earmarked to succeed his father

[113] Interviews with Samuel Anye K. Ndingwan, Buea, 4 March 2000; Joseph Chi Ngang, Mulang, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[114] Interview with Paul Shu Ndanka, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[115] Interview with the Very Rev. Henry Anye Awasom, Buea, 23 June 1999. In the Gold Coast, Boateng recalls, 'Christianity of one kind or another was taken for granted around the house where I was born in 1942.' F. Yao Boateng. *Op. cit.*, p. 80.
[116] On the opposition of elders to schools in Ngalla near Widekum, see Interview with Ndumi-wa-Ndanji, Bamenda, 22 April 1999.
[117] J. O. Ochengini, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Okerika Oliti.
[118] Interview with Thomas Sona Ngu, Azire, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[119] On so-called "eternal" catechumens, see BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, June 1945, p. 7.

as a retainer at the royal palace of Bali, 'escaped' with his brother in 1953 to attend school at the age of 13. Baptised in 1957, Yebit was later discouraged by friends from venturing into catechist's training but stood firm in pursuit of a career in the ministry of the PCC.[120]

In Marie Louise Pirouet's dictum, the 'light' of Christianity 'opened up new vistas for many people.'[121] The process of expanding horizons provided the basis for reorientation in the course of trying to cope with colonial penetration.[122] Enrolling in schools, whether BM, Catholic, Baptist or NA, was usually considered the best option. Following Mudimbe, '"African conversion," rather than being a positive outcome of a dialogue – unthinkable per se – came to be the sole position the African could take in order to survive as a human being.'[123] All the same, the numbers of catechumens and pupils fluctuated in response to events of wider relevance such as the Depression of the early 1930s, the Second World War, and growing disenchantment over missionary hegemony in the late 1940s.

Figures 1-4 chart the highs and lows both of religious zeal and educational fervour in BM circles. The figures for catechumens and pupils appear to have been at variance until the mid-1940s when a closer correlation began to develop. However, an important factor is missing in this inference: the vernacular schools, which do not feature in the two tables but were pivotal for religious instruction until 1945/46 when a sharp decline set in.[124] Simon Asang, for one, was selected by the BM to be trained as a catechist 'perhaps because I was very serious at school! I mean vernacular school. In the vernacular school I also studied the Bible well, after which I was selected [for further education].'[125] Another enthusiast is Jonas Tumban who considered Bible studies not merely critical to his personal career, but also to the BM Church, since 'what made the church here survive [during the First World War] was Mungaka.'[126] Bible studies provided the principle source for the instruction and dissemination of vernacular skills. Consequently, vernacular schools resembled seedbeds for the appropriation of Christian values. As such, they set a constructive precedent for the evolving social identities of Cameroonians and for their nationalist trains of thought.[127]

A second comparison now calls for attention. It will be drawn between the two different categories of baptism. The most pronounced characteristic is the high level of fluctuation in Figure 1 as compared to the stable rate of increase interspersed with minor deviations in Figure 2. It is apparent that deviations, either upwards or downwards, as well as stagnation,

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[120] Interview with Daniel Tita-Yebit, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999.
[121] Marie Louise Pirouet. *The Spread of Christianity in Uganda 1891-1914*. London: Rex Collings, 1978, p. 198.
[122] On variations of 'dislocation' and 'relocation', see James Fernandez. 'Location and Direction in African Religious Movements: Some Deictic Contours of Religious Conversion', *History of Religions* 25(4), 1986, p. 367.
[123] V. Y. Mudimbe. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.
[124] See Chapter 5, p. 156.
[125] Interview with Simon Asang, Bamenda, 25 April 1999.
[126] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[127] For a discussion of similar conclusions among the Thonga and Ronga in South Africa, see Adrian Hastings. *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 155.

occurred simultaneously in both groups. The following trends arose: The late 1920s and early 1930s witnessed a period of reinvigoration of the BM;[128] the Depression produced a severe reflux from 1931-1934;[129] 1935-1939 was a phase of economic recovery, ebbing opposition from secret societies, and consolidation both of the BM Church structures and adherence;[130] the early 1940s saw the impact of the Second World War and a new bout of economic instability;[131] schools were revived from 1942-1946, influenced by the motto of mass-education; 1948-1950 marked a protracted state of discord between the BM and her African agents.[132] Another clear trait is the relative congruence between both categories of baptism after 1945. Here lies an indicator of organic growth: A rising number of Christian families had their offspring baptised, thus propelling the expansion of the BM Church.

Having singled out the broader influences on general patterns of baptism, it is time to examine how these modes evolved from the local level to wider dimensions. Evangelisation was the first target. Its realm was staked out by peripatetic clerics and the duties of village catechists. Penetrating new areas, villages and towns, the preachers – initially Europeans and Africans, later Africans alone – sought convenient sites. Palace courtyards represented popular communal spaces where negotiations with village authorities for permission went hand-to-hand with evangelisation.[133] Familiarisation in such circumstances occurred quite effectively in palm wine drinking spots.[134] In 1933 P. Leu reported a visit to a palm wine drinking shack in Mbam (Banso) where he mingled with the crowd which he confronted with an exhortation on resurrection and eternal life. In the event, he observed, the villagers resolved to construct a church that became 'well-frequented.'[135] Elsewhere, Zürcher once joined a group of Banso and Nsungli dignitaries drinking palm wine in 1935. Challenged for not bearing a traditional *coup-coup* (double-edged sword), he held up his copy of the New Testament, exclaiming: 'This is *my* double-edged sword!'[136] Making acquaintance with the local milieux of social life was often taken advantage of with a view to establishing melting-pots of Christian advance. The common focus on domestic evangelisation carried out in and between extended families was, as outlined earlier, also imperative to this effect.

Among the venues for evangelisation were death ceremonies.[137] To address the distinct nature of Christianity, Victor Ama'azee notes, his father saw to it that deceased Christians

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[128] See Chapter 2, pp. 73-77.
[129] See Chapter 3, pp. 105-109.
[130] See Chapter 4, pp. 142-149.
[131] See Chapter 6, pp. 180-184.
[132] See Chpater 6, pp. 189-197.
[133] See T. Authenrieth, 'Predigtreise in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, June 1928(6), pp. 86f.; J. W. Zürcher. 'Gottes Spuren im Grasland', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, September 1935(9), pp. 134-136.
[134] See the two photographs by J. W. Zürcher, BMCA E-30.85.149, "A drinking round in Bali." 1932/1937; BMCA E-30.85.150, "A drinking round in Banso." 1932/1937.
[135] BMCA E-5-1,1, P. Leu, Annual Report, Kishong (extract), 1933.
[136] BMCA E-5-1,2, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (extract), Kishong, 1935. See also 'Vor dem Trinkhaus', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, July/August 1938(7/8), p. 105. (My translation and italics)
[137] See for example interview with Samuel Anye K. Ndingwan, Buea, 4 March 2000.

BMCA E-30.85.149, J. W. Zürcher, "A drinking round in Bali." 1932/1937.

BMCA E-30.85.150, J. W. Zürcher, "A drinking round in Banso." 1932/1937.

> received a decent burial in terms of dressing the corpse, arranging a good coffin and formulating a special message. I remember that there were some people who decided to come to church because they recognised that the church had respect for the dead. My father saw funerals, dying in dignity, as moments of evangelisation.[138]

Traditional wakes – 'cry-dies' – and burial rites were, and still are, often combined with vigils and funeral services, thus demonstrating the cohabitation of customary and Christian practices. On the occasion of a big ceremony after the death of a chief in Bamedig in 1927, E. Wunderli quickly organised a vigil. Preaching continued as the chief's entourage filed past his remains to pay their last respects. The following Sunday, a day of mourning, was dominated by traditional dances and sacrifices. The funeral service, ostensibly attended by 1,500 people, was held later on.[139] Similarly, in 1939 E. Pfenning caught up with a ritual in honour of a deceased man in Dikume. He engaged in a debate on the performed sacrifices, drawing an analogy between the chicken blood offered to the spirits and the suffering and blood of Christ intended for everybody to 'appease their souls and attain forgiveness for their sins and everlasting life.'[140] The Christian sacrifice for eternal life – 'transvalued life after death' – was consequently superimposed on local rites for the 'deferral of death'.[141]

The most spectacular manifestations of religious reorientation, Christian worship and baptism were mission feasts. Providing opportunities for vendors, social interaction, news and announcements, and for the convergence of scattered villagers, they marked important days of the Christian calendar, such as the dedication of churches and jubilees.[142]

> The mission feast used to be like the Presbyterian [Church] Day now, but it used to be grander because it embodied so many congregations coming together. They would choose women to cook...and they would bring this food together. We had a Divine service. After the Divine service there was usually a bazar, then eating would start. They would divide the people according to grades. The elders, the pastors went to one side...and we ate a fellowship meal.... There was singing and praying.... Usually it was not held in one place.... There would be evangelisation, choirs would sing. Those who were not interested in the church were sometimes moved to become Christians.[143]

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[138] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999.

[139] E. Wunderli. 'Heidnische Totenklage in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, February 1927(2), pp. 60f.

[140] E. Pfenning. 'Mit der Botschaft vom Auferstandenen am Fest der Toten', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, May 1929(5), p. 71. (My translation)

[141] On transvaluation, see J. D. Y. Peel. *Op. cit.*, pp. 165f., 186; on 'mutual cognitive adaption', see J. D. Y. Peel. 'The Pastor and the Babalawo: The Interaction of Religions in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland', *Africa* 60(3), 1990, p. 347. In contrast to modes of Christian transvaluation, Peel relates Yoruba sacrifice to 'the life human beings know.'

[142] See the photographs BMCA E-30.86.022, "First mission festival in Kumbo (Banso)." 1932/1937; BMCA E-30.86.059, "A joyous baptism. The people who have been baptised at the mission festival in the grassfields go home afterwards in a procession accompanied by those who came with them," 1932/1945; BMCA E-30.91.019, "A so-called mission festival in Victoria: a meeting of all the Christian congregations of the area around the station of Victoria. The festive meeting house is a roof of palm leaves." 1935/1938; BMCA E-30.92.107, "The mission festival in Eso. The sermon must be translated into five different languages. Until five years ago cannibalism was practiced here." 1934/1938.

[143] Interview with Ruth Enanga Ndando, Muea, 18 May 2000.

BMCA E-30.86.022, J. W. Zürcher, "First(?) mission festival in Kumbo (Banso)." 1932/1937.

BMCA E-30.86.059, J. W. Zürcher, "A joyous baptism. The people who have been baptised at the mission festival in the grasssfields go home afterwards in a procession accompanied by those who came with them." 1932/1945.

BMCA E-30.91.019, F. Mischler (Ms), "A so-called mission festival in Victoria: a meeting of all the christian congregations of the area around the station in Victoria. The festive meeting-house is a roof of plam leaves." 1935/1938.

BMCA E-30.92.107, K. H. Weber, "The mission festival in Eso. The sermon must be translated into five different languages. Untilsix years ago cannibalism was practised here." 1934/1938.

In this passage Ruth Ndando portrays the force of Christian publicity and collectivity, a spirit of fellowship that 'moved' Meshack Akanji to imagine that 'the angels had come down' when he attended his first mission feast as a boy around 1940.[144] This was a most comprehensive form of evangelisation, involving the essential components of propagating Christian faith: preaching, choir singing, baptisms, the Lord's Supper and reaching out to win over new mission school pupils and catechumens. It defined a crucial interface where individuals from different – both Christian and non-Christian – worlds probed and shared ideas of a religious identity that claimed universal currency. Indeed, mission feasts served as catalysts for the abnegation of 'white-man's-fence' variants of Christian communities modelled on the splendour and distinctiveness of European mission stations.[145] Attracting mixed crowds was imperative for the goal of establishing a church whose members hailed from diverse political, cultural and linguistic backgrounds in British Southern Cameroons. These religious encounters, it can be added, were geared to reconstruct African society and identities. Congregations were basic units of the community. Districts, later presbyteries, constituted intermediary levels of church authority with the Synod as the governing body. Contributions of the African sub-clergy and clergy lay at the heart of Christian advance.

7.3 "Native" Agents and "*Sango* Pastors": The Foundation of an African Clergy

The African agents of the BM Church prior to the birth of the PCC in 1957 comprised deacons, (teacher-)catechists, assistant catechists, evangelists and ordained pastors.[146] The BM Elementary School teachers fell within a distinct category. The present focus is on the three most prominent groups of Africans involved in promoting the missionary enterprise: teacher-catechists, ordained pastors and – representing the category of lay people – elders. Drawing on elders notably meant subscribing to local structures of traditional authority.[147]

The increasingly decentralised structures of the BM Church from 1914-1968 induced singular strands of community formation at the local level. Much as all congregations were approved jointly under the auspices of the BM, they were developed by teacher-catechists and elders. These 'corner-stones of the African Church' were accordingly in charge of the evangelisation project: preparing non-Christians for conversion and turning converts into committed adherents.[148] Relying on African staff and their cultural and linguistic insights challenged colonial critics, such as Beti's Vidal who says that 'evangelising the Blacks is like taking an old water jug and turning it into an amphora.'[149] A Pidgin proverb counters appropriately: '*fine mimbo no di flop cup.*' (A good quality beverage cannot quench one's

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[144] Interview with Meshack Tiku Akanji, Buea, 13 July 1999.
[145] The coinage 'white man's fence' is borrowed from Jonas Dah. *Missionary Motivations and Methods. A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon*, 1886-1914. Basel: Basileia, 1983, p. 121.
[146] See BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1944), Bafut, 19 July 1945, p. 28.
[147] On elders in African societies, see Igor Kopytoff. 'Ancestors as Elders', *Africa* 41(1971), pp. 129-142.
[148] On this reference by Roland Oliver to village catechists, see Adrian Hastings. *Op. cit.*, p. 583.
[149] Mongo Beti. *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 33. (Translated by Gerald Moore)

BMCA E-30.86.008, J. W. Zürcher, "The missionary Zürcher and his choir on an evangelisation journey." 1932/1935.

BMCA E-30.92.087, E. Wunderli, "The christian singing society called 'Choir of Angels' in Victoria. The man holding a book is the catechist." 1924/1928.

thirst). What mattered was not the vessel (the old water jug) but its contents. If conversion was a painful experience,[150] catechists were also exposed to what Richard Rathbone dubs 'a terrifying test of conflicting loyalties' between Christianity and their African origins.[151] Conversely, however, their pioneer roles both at the helm of rural congregations and in the capacity of local *literati*, health and hygiene consultants, headmen in community work, and advisors to the chiefs or councils precipitated social reform.[152] According to Simon Asang, 'The way people dress, marry, bury, talk has been influenced by the church. The church has an authority, it has also identified itself with the people.'[153] As John Ngwana explains, 'Much of village communication is done through the church. The church has power in this village [Bafanji]. It is not easy for the village to intervene in church issues.'[154] The powers and reputation of BM catechists changed over the years. Theirs was considered an '*élitist* profession'[155] in the 1920s, or the 'foundation of the PCC' in the absence of pastors and evangelists.[156] In the 1950s a different picture emerged. Henry Awasom recounts: 'When they [BM Church] saw a bright child, they recommended it as a teacher, when they saw a weak child, they recommended it as a church worker, a catechist. That is why the ministry of the church from the catechist to the evangelist to the pastor has been overlooked.'[157] All the same, catechists remained in the vanguard of church growth until the late 1960s.

The situation of the catechist ministry had been exacerbated by financial constraints for years when the General Synod tackled the problems in 1950. A committee was formed to come up with a plan on how to cut down the number of catechists. It was resolved that the Catechist Training Institution (CTI) in Bafut would be shut down in favour of maintaining the CTI in Nyasoso. This was rooted in the policy of sharing institutions equally between the Forest area with one (BM Higher Elementary School at Esossong) and the Grassfields with two (the first BM Secondary School in Bali and the Teacher's Training College in Batibo).[158] At a General Synod Committee meeting in 1962 – the BM Church had become the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon (PCWC) in 1957 – it was decided that the catechist ministry would be restructured with a view to gradually extending the ordained ministry.[159] 17 years after the CTI in Nyasoso was reorganised, promising higher salaries and rallying fewer candidates,[160] the final blow came in 1966 when Cameroon's President Ahmadou Ahidjo issued a decree raising minimum monthly salaries. Catechists' wages

[150] 'Painful' refers to manifest 'disloyalty to one's dead relatives.' Adrian Hastings. *Op. cit.*, p. 330.
[151] Richard Rathbone. *Murder and Politics in Colonial Ghana*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 29.
[152] Interviews with George Mebafu Nkweti, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000, and Elias Ngum Gbai Cheng, Bamenda, 22 April 1999.
[153] Interview with Simon Asang, Bamenda, 25 April 1999.
[154] Interview with John Ngwana, Bafanji, 1 May 1999.
[155] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 10 May 1999.
[156] Interview with Jonas Atemku Tumban, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[157] Interview with the Very Rev. Henry Anye Awasom, Buea, 23 June 1999.
[158] PCCCAL 1100, Minutes of the General Synod meeting, BM Church, Buea, 12-13 May 1950.
[159] PCCCAL 1080, Minutes of the General Synod Committee meeting, Mankon, 5-6 December 1962.
[160] PCCCAL 1080, Minutes of the Synod Council meeting, BM Church, Kumba, 18-19 February 1950.

leapt from FCFA 3,000 in 1964 to FCFA 20,000-25,000.[161] The CTI was shut down once the final batch had completed their course. The abolition of the catechist ministry, however, lingered on into the 1970s as the remaining group in active service faced a long selection procedure, awaiting either retention or retrenchment.[162]

After the full integration of all schools into the PCWC in 1966, followed by the medical institutions, workshops, living quarters for expatriates, and the Bookshop and the Printing Press in 1968, the problem of the catechist ministry was resolved. It was decided in 1969 to fuse the Lay Training Department and the Theological Board into the new Committee of the Ministry. In addition, the Evangelisation Committee was born.[163] This was reminiscent of the 'peoples' movement Christianity' that cropped up variously in missionary accounts, notably in the 1920s.[164] The Department of Lay Training and Evangelism succeeded the catechist ministry with a burdensome legacy, for 'the catechists were fully committed to work for the spread of the Gospel and probably did much more work than many of these laymen around now.'[165] The CWF and elders ought to be exempted from this judgment.

Before the process of transition from mission to church was triggered in the late 1940s, profound concern was expressed about the vocation of many African church workers who ostensibly felt that they had been 'called' by the BM rather than by God. Zürcher's target was subsequently to consolidate a foundation for the comprehension of the reformational, biblical approach to salvation.[166] The level of spirituality, P. Wöhr noted in 1939, suffered from the teacher catechists' support of mass baptisms. As baptismal candidates had to pay 3 shillings to the church treasury and the accrued amount was needed to benefit catechists' salaries, the latter opposed severe conditions for baptism.[167] One case of misappropriation involved catechists in Buea who received permission from Pastor Daniel Lyonga to retain part of the harvest thanksgiving offerings in 1945. He had also allegedly 'urged baptismal candidates not only to submit their dues to the church treasury but to consider a personal gift for him!'[168] Chief G. M. Endely and 27 co-signatories sent a petition to E. Peyer on 5 November 1945, demanding another inquest when Lyonga's suspension was extended.[169] Insisting that his error did not 'warrant such an indelible stain,' they added later:

> The Principal should understand that (a) before the Europeans entered our land there was no Basel Mission Church and it is the Natives and the Europeans together who have formed the local Basel Mission Church. (b) We,

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[161] Jeremiah Ngusum Ambeh, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Ngie, June 1999; PCCCAL 651, Seminary, Progress Reports, Annual Report 1964.
[162] PCCCAL 800, Minutes of the General Synod Committee meeting, Kumba, 13-15 April 1970.
[163] PCCCAL 800, Minutes of the General Synod, PYC Victoria, 17-19 April 1969.
[164] See Chapter 1, p. 38.
[165] Interview with Ndumi-wa-Ndanji, Bamenda, 22 April.
[166] BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1942), Bafut, 15 March 1943, p. 15; BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), Bafut, 10 July 1944, p. 12.
[167] BMCA E-5-1,2, P. Wöhr, Annual Report (extract), Nyasoso, 1939.
[168] BMCA E-5-2,15, F. Raaflaub, Annual Report (1944), Buea, June 1945, p. 7. (My translation)
[169] PCCCAL 28-33, Petition from the Bakweri Community to E. Peyer, Buea Town, 5 November, 1945.

> the petitioners, are both christians and heathens. (c) that Pastor Lyonga is one of the sons of this community who has formed, together with the Basel Missionaries, the Basel Mission Church in Buea. (d) That without the Africans the Europeans would not bother to form churches out here. (e) That though we are obedient and faithful to our church such statement may cause misunderstanding between the Mission and the Natives and discourage or lower the attendance of the Church by the natives. On the other hand the natives can easily separate themselves [from the Basel Mission Church]....[170]

This example reflects the disparity between the deeply assiduous, moralistic approach of the BM and a strong sense of self-assertion and self-realisation among African agents. It was, as shown in other chapters, a long drawn-out contest over authority, an attempt at reconciling spiritual and secular aims. For elders who took their duties as a voluntary and honorary service, such disputes were key tests of wisdom and loyalty toward the Christian community. After all, elders were, jointly with the teacher-catechists-in-charge, responsible for shaping the moral economy of the congregations. And this moral economy constituted the foundation for the transformation of converts into recognised adherents of the church.

Of the informants who were interviewed or who answered questionnaires for this study, nine are or were church elders, five women and four men. Four among the five women, Ida Mallett, Elizabeth Mbonifor, Catherine Musoko and Ruth Ndando were introduced above. A fifth, Susana Gana, is the oldest interviewee who says she was born about 100 years ago 'when the white man [missionary] first entered Bali-Nyonga.'[171] Her parents were Dinga Sunday and Mama Nangwah. She was married to Joseph Gana, the first catechist in Baligashu in the mid-1920s. They accompanied the people of Baligashu to their present site and enthroned the first ruler, Fon Ben Ndinga. Susana Gana could not attend school but learnt Mungaka in her later years from the teachings of her husband. Although the Gospel was first rebuffed in Baligashu, the Fon allowed services to be held in the palace before the Gana residence became the local chapel. The first batch of 15 catechumens including the Ganas' first son David were baptised by Zürcher in the early 1930s. David Gana became a prominent figure in the young PCC. Like many colleagues, Joseph Gana was repeatedly transferred during his career. When the Ganas were serving in Nyasoso, having previously been stationed in Balikumbat, Fungom, Santa and Victoria, apart from Baligashu, Susana Gana was elected as an elder of the BM Church 'in response to God's will.'

Susana Gana was an epitome of perseverance in the course of politically motivated and job-related migration, persecution – Joseph Gana was occasionally beaten by opponents of Christianity –, and the loss of 15 children and grandchildren over the years. Her eldership reflects a vocation as well as an experience which she was called upon to share with other Christians. Her example suggests that priority was given to Christian commitment instead of standards of education among elders, which were purportedly usually low during the

[170] PCCCAL 28-33, Second petition from the Bakweri Community to E. Peyer, Buea Town, 18 November, 1945.
[171] Interview with Susana Yepeh Gana, Baligashu, 7 April 2000.

the BM era. As Victor Ama'azee maintains, the reason for his father's – Thomas Ngong Ama'azee's – success as the 'Sunday School Uncle' and as a respected clergyman was 'the very low educational level of the elders. When your position is "over-towering", you might find it easy to carry your followers along. My father worked with elders at a time when they easily received instructions from him. They were very loyal to him.'[172] Thomas Ama'azee's team spirit earned him a place for further training at the Theological Seminary in Nyasoso.[173] There were others, however, like Abel Mukete, the Paramount Chief of the Bafaw, who gained high repute as a church elder in Kumba from the 1920s to the 1940s. And his daughter Johana Ndoh Epie became a valued successor in the same capacity.[174]

Elders were prepared jointly by missionaries and ordained African pastors in training camps or retreats. The topics of instruction coincided with those chosen for the ministries: building congregations through devotion, prayer, exegesis, spiritual care, moral guidance and counselling of backsliders.[175] John Musumbe developed his affinity to Christianity in the coastal plantations. He collaborated with local catechists whom he helped to construct, or apply for, shacks that served as places of worship. He was seen as an informal leader in several congregations, particularly in Molyko, Buea, where he laid down the groundwork for the congregation to which he has belonged as an elder since 1957. In his opinion, the catechist was the 'pillar of the congregation' while he views himself as the 'foundation' of its church.[176] This self-assessment suggests that the foundation of the church as a whole represented a mosaic of plurality and unorthodoxy: Not surprisingly, perhaps, polygamists also became elders despite the BM's strict prohibition of polygamy among Christians.[177] What makes this seem particularly paradoxical is that the elders' responsibilities included approving marriage proposals in consonance with the BM's moral code.[178] BM Inspector Witschi's appraisal of the difficulties in recruiting catechists suggests that rallying elders necessarily became more flexible during the early 1950s when a great need for manpower arose.[179] Ndumi-wa-Danji remembers Hiob Enuajong who 'was a church elder in Ngalla and then later on in Nyen for many years. Although he was a polygamist, that did not deter him from preaching to anyone he met. Catechists and pastors respected him because of his commitment to serve God.'[180]

Expressing commitment and loyalty occasionally helped elders to leading positions as key representatives of the church. Paul Shu Ndanka, who received baptism as an infant in

[172] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili 22 April 1999.
[173] J. W. Zürcher, 'Mission und Gemeinde im Grasland von Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, August/September 1951(8/9), p. 89.
[174] 'Life Stories. The Life Story of an Influential Mother: Ma Johana Ndoh Epie', in *1995 CWF-CMF Study Material* by the Department for Women's Work and Lay-Training & Evangelism, PCC, April 1994, p. 108.
[175] See for example BMCA E-5-2,15, J. W. Zürcher, Annual Report (1943), Bafut, 10 July 1944, p. 13.
[176] Interview with John Teghen Musumbe, Molyko, Buea, 25 May 1999.
[177] BMCA E-9-1, III, 5b, Gemeinde-Ordnung Kamerun, 6 February 1935, § 81, p. 15.
[178] Ibid., § 70, p. 13, and § 82, p. 15.
[179] Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 25.
[180] Interview with Ndumi-wa-Danji, Bamenda, 22 April 1999.

1921, was made an elder of the Ntamulung congregation in 1953. In the next 37 years he steadily rose to the ranks of Congregational Chairman and of Chairman of the Presbytery before retiring in 1990.[181] It is worth adding that Ndanka already became an elder at the age of 32. Age appears to have been of little importance. Ida Mallett was merely 31 when W. Bachmann persuaded her to accept eldership in 1960 with reference to Proverbs in the Old Testament: 'Serve the Lord when you are young.'[182] Christol Foncham found his call for eldership in the Pauline prescription of the Epistles, Romans 1:1: 'From Paul, servant of Jesus Christ, apostle by God's call, set apart for the service of the Gospel.'[183] Foncham views elders as 'helpers' of the pastors who played and play a central part in maintaining ecclesiastic tradition. The ideal of church eldership is to serve congregations as opposed to the 'village elder who wants to 'enjoy' everything.'[184] This comparison is not explicated by Foncham, but it clearly points to a perceived demise and misuse of traditional eldership to unintended ends. Church elders operate at the two levels of planning and implementing strategies for Christian advance. Foncham thus offers a reply to P. Scheibler's abnegation of pure missionary administrators in 1948: 'Evangelisation among all our co-workers and elders, evangelisation in every single congregation – that is what this country requires.'[185] Catechists and elders, however, succeeded in bonding with little missionary influence:

> Few missionaries were involved. Missionaries only came occasionally, usually once every two or three months. The bedrock of the development of Christianity was the village catechist. Without the village preacher we would have no church as we know it today in any denomination. Catechists, aided by the elders in each congregation, and Cameroonian pastors, have left their footprints on the development of Christianity.[186]

Pastors of course embodied the *sine qua non* through which to confer formal authority upon the BM Church. Representing the ordained *élite* among the African BM agents, they were, technically speaking, on a par with the European missionaries or, as Victor Ama'azee says, 'shareholders of the missionary enterprise.'[187] African clergy were underrepresented before the late 1940s. In 1929 the first two ordinations took place,[188] 12 years after Ekese, the BM's first African cleric in British Southern Cameroons, received his pastoral gown in 1917. The figure rose to 12 in 1943 before increasing to 39 in 1957 and to 62 in 1965.[189]

This uneven process reflects distinct phases of the devolution of missionary supremacy, concluding with the rapid numerical growth and consolidation of a new

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[181] Interview with Paul Shu Ndanka, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
[182] Interview with Ida Mallett, Bota, Limbe, 22 June 1999.
[183] Quoted from the New Testament, New English Bible. Oxford: University Press, 1970, p. 191.
[184] Interview with Christol Fombat Foncham, Buea, 6 April 2000.
[185] E-5-2,17, P. Scheibler, Annual Report (1948), Kumba, September 1949, p. 5.
[186] Interview with Mola Njoh Litumbe, Bokwoango, Buea, 5 July 1999.
[187] Interview with Victor Bong Ama'azee, Bambili, 22 April 1999.
[188] Johannes Litumbe Ekese and Peter Essoka started their course in 1926 at the Ecole Biblique in Ndounge which was run by the PEMS. See Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun.* Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 263.
[189] BM Annual Reports, 1917-1965.

African leadership. The protracted previous period of stagnation reveals long drawn-out pre-ordination careers of future pastors as members of the diverse *clerus minus*, the local sub-clergy. Here lies a clue to the variety of forces that shaped the multi-stranded identity of the PCC: The BM Church represented a corporate body in the institutional sense of the term, but not in its organisational framework. Individual congregations provided a baseline for Christian self-identification within local parameters of missionary activity. It is at the congregational level that pastors were born as converts and adherents who teased out all opportunities lying in the twilight zone between mission education and future prospects.

One of the latter was to enroll at the CTI Nyasoso or Bali.[190] The majority of graduates ended at that level and then remained either catechists – Dan Tunyi spent 36 years in this capacity from 1936-1972[191] – or changed their jobs (to teaching, plantation labour, trade, clerkdom etc.). Others attempted to join the clergy either by promotion or through further training abroad. The first option was common until the late 1940s. By 1950, however, the ordained clergy was considered too old and insufficiently educated. Consequently, a trend set in to send good candidates to Trinity College in Kumasi, Ghana, for proper theological training.[192] Aaron Su was among the latter group. Having attended the BM Vernacular and Primary Schools in Bafut and Bali and the Government School in Mbengwi, he decided in 1933 to venture into the palm oil business. He returned to repeat Std. IV in 1934 before transferring to the BM Higher Elementary School in Esossong in 1935. After completing Std. VI in 1936, he enrolled at the CTI in Nyasoso and graduated in 1939. Having taught at the CTI Bali/Bafut, he transferred to Bamenda as a catechist in 1947. From 1948-1951 he studied at Trinity College. Upon his return he was posted to the Theological College in Nyasoso in 1952. In 1957 he was appointed as the first Synod Clerk of the PCWC.[193]

Turning the BM's regimented authority into local autonomy begs the question whether the latter bears traits of class formation. The answer is ambivalent, for "native" agents, the pawns of the BM, and "*Sango* Pastors" were not so far apart. But since "native" agency has been reformed, "*Sango* Pastors" seem to be joining the 'big men' of African society. On the one hand, being addressed as *Sango* Pastor mirrors comradeship and intimacy. On the other, it calls to mind how European missionaries – who belonged to the 'big men' of colonial society – earned awe, respect, and at times apprehension. This aspect of the BM's legacy combines with the image of local prestige among some Cameroonian PCC staff. If we argue that the PCC is modelled on social prestige, which is firmly rooted in the historic reputation of mission school education, she has – perhaps unwittingly – become a seedbed of class formation. Her contribution to class formation thus results from a concurrence of spiritual distinctiveness, the privilege of education, and reinvented precepts of hierarchy.

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[190] The CTIs were opened in Nyasoso in 1932 and in Bali in 1936 (transferred to Bafut in 1940). Werner Keller. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.* Limbe: Presbook, 1969, p. 90.
[191] Interview with Dan Tunyi, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
[192] Hermann Witschi. Bericht über die Inspektionsreise in Kamerun, Januar bis Mai 1950, p. 24.
[193] Interview with Aaron Su, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999.

7.4 Conclusion

The appropriation of Christianity in the BM Church, the PCWC and the PCC occurred in several stages that distinguish between converts and adherents to Christianity. Converts are those who – under pressure or voluntarily – changed their creed. Adherents come from a Christian background. They did not 'convert' but were 'born into', and assimilated, the faith of their missionised families and kin, thus propelling the organic growth of Christian communities. Adherents include converts who became BM Church members in line with the conditions set out in the congregational regulations, the *Gemeinde-Ordnung* of 1935.

On this basis, the chapter tackled the shaping of identities through religious encounters. The discussion centred upon conversion idioms – symbols, disparities, promises, hopes – that were employed with the aim of enlightening African target groups. Light is one of the most persuasive metaphors that conveyed the relevance of Bible teachings on forgiveness, salvation and everlasting life. An analogy is discernible in the vocabularies of evangelism and nationalist reformism. The Christian symbolism of light defined the motto of Nnamdi Azikiwe's *West African Pilot*: 'Show the Light and the people will find their way.'[194] In the perspective of social-structural models of conversion, light came to embody pragmatic motives for turning to Christianity so as to receive education. Both categories of motives, the psychological and the pragmatic, are investigated as interconnected determinants for Christian growth since neither of the two can stand on its own. The psychological category bears more relevance for the earlier period of the research whereas pragmatic motives loom larger in the second half from 1940. The shift was triggered by economic factors, coupled with social mobility, which linked microcosms of tradition to the macrocosm of modernity.

Next, the complex of acquiring knowledge of, adopting, and abiding by, Christian faith is elucidated by drawing on biographical fragments. A mosaic of experiences with shared characteristics emerges. The informants' inputs represent signposts of the various facets of Christian advance articulated through religious encounters in the Grassfields and the Forest area. The central unifying factor is membership of the larger Christian community; the vital mark of distinction is the extent to which Christian self-representations are cross-fertilised with traditional beliefs and rites. A possible consensus lies in Christian tolerance of African customs, advocated from the late 1920s by a self-critical mission anthropology which linked the Christianisation of Africa to the Africanisation of Christianity. Forms and loci of evangelisation are among the main components of this Christian self-identification.

Finally, the changes in embryonic forms of church leadership are discussed. "Native" agents, a popular currency of the 1920s in colonial circles,[195] eventually merged with the *élite* of the PCWC/PCC. The African leadership has cemented new hierarchies while the loud and zealous appeal of the 1960s and 1970s continues: 'Cameroon needs Pastors!'[196]

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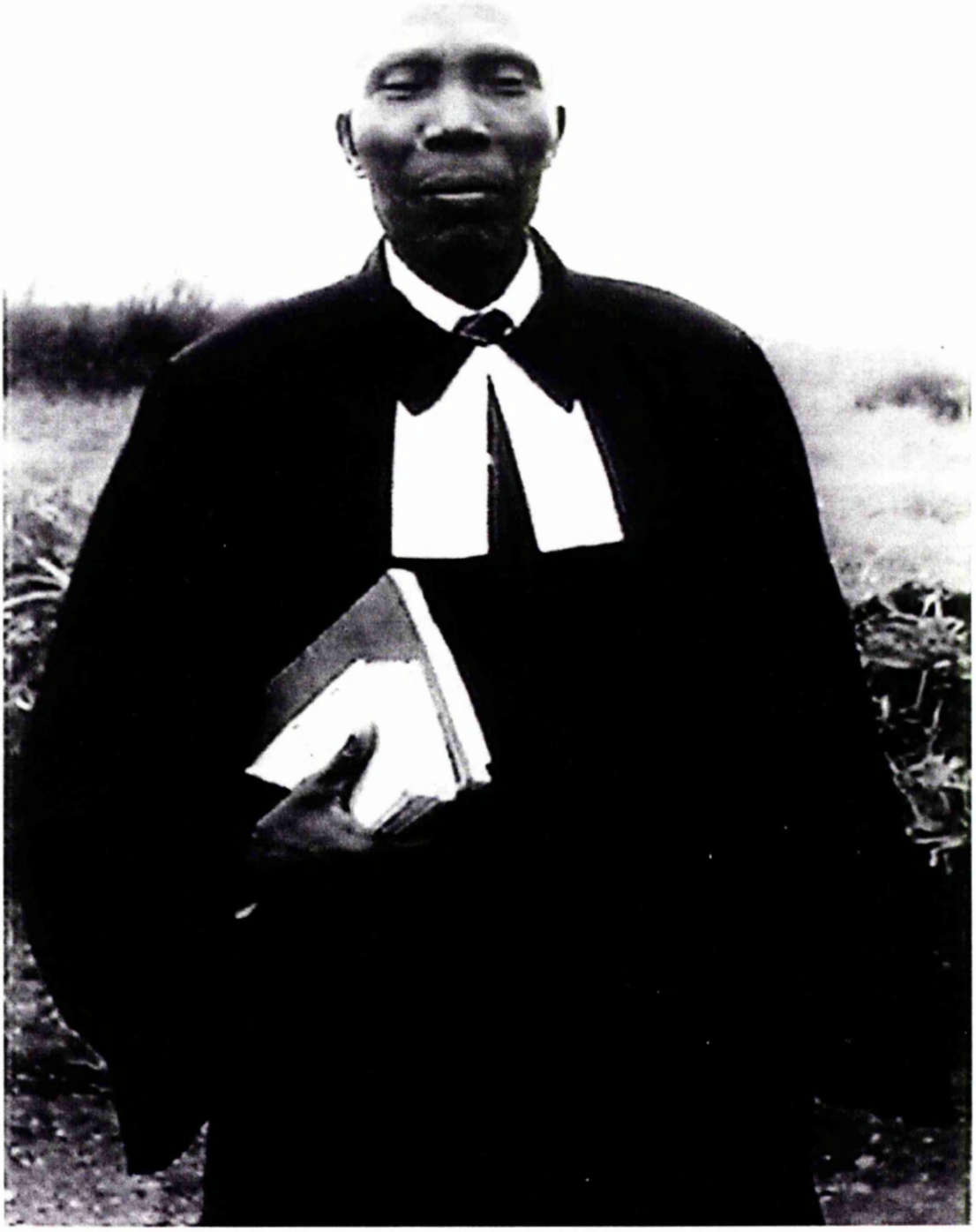
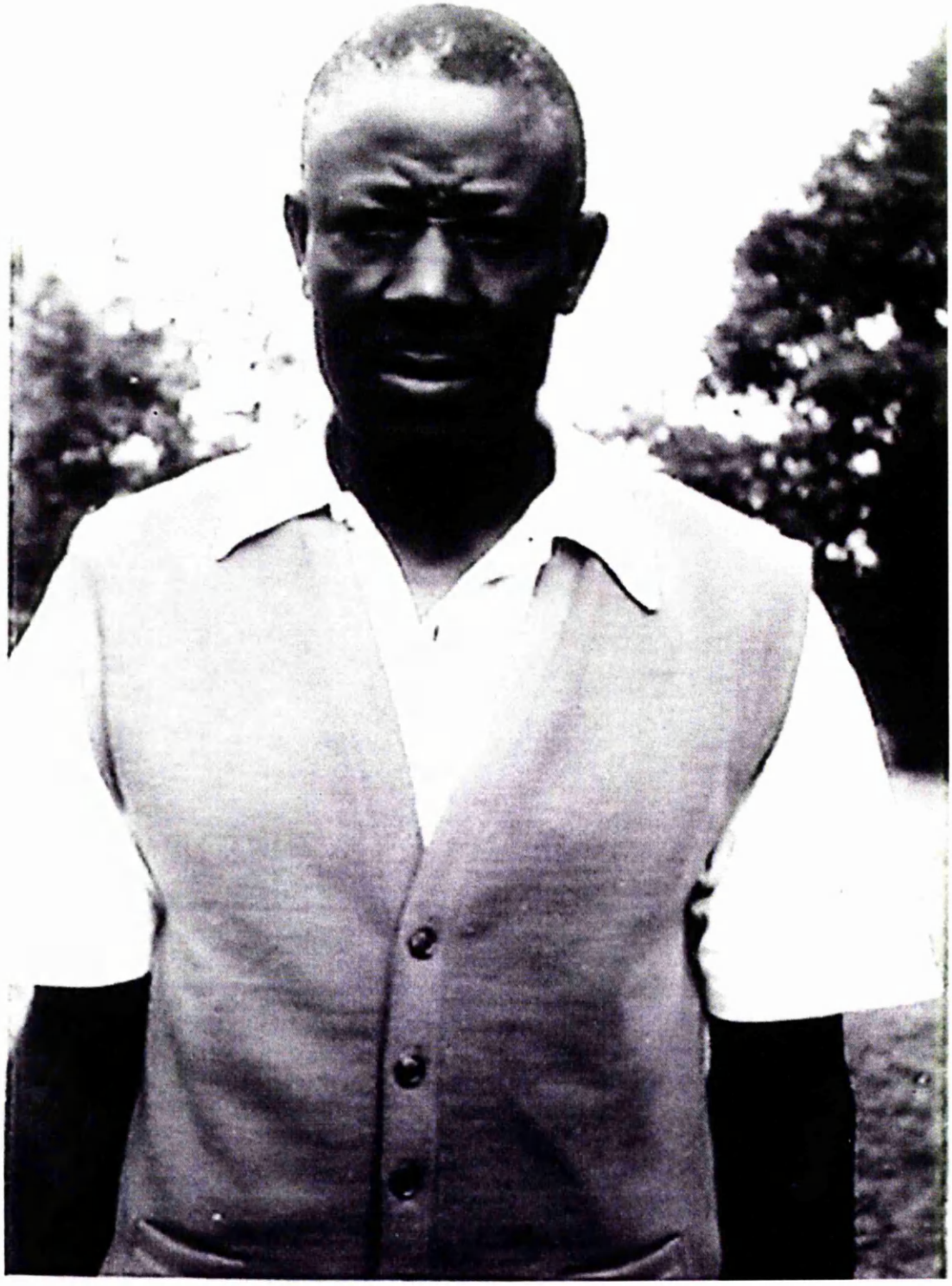
[194] Aaron Su. *Nationalism and Nation Building in Africa*. Basel: Basileia Publications, 1992, p. 103.
[195] On the occurrence of the term "native" agents in connection with catechists of the Basel and Baptist Missions, see BNA Sd/1920/5, no. 463/1920, Elie Allégret to the Resident, Buea, 4 November 1920.
[196] 'Cameroon Needs Pastors.' PCWC campaign leaflet, 1966/1971.



BMCA E-30.92.230, W. Keller, "Rev. P. Essoka, Chairman of the General Synod in Bali." 1950/1958.

BMCA E-30.92.229, W. Keller, "Rev. A. Su, the future Secretary [first Synod Clerk] of the Church in Cameroon." 1950/1958.



BMCA E-30.92.233, W. Keller, "Abraham Ngole, the new President [Moderator] of the Church in Cameroon." 1950/1958.

Outlook and General Conclusion

The 'White Man's God' is a catchword of the Christian discourse. It encapsulates the aim of persuading Africans to convert and live according to an alien faith.[1] By the time the BM Church's autonomy was sealed in 1957, this colour-coding appeared blurred, though not entirely obscured. Much as the BM's brand of Christianity had been appropriated by, and incorporated into, many segments of Cameroon's anglophone population, it was an alien belief system in the new local mission fields that were targeted. These include Mamfe Overside/Akwaya and Ngolo-Batanga-Bima in the Forest area, and Esimbi, Frukangkang, Mbembe and Menka in the Grassfields.[2] Moreover, some traces of the BM remain clearly perceivable up to the present. Whenever I told Cameroonians I worked with the PCC, this prompted a similar response: 'You are with the Presbyterian *Mission*' or 'in the *Mission* compound.' Such synonyms seem to reflect pride and sympathy for the Church's history, but they also beg the delicate question whether the PCC has effectively attained autonomy.

Walter Hollenweger, in Werner Keller's *Zur Freiheit berufen*, suggests in concurrence with Madiba Essiben that 'despite all nice phrases, one can barely speak of an independent Presbyterian Church.'[3] Essiben and Hollenweger raise two key points in their critique: the western bias of the BM's educational legacy and the lingering financial crisis of the PCC. Essiben stipulates ultimate conditions for sound self-governance through the promotion of theologically and culturally independent academicians. He holds that 'True independence begins with *mental* independence which liberates itself from foreign norms.'[4] This seems to overlook Cameroon's multicultural reality and the BM's more subtle concern with full integration in 1968, the transfer of remaining liabilities to the PCWC: 'Integration is not only an administrative or legal matter, but even more so a spiritual process. The Church will need much spiritual strength and wisdom to go forward.'[5] While Essiben's remains a distant ideal, the integration formula recurs perennially in contemporaneous debates on the PCC's partnership with the BM, denoting a struggle for *greater*, not *true* independence.[6]

The issue of self-governance is coupled with the continuing financial dependency that has marred the PCC's prospects of self-reliance. Partially shedding the burden of costly institutions in favour of a purely spiritual emphasis on the church's role is a possible way out. But this could defeat the PCC's object of trying to maintain a combined spiritual and social welfare programme. Commenting on this initiative (in the absence of efficient state welfare), Nyansako-ni-Nku wrote on the occasion of the Church's Silver Jubilee in 1982:

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[1] See E. Wunderli. 'Widerstand des Heidentums in Kamerun', *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, January 1927(1), pp. 5f.
[2] PCCCAL 589, Tour and Evangelization in Ngolo-Batanga-Bima missionary area, 20 December 1974.
[3] Walter Hollenweger, in Werner Keller. *Zur Freiheit berufen. Die Geschichte der Presbyterianischen Kirche in Kamerun*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 23. (My translation)
[4] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 30. (My translation and emphasis)
[5] Jacques Rosssel and Fritz Raaflaub to the Synod PCWC, Basel, 12 March 1968, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 616.
[6] I refer here to the Gwatt and BM-PCC consultations of the 1990s.

> This seems to be the underlying conviction of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Thus besides the proclamation of the word, maximum efforts are being made to fight against the ignorance that blindfolds man, the economic conditions that strangle him and the social conditions that cripple him. And with that as a basis the church now operates a vast social scheme, covering education, medical work and rural development.[7]

If such a wide range of engagement with the concerns of the populace eventually came to fruition in 25 years of 'autonomy', it was thanks, to some extent, to the sustained support by the BM. The agreement ratified by the BM and the PCWC on 28 April 1968 disclosed a historic vision of autonomy that has been difficult to live up to. The financial dilemmas in the era of selfhood reveal similarities to the predicaments which began to affect the BM Church in the 1930s when overseas funding was curtailed. On the tenth anniversary of the PCC in 1967, the Moderator, Abraham Ngole, looked ahead with considerable uncertainty:

> I am not ashamed to say that without the BM and other bodies with which it [the PCWC] co-operates, we would not have been where we are today. Our church is poor. Is it because we are poor? I believe it is because many do not give reasonably and generously. Discussions on the total integration of the BM into the church are going on and it will not take long before that becomes a reality. What will be our situation when total integration takes place?[8]

The immediate reply was hardly encouraging. Financial dependency was not alleviated. If anything, it worsened sporadically. In 1973 the young Lay Training Department, which had replaced the ailing catechist ministry, resolved to produce a pamphlet entitled *Help*.[9] *Help* was intended to explain the 'true' story of the crises in the PCC. 10,000 copies were to be distributed to all pastors and sold to the members of the different congregations at 30 francs CFA a copy. Endeavours to mobilise support at the grassroots of the PCC were not in vain. While the districts (presbyteries) 'fed' off the congregations, they in turn began to 'feed' the departments and institutions of the Church in 1976/77.[10] This system has been maintained to date. The principle revenues come from the church contributions and harvest offerings, ideally covering two thirds or more of the PCC's annual budget. It is, however, misleading to assume that the sources of revenues as they exist constitute a solid base for the PCC's treasury, given the disparity between wealthier and poorer presbyteries. Again, we are reminded of the attempt to revive the system of local church treasuries in the 1930s, which relied on financially stronger BM districts to support the weaker ones.[11]

The pain of financial predicaments is intensified by rising demands for accountability. Accountability connotes more than mere transparency in financial transactions. It evokes

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[7] Nyansako-ni-Nku. 'Introduction', in Nyansako-ni-Nku (ed.). *Journey in Faith. The Story of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*. Yaounde: Buma Kor, 1982, p. 15.

[8] PCCCAL 1347, A message from the Moderator on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon, 12 November 1967.

[9] PCCCAL 589, District teams touring the congregations to inform them on the financial situation of the Chruch, 24 June 1973.

[10] Karl Simpfendörfer. 'Financial Stewardship', in Nyansako-ni-Nku (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

[11] See Chapter 6, pp. 190.

the sensitive problem of over-patronising the business of running an autonomous church. Here lies the root cause for recent discord between the PCC and the BM.[12] This is not the place to expound the current process of rethinking terms of collaboration, consensus and partnership as the debate extends beyond my envisaged scope. Whether the vision of 1968 can be transformed into a satisfactory agenda for the future or an entirely new joint venture emerges, the PCC is continuing to revel in the optimistic slogan 'God has a better plan in mind.' And as Nyansako-ni-Nku, renowned, amongst others, for his marvellous sermons, urges, 'Cameroon, keep God.'[13] His fundamental tenet is that God is the key to salvation and liberation in 'heaven, its light and its joy, after the darkness and sorrow of earth.'[14] In this sermon of the early 1980s adherence to Christianity lies at the heart of political, social and economic solidarity. Later, Nku set out to address the turmoil after the legislative and presidential elections in 1992 with a collection of miscellanea concerning the PCC, politics and society in an attempt 'to document our contribution to the process for democratization, justice and reconciliation' and 'to respond to the revolutionary challenges of this time.'[15]

The appropriation of Christian faith has shaped a spiritual and utilitarian sense of duty towards Cameroon as a nation and a community of varied peoples.[16] Besides all questions raised with the BM and other overseas partners, the PCC has local responsibilities of more immediate concern. A striking development is the increase of church membership over the years, almost tripling between 1965 and 2001 from 100,958-291,383.[17] This reflects both organic growth and sustained evangelisation. The PCC has expanded into the francophone zone (East Mungo) where two presbyteries were added to the 19 others. The presbyteries cater for 1,257 congregations. Not only does this attest to a complex task of administration by the 'Central Church' – the Synod Office, the Synod and the Synod Committees –, but also to difficulties in pursuing unified objectives. The revival of the Bastos congregation in Yaounde occurred in response to the 'spiritual dryness' of some PCC parishes. Launched by Michael Bame Bame in 1990 in a tide of criticism against materialism and opportunism among clergy, the revival movement was censured by the Synod in 1994 for its Pentecostal wing and non-conformity with PCC practices.[18] Prayer groups were henceforth permitted in accordance with Synod guidelines. This was the second influential revival initiative after Zacharias Fomum's 'born-again' movement in 1970 which caused a split in the PCC.[19]

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[12] *Editorial: That PCC-BM Consultation*, Presbyterian Newsletter, April 2000, no. 44, p. 1.
[13] Nyansako ni-Nku. 'Cameroon, Keep God', in *Cameroon, Keep God. Prophetic Sermons to a Troubled Nation*. Limbe: Presbook Press, 1999, 153-156.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 155.
[15] Nyansako-ni-Nku. *Cry Justice! The Church in a Changing Cameroon*. Limbe: Presbook Press, 1993, p. 9.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[17] BM Annual Reports, 1964-1968; PCC Daily Bible Readings and Diary 2001. Limbe: Presbyterian Printing Press, 2000.
[18] Tening Mongwa. 'The Revival at the PCC Bastos Congregation, Yaounde', in Achowah Umenei (ed.). *Focus on Revival*. Limbe: Presbook Press, 1995, pp. 12f.; see also pp. 24f., 32.
[19] Piet Konings. 'Religious Revival in the Roman Catholic Church and the Autochthony-Allochthony Issue in the South West Province of Cameroon', p. 2, forthcoming in *Africa*.

A radical effort to supplant the PCC's authority was Jonathan Fru Awasom's 'Church Reformation' in 1998.[20] His proposals – 'in search of true brotherhood and sisterhood' – suggest that the foremost challenge confronting the PCC is the discrepancy between 'big men's' and 'commoners'' congregations. Besides spiritual disunity, Awasom essentially highlights social inequality in the polarity between 'excessively rich' managers (of church institutions), doctors and lay people on the one hand and what he dramatically refers to as 'disgracefully wretched' teachers and clergy on the other.[21] The target was to reduce 'the gap between the rich and the poor in the Christian community.'[22] What is striking about Awasom's reform agenda is neither its contents nor its resemblance in make-up to Martin Luther's theses but the youthfulness and directness with which he presses his demands. He quizzes the PCC on wider social issues and on a better deal for her clergy and teachers, calling to mind the precedents of the BM Church's disenchanted teacher-catechists from the 1920s to the 1940s. It still seems that rendering the salaries of clergymen and teachers commensurate with other non-clerical wages of the PCC remains a far cry from feasibility. Is this the signal for a new bout of redundancy after the abolition of the catechist ministry?

The PCC is fighting the paradox of simultaneous growth in membership and potential decline in institutional capacity and diversity. But she squares up to critical public opinion. And most importantly, to avoid weakening her fragile structures, she continuously engages in parrying the threat of heightened regionalism and ethnic factionalism. From the outside, say the francophone zone, the PCC bears 'partisan' features as an all-anglophone church. She acquired such a reputation in the two national election campaigns of 1992 and 1997.[23] By contrast, the divide between the Forest area and Grassfields renders ideas of coherence more contested. Although the marked separation of local from 'stranger's' (Grassfields) congregations in the Forest area, rooted in the 1920s, is now obsolete, the labels 'Graffi', 'settler' or 'come-no-go' (one who comes and stays) have recently been used for political agitation. Entirely aware of such undercurrents, the PCC is trying at once to retain her dual vernacular heritage and to span bridges between her traditionally Mungaka- and Duala-speaking contingents. The critique of a church being racked by a cultural and linguistic rift and inter-ethnic strife is neither wholly tenable nor utterly refutable. By and large, however, the varied composition of PCC members has never severely jeopardised their cohabitation.

Despite enduring political, economic and social instability, the PCC shows remarkable resilience reminiscent of the BM Church's struggle – as a string of people's movements – during and immediately after the First World War. Such people's movements, bearing the most Africanised traits of Christianity at the Grassroots, account for the peculiar nature of Presbyterianism which has evolved in anglophone Cameroon. The local appropriation of

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[20] Jonathan Fru Awasom. 'Church Reformation. In Search of True Sisterhood and Brotherhood. Case Study: Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.' Bambili, 5 April 1998. (Typescript)
[21] Ibid., p. 3.
[22] Ibid., pp. 13f.
[23] Paul Gifford. *African Christianity. Its Public Role*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998, pp. 282f.

the BM's legacy attests to a promising transition. Evaluating progress is about expansion, but it crucially involves an appraisal by Cameroonian Christians whose lives came under the impact of the 'White Man's God'. Yet as ideas of an 'African Christianity' were often refuted by my informants on the grounds that 'there is only one Christianity,' a logical inference is that notions of a 'White Man's God' do not prevail either – not anymore.[24] A consensus reigns, as Elias Cheng affirms, that 'The Christian God is supracultural.'[25] But the perception of Christian universality has not effaced local customs among Cameroonian Christians 'to call on the gods of their ancestors in time of problems and difficulty.'[26] It is suggested that 'a synthesis be drawn between the traditional values and those of the new Christianity because these cultural practices are not essentially evil.'[27] Although syntheses are credible means to the end of meshing Christianity and cultural peculiarity, they would be very difficult to implement on a large scale. After all, how would the Church proper fit into this plan? The situation is contentious: On the one hand, Christianity can be viewed as undermining traditional norms and inciting 'tribalistic' divisions.[28] On the other, as Chief S. M. L. Endeley insists, 'there are certain traditional principles which are strengthened through Christian faith, and there is a lot Christianity can learn from tradition too.'[29] Here lies the basis of complementarity which the late Moderator Jeremiah Chi Kangsen found when he became Fon of Kusu-Wum in 1977 and one dignitary remarked: 'We think your leadership among us could be the extension of the work of the Church.'[30] And so it was.

Besides marking a vital step toward assuming full responsibility for all branches of the former missionary enterprise, 'integration' has also assumed a second meaning. It dictates the PCC's pivotal objective of anchoring herself in society as an edifice that stands for the common creed of tolerance, reassurance, hope, commitment and faith among her members. The seeds for this task were sown during the election of the first African chairman of the BM Church Synod, Peter Essoka, alongside Jacob Shu as vice-chairman and Kangsen as Synod Secretary.[31] 1997, the year of the PCC's Ruby Jubilee, was a chance to look back on how the Church has coped with integration and the re-formation of her identity. But the official voices remained muffled. This is somehow understandable, for what continues to shape the PCC, just as it did the BM Church, is what occurs at the grassroots. Very little of this surfaces in the idea of the PCC as a whole. That is why I prioritised local histories.

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[24] Samuel Ngome Ejedepang-Koge, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Yaounde, 18 May 2000.
[25] Elias Gbai Ngum Cheng, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Wum, 11 March 1998.
[26] Martin Andoh Igeh, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Bombe, Akwaya, 7 November 1999.
[27] Francis Yiambu Gwain, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Anjang, Kom, September 1997.
[28] Emmanuel Forju Njungwa, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Lewoh, Lebialem, 5 July 1997.
[29] Interview wiith Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
[30] Elias Gbai Ngum Cheng, reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', Wum, 11 March 1998.
[31] PCCCAL 1100, BM Church, General Synod minutes, Buea, 12-13 May 1950.

Thinking about the history I have related, I feel a conclusive clarification is called for. I stress with prudence and, notably, my deep respect for all those who appear in the narrative that I need to face up to a perplexing revelation. I started by recapitulating Roland Oliver's insistence upon analysing Christian advance in the context of its African setting rather than emphasising the metropolitan, European angle of the missionary enterprise. The latter can of course not simply be discounted, recalling the emphasis in Paul Jenkins' 'Manifesto' on the two sides involved in religious encounters. What I have increasingly come to realise in this attempt to investigate a complex terrain of Christianisation is that the history of the African 'Church' is in fact the sum of her congregational histories. To go one step further, congregational or local histories were in turn composed by numerous protagonists and of their varied biographies. The different people and places mentioned at one point or another therefore comprise but fragments of a very much broader mosaic of distinct responses and diverse landscapes and localities. In short, my account does not claim to be representative of the entire BM Church. Nor does it deal extensively with one or several congregations. What it has attempted is to reinvigorate the discourse, encounters and personal experiences which define the interfaces between local and regional as well as individual and collective realms. Exploring these frontiers, a larger process that underlies the institutional structures of the PCC has been illuminated: the *formation* of the BM's Christian movement(s).

There is nothing exceptional about testifying to the fact that Christian advance in Africa was essentially a black advance. For Richard Gray, the dwindling adherence to traditional societies and the rise of "new men" aspiring to acquire modern skills and techniques are key to an understanding of African church history in the 20th century. Indeed, 'Even at the moment of greatest missionary influence, vital spaces remained open for African initiatives and responses.'[32] Besides the unique situation of South Africa, most religious movements in the continent were either originally African or became Africanised with time. "Native" agents, the local clergy, sub-clergy and lay people, played a critical part in any missionary enterprise. What gives each narrative about black Christian advance its peculiarity is why and how it occurred. The episode under review was marked by a modest display of foreign presence featuring a small corps of officials in British Southern Cameroons. Furthermore, the European BM personnel (including spouses) fluctuated considerably from zero during and for a few years after the First World War to 73 in 1939, nine from 1943-1945, and to the upper 70s in the 1960s. The remaining expatriates were made up largely of Catholic and Baptist mission staff, plantation managers and employees (accountants, engineers etc.) and merchants. The three mission bodies created extensive local networks of stations and outstations, schools and dispensaries, and other branches. They were, along with additional endogenous factors (local politics, trade, ecology and others), at the helm of social change. Christianity seemed designated to dissolve the traditional markers of distinctiveness, but an

[32] Richard Gray. *Black Christians and White Missionaries*. London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 62.

appraisal of historical and current processes reveals that it encouraged linkages instead. It provided moral codes for cohabitation which supplement rather than suppress tradition.

To present the conclusive intricacy more poignantly – and provocatively – then, the term 'church' history fades away in the face of its inherent dynamics. This is where the social history (of religious encounters) approach comes into use. Without denying the fact that the BM Church did exist and that the PCC exists today, the roots of 'church' history lie in the minds of its protagonists. They have shaped a history of interaction, interconnections and interpretations of the ways in which Christian faith and traditional values can co-exist. Although no adequate formula for such a fusion has been elaborated, ratified and inserted into the constitution of the PCC, it is overtly reflected in everyday practices and rites such as 'born-house' ceremonies following childbirth, 'knock-door' gatherings in the event of marriages and 'cry-dies' in honour of the deceased. It is in these common celebrations of *rites de passage* that the compatibility between Christian faith and tradition is borne out by hybrid practices of their acolytes. The fundamental preoccupations of the evolving mission anthropology in the late 1920s and 1930s, of BM staff in the 1940s and 1950s, and indeed of many Cameroonians throughout with Africanising Christian values continue within the PCC. Meanwhile, a solution has been found outside the House of God in linking elements of local belief and custom that are considered worthy and honourable to Christian identity.

The social history traced out in the preceding chapters is partly an intellectual history of ideas and idioms exchanged between European missionaries and African Christians. In the course of religious encounters the gist of Christian discourse veered off from 'awakening' and 'liberation' to a simple logic of 'belonging' to the PCC: 'I am a Presbyterian because I had no choice. I was born into the Church.' This conceals the history of remarkable self-assertion which encouraged the formation of the BM Church and the PCC. Self-assertion was triggered by wider influences such as economic opportunities and circular migration, nationalism and political emancipation, and by personal motives. The PCC's membership and leadership are steadily easing away from the threshold of internalising the heritage of the BM and from their roots as a mission church. They appear determined not to let their quest for identity be mitigated by external pressures concerning self-reliance and internal demands for heightened spirituality and 'revolutionary' reforms of leadership and welfare. The PCC took a self-defensive position on her evolving identity by resigning to the idea of a merger with other mission churches in the 1960s. Furthermore, she is battling to fend off Pentecostal churches that are seeping into Cameroon from Nigeria. Once this perspective on the development of the PCC is factored into her policy-making, we should return to the self-identification of the PCC's adherents. For all that it stands, the Church's universality is caught up in contradictions between the local and the global. Her long-term aim must be to continue forging assent between the diverse peoples of Cameroon so as to disentangle and overcome the colonial inheritance of territorial, political and cultural particularism.

If Cameroonian PCC members have been brought into the fold of one particular brand of Christianity with clearly defined rules, their personal experiences occurred in changing individual and collective circumstances. There are five living generations who can testify to the significance of their affiliation to the PCC and to the Church's role in society. Three of these generations witnessed the missionary era while the other two have become adherents of the PCWC/PCC. The representatives of each generation offer singular accounts relating to the fundamentals of how religious reorientation affected their livelihoods and lifestyles at particular times. The outcome of their contributions is a multilayered historical review of social change and changing perceptions, perceptions of what it meant and means to engage with Christian faith. All informants had a twist to their story, demonstrating what mattered to them. It was rarely the overwhelming presence of the BM as a whole which encouraged Cameroonians to turn to Christianity but the odd encounter with European missionaries or local BM agents. Thus life histories diffuse subtle shades of light on religious encounters.

The biography of the late Maxwell Gabana Fohtung, taken down by Peter Kalle Njie and subseqently edited by the celebrated 'Cameroonologue' Elizabeth 'Sally' Chilver, is exemplary for such distinctiveness. Fohtung did not simply witness the day of his baptism as a decisive or revolutionary turning point in his life. Instead, this signified the beginning of a path towards understanding the essence of being a Christian at heart. Fohtung, who had 14 wives for a part of his life, became a 'backslider' for breaking the rules prohibiting polygamy but never despised Christian teachings. He later returned to monogamy and was readmitted as a full member of the PCWC in 1961.[33] To underline the earlier point on the distinction between the 'Church' and her numerous congregations, the core of the larger community must be added: the home. Homes are the chapels that count under the wing of the Church. I witnessed this on one visit to an informant in an outlying ward of Bamenda. I found a graphic illustration how family devotion forms cells of faith, and bridges the past and present: my host took over this custom from his father, a pioneer catechist of the BM.

By interweaving biographical fragments and personal reminiscences with institutional development as well as political, economic and social change, I sought to unveil a chunk of the missionary iceberg that lies beneath the water surface. My excursion into the history of religious encounters as narrated partially by Cameroonians opens up two related domains. First, the study was intended to afford the most comprehensive agency-oriented picture of religious change and the domestication of Christianity covering anglophone Cameroon. It pursued this aim, secondly, by plugging into the local dynamics of this process, examining how missionary strategy and policy analysed elsewhere were probed, legitimised, adopted, altered or defied. Having attempted to bring out a plethora of nuances in the dazzling array of contributions and responses to the uneven spread of Christian faith, I now eagerly await fresh challenging insights about the significance and outreach of the 'White Man's God'.

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[33] Peter K. Njie. 'Max Gabana Fohtung. Self-Portrait of a Cameroonian' (edited by Elizabeth M. Chilver), *Paideuma* 38, 1992, pp. 242f.

Appendix: Questionnaire

Local Responses and Contributions to Christianity, with special Reference to the Basel Mission and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)

Towards a reassesssment of church history:
Collection of biographies and local/presbyterial histories of the PCC

Please send your replies to:

Guy Thomas
PCC Central Archives and Library
P.O. Box 19
Buea, Cameroon

Preamble:

Please maintain a **reasonable chronological order** in your answers to the questions below. This is crucial for an appraisal of the history of the Basel Mission/PCC. The lead questions are underlined and supplemented by auxiliary questions and key words in brackets. Kindly add your signature and the appropriate date to your answers.

1) Particulars:

- Full name
- Age
- Household/family (how many members?)
- Occupation
- Village, area, sub-division, division
- Origin, language/vernacular

2) Life history:

a) From your family background and birth to your school years: What kind of people went to school and how were they recruited? (How was "school" - teaching/learning - perceived/understood?)

b) What was your connection with the Basel Mission/PCC and what kind of experiences did you gain as a teacher/elder/catechist/evangelist/pastor etc? (Please provide a detailed account of your training and work. Explain where and when you worked and what your work consisted of)

c) Can you remember particular personalities (missionaries from Europe and fellow teachers/elders/catechists/evangelists/pastors/others) who left a profound impact on you? (Please provide a detailed account of such personalities)

d) Can you recall any special encounters with Christians, non-Christians, traditional and government authorities who have left a mark on the church and have contributed significantly to the emergence and spread of Christianity?

3) When and how did Christianity establish itself in your community/village/chiefdom? (Year of "implantation" of Christian faith; under which traditional ruler; through which church/mission; following whose invitation; with which explicit intentions?)

4) How did Christianity develop in this/your area/village/chiefdom?
(How did missionaries/converts/congregations go about pursuing their objectives?)

5) Are you a Christian? (If yes, which denomination do you belong to and since when?)

6) What drew/draws people to Christianity and made/makes them adopt Christian faith?

7) Do you equally respect and/or adhere to an indigenous/traditional belief system and what kind of indigenous/traditional belief system exists in your society? (deities, creation, spirits and ancestors; rites; moral values; spiritual and political authority?)

8) Are Christian faith and life compatible with traditional beliefs, culture and rule? (Which elements of Christianity are positive/useful, which ones are unimportant/less useful?)

9) How is your society/village community/chiefdom structured? (Traditional institutions including governing bodies, societies, rituals, the ranks and roles of people as groups and individuals, degree of centralisation/decentralisation of society)

10) Can you describe the relationship between chiefs/traditional rulers and Christian faith? (Can a chief/traditional ruler be a Christian or Christian leader at the same time? If so, under which conditions? Were/are there conflicts between traditional and Christian authority? Can tradition survive alongside Christian faith?)

11) Can you explain the relationship between the church and government authorities? (Especially under British Indirect Rule, Mandate, and Trusteeship as observed and witnessed by you in your own particular capacity/ies)

12) What can you say about interdenominational conflicts as well as secessionist tendencies within Basel Mission/PCC circles in the past?

13) How did the language policy of the Basel Mission (establishment of Mungaka and Duala as the official languages of the Basel Mission Church) affect the Church? (How was the language and cultural policy of the Basel Mission understood?Were the two vernaculars accepted and appreciated, or were they rather criticised and opposed?)

14) Has Christianity/the church been supported and promoted in this/your area/village? (If yes, when, how and by whom?) Has it at times/to some extent been rejected and opposed to? (If yes, when, why, and by whom?)

15) To what extent do you consider Christianity as having been constructive/ destructive? (Why? Have there been changes in this/your area/village/chiefdom owing to Christianity? If yes, in what respect? Is (has) Christianity (been) facing problems?)

16) Do you have a vision concerning an ideal of "African Christianity"? (How do you understand the terms "Africanisation", "inculturation" and "indigenisation" of Christian faith and churches in the African/Cameroonian context?)

17) What are the functions of Christianity and the church today ? (Do you see it as a non-governmental alternative to state welfare programmes; as the realm of spiritual authority; as a basis for self-help initiatives; other?)

18) In your eyes, what were the contributions of Cameroonians to the making of the Basel Mission Church, the PCC and the general advance of Christianity?

19) How would you distinguish between various stages of the Basel Mission's/PCC's history in Cameroon, especially in your specific areas of origin and/or work?

20) What, do you believe, are the benefits of a reassessment of the history of the BM/PCC in connection with the changing role of church in society?

Informants

Akanji, Meshack Tiku. From Enyoh, Momo Division. Born c. 1937. Civil servant (retired).	Interview, Buea, 13 July 1999.
Ama'azee, Victor Bong. From Bu-Wum, Menchum Division. Born in 1943. Teacher.	Interview, Bambili, 22 April 1999.
Ambeh, Jeremiah Ngusum. From Bonatu, Momo Division. Born in 1929, Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', July 1999.
Andoh, Martin Igeh. From Bombe Village, Manyu Division. Born in 1947. Evangelist of the PCC.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', 7 November 1999.
Asang, Simon. From Bu-Wum, Menchum Division. Born in 1929. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Bamenda, 1 May 1999 (by Peter Toh Nja'ah).
Awasom, Henry Anye. From Alabukam, Mezam Division. Born in 1938. Former Moderator (1985-1999) of the PCC.	Interview, Buea, 23 June 1999.
Cheng, Elias Ngum Gbai. From Bu-Wum, Menchum Division. Born in 1930. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', 11 March 1998. Interview, Bamenda, 19 April 1999.
Ediage, Thomas Ngwane. From Nyasoso, Kupe-Manenguba Division. Born in 1932. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', 29 December 1999. Interview, Nyasoso, 19 April 2000.
Ejedepang-Koge, Samuel Ngome. From Ndum-Mwasundem, Kupe-Manenguba Division. Born in 1938. Teacher and Educational Administrator (retired).	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history' ('Church History as I see it'), 18 May 2000.
Ekiti, Eugene Awasum. From Nkikoh, Kupe-Manenguba Division. Born in 1921. Teacher and first Education Secretary of the PCC. Deceased in 2000.	Interview, Buea, 22 July 1999.
Elangwe, Isaac Sakwe. From Ebowe Balue, Ndian Division. Born in 1942. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview, Buea, 1 July 1999.
Endeley, Samuel Moka Lifafa. From Buea, Fako Division. Born in 1923. Paramount Chief of the Bakweri.	Interview, Mokunda, Buea, 19 July 1999.
Etchu, Alred Aboh. From Assam, Manyu Division. Born in 1947. Farmer.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', November 1999.

Fenji, Emmanuel Mbing. From Mbetsop-Bagam. Born in 1934. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Memfoung-Bagam, 23 August 1999 (by Julius Muokweh).
Fokom, Daniel. From Bali-Nyonga, Mezam Division. Born in c. 1930. Teacher.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', n.d.
Fomusoh, Peter Foncham. From Bali-Nyonga, Mezam Division. Born in 1936. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview , Agyati, Bafut, 5 June 1999.
Foncham, Christol Fombat. From Bome, Momo Division. Born in 1942. Forestry officer/civil servant (retired).	Interview, Buea, 6 April 2000.
Fongmefrie, Mathew. From Bessa-Bagam, Bamboutos Division. Born in 1924. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Ngoyo-Bagam, 24 August 1999 (by Julius Muokweh).
Forju, Emmanuel Njungwa. From Lewoh, Lebialem Division. Born in 1912. Farmer.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', 5 July 1997.
Gana, Susana. From Baligashu, Ngoketunjia Division. Born in c. 1903.	Interview in Baligashu, 7 April 2000 (by Julius Muokweh).
Kenji, Peter Mfuh. From Bamessing, Ngoketunjia Division. Born in 1925. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Curriculum Vitae and miscellanea about his career as a member of the sub-clergy and of the clergy of the BM Church/PCC.
Litumbe, Mola Njoh. From Bokwoango, Fako Division. Born in 1927. Chartered accountant (retired) and politician. Fourth son of Johannes Litumbe Ekese.	Interviews, Bokwoango, Buea on 10 May, 28 June and 5 July 1999.
Mallett, Ida. From Ikiliwindi, Meme Division. Born in 1929. Teacher (retired).	Interview, Bota, Limbe, 22 June 1999.
Mbachuh, Wilfred. From Enyoh, Momo Division. Born in 1924. Policeman and nurse. Deceased in 2000.	Interview, Buea, 9 August 1999.
Mbonifor, Elizabeth. From Jibusang, Bafut. Born in 1934. Teacher and pioneer leader of the Christian Women's Fellowship (CWF) (retired).	Interview, Nsem, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
Ndasah-Mote, Daniel. From Dikume Balue, Ndian Division, Born in 1916. Cook-steward in the plantations (retired).	Interview, Dikume Balue, 18 April 2000
Mote-Ndasah, Eugene. From Dikume Balue, Ndian Division. Born in 1937. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview, Buea, 28 June 1999.

Muenyi Grace Yenkong. From Baba I, Ngoketunjia Division. Born in 1958. Nutritionist.	Interview, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.
Musoko, Catherine. From Buea, Fako Division. Born in 1926. Teacher (retired). Daughter of Rev. Daniel Lyonga.	Interview, Buea, 7 July 1999.
Musumbe, John Teghen. From Mbemi, Momo Division. Born in 1918. Farmer.	Interview, Molyko, Buea, 25 May 1999.
Nchinda, Zacheus. From Mbere Bagam, Bamboutos Division. Born in 1925. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Bamessing, Ndop, 8 April 2000 (by Julius Muokweh).
Ndando, Ruth Enanga. From Victoria, Fako Division. Born in 1935. Local council and trade union posts (retired).	Interview, Muea, 18 May 2000.
Ndanka, Paul Shu. From Bafut. Born in 1921. Tailor (retired).	Interview, Ntamulung, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
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Ndumi-Wa-Danji. From Nyen-Busam, Momo Division. Born in 1944. Secretary Men's Work (CMF).	Interview, Bamenda, 22 April 1999.
Ngang, Joseph Chi. From Mulang, Mankon, Mezam Division. Born in 1925. Contractor (retired).	Interview, Mulang, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
Ngu, Thomas Sona. From Dchang. Born in 1912. Teacher and headmaster of BM Schools (retired). Deceased in 2001.	Interview, Azire, Bamenda, 21 April 1999.
Ngwana, John. From Baligashu, Ngoketunjia Division. Born in 1932. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interviews, Bamenda, 1 May 1999 (by Peter Toh Nja'ah); Bafanji, 24 August 1999 (by Julius Muokweh).
Nkweti, George Mebafu. From Mangwi, Bafut. Born in 1939. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview, Kosala, Kumba, 12 April 2000.
Ntoko, Richard Mambo. From Nyasoso, Kupe-Manenguba Division. Born in 1924. Paramount Chief of the Bakossi. Deceased in 2001.	Interview, Nyasoso, 20 April 2000.
Nyansako-ni-Nku, Stephen. From Kotto Barombi, Mbonge Sub-Division. Born in 1945. Moderator of the PCC.	Interview, Buea, 18 May 2000.

Okwa, James Ochengini. From Okerika Oliti, Manyu Division. Born in 1968. Farmer.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', n.d.
Ozimba, Jeremiah Anyangwe. From Oshie, Momo Division. Born in 1923. Teacher and preacher, first Development Secretary of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Molyko, Buea, 21 July 1999.
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Su, Aaron. From Manka'a, Bafut. Born in 1918. Rev. Pastor and first Synod Clerk of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Agyati, Bafut, 20 April 1999.
Sumbele, Abel. From Enyandong, Kupe-Manenguba Division. Born in 1929. Teacher and second Education Secretary of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Bokwoango, Buea, 9 July 1999.
Tende, David Njokom. From Mbengwi, Momo Division. Born in 1943. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999.
Titamangwa, Samuel Feh. From Bali-Nyonga, Mezam Division. Born in 1916. Farmer.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history', 12 July 1999.
Tita-Yebit, Daniel Gana. From Bali-Nyonga, Mezam Division. Born in 1940. Rev. Pastor of the PCC.	Interview, Mbengwi, 23 April 1999.
Tumban, Jonas Atemku. From Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), Bafut Sub-Division. Born in 1923. Rev. Pastor of the PCC (retired).	Interview, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
Tunyi, Dan. From Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), Bafut Sub-Division. Born in 1914. Catechist of the BM Church (retired).	Interview, Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), 3 June 1999.
Yiambu, Francis Gwain. From Anyang, Boyo Division. Born in 1967. Teacher.	Reply to the questionnaire 'Towards a reassessment of church history, Sept. 1997.

Other life stories of BM Church/PCC Pioneers

1) 'Life Stories. The Life Sory of an Influential Mother: Ma Johana Ndoh Epie', in *Is there no Balm in Gilead? PCC 1995 CWF-CMF Study Material*, Department for Women's Work and Lay Training and Evangelism, April 1994, pp. 105-108.
2) 'Life Story of a Cameroonian Pioneer Assistant to Missionary Workers of the Basel Mission and Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC): Ba Mateo Wakum', in *God's Finger is Warning! PCC 1998 CWF-CMF Study Material*, Department for Women's Work and Lay Training and Evangelism, May 1998, pp. 106-109.

Archives

Basel Mission Cameroon Archive, Basel, Switzerland

The overseas record of the Basel Mission Archive has been arranged in accordance with the different mission fields. The Cameroon-related material comes under the 'E' category. The documents consulted for this study have been accurately cited in their original (mostly German) version. The comprehensive *Guide to the Basel Mission's Cameroon Archive* by Paul Jenkins and Waltraud Haas provides translations or summaries of single sources and of each series and sub-series. Taking the volume of items in the individual series and sub-series into account, attention is drawn to the footnotes for detailed references while the full headings of the relevant series, sub-series, and file groups are taken down as follows:

Series E-4 Cameroon Correspondence from the Period of the First World War and until the return of the Basel missionaries to Cameroon in 1925.

1) E-4.1 Kamerun. Berichte Stationen, Kriegserlebnisse, Internierung, 1914-1916. (File with 39 reports by missionaries from stations in Cameroon; Bagam to Edea)
2) E-4.2 Kamerun. Berichte Stationen, Kriegserlebnisse, Internierung, 1914-1916. (File with 27 reports by missionaries from stations in Cameroon; Fumban to Victoria)
3) E-4.3 Weltkrieg und Gefangenschaft 1914-1922, Kamerun. (Papers concerning the Cameroon missionaries, the war and their captivity, 1914-1922; 110 items)
4) E-4.4 Kamerun. Kriegsakten. Briefe von Einheimischen, 1916-1924. (Mainly letters from Cameroonians to the BM Home Board or to individual missionaries; 89 items)
5) E-4.5 Kamerun. Kriegsakten. Amtlich. (Official papers concerning the war)
6) E-4.6 Wiederaufnahme der Missionsarbeit durch die BM, 1924-1925. (Miscellaneous correspondence concerning the return of the Basel Mission to Cameroon)
7) E-4.7 Kamerun. Korrespondenz mit Basler Missionaren im Dienste der Pariser Mission, 1919-1934. (Correspondence from/to ex-BM missionaries in the ranks of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society; 234 items)

Sub-series E-5-1 "Abschriften (vorwiegend aus Jahresberichten, früher Beispielsammlungen, 1927-1940/6." (Summaries of information extracted mainly from Annual Reports of the missionaries in Cameroon)

8) E-5,1.1 File with c. 200 pages (stories collected from the Cameroon missionaries' reports, 1925-1933)
9) E-5,1.2 File with c. 500 pages (excerpts on general, political, religious, social, medical, congregational and church situations, 1934-1940, 1946)
10) E-5,1.3 File with c. 250 pages (on custom and traditional religion, 1927-1935)
11) E-5,1.4 file with c. 500 pages (miscellanea, 1928-1933)

Sub-series E-5-2 "Berichte 1925-1948 (-1950)." (Quarterly and Annual Reports from the missionaries in Cameroon, arranged by year and station; 17 files)
12) E-5-2,1 to E-5-2,4: Four files covering the period 1925-1930, arranged by station
13) E-5-2,5 to E-5-2,8: Four files covering the period 1931-1934, arranged by station
14) E-5-2,9 to E-5-2,13: Five files covering the period 1935-1939, arranged by station
15) E-5-2,14 to E-5-2,17: Four files covering the period 1940-1948, arranged by years

Sub-Series E-5-8 "Restkategorie, 1925-1948 (-1950)." (Miscellaneous files from the period 1925-1948 (1950))

Series E-8 Church census data from 1889-1950

Series E-9 "Verordnungen, Zirkulare." (Mission regulations, official circulars from the BM, correspondence about regulations, papers from the BM Annual Missionaries' Conference in Cameroon)

Series E-10 Miscellaneous documents from/about Cameroon in European languages

Buea National Archives, Buea, Cameroon

The holdings of the Buea National Archives comprise the most comprehensive repository of records relating to British Southern Cameroons. While stacks of files from a variety of collections remain to be organised, a substantial number of classified documents totalling nearly 8,000 entries have been catalogued. The repository contains crucial sources for the background and comparative aspects of the present study. All the consulted items are fully cited in the footnotes. They are ordered under the following series:

*A. **Ethnographic*** (Intelligence and Assessment Reports as well as miscellanea)
Aa. Present Mezam Division (formerly Bamenda Division).
Ae. Present Meme Division (formerly Kumba Division).
Af. Present Manyu Division (formerly Mamfe Division).
Ag. Present Fako Division (formerly Victoria Division).

*C. **Periodical Reports - Divisional - Annual*** (Divisional Officers' and other departmental reports)
Cb. Divisional Annual Reports, Bamenda Division.
Cd. Divisional Annual Reports, Kumba Division.
Ce. Divisional Annual Reports, Mamfe Division.
Cf. Divisional Annual Reports, Victoria Division

D. Divisional Reports - Quarterly and Half-yearly (administrative reports)

Da. Divisional Reports – Quarterly and Half-yearly, Bamenda Division

Dc. Divisional Reports – Quarterly and Half-yearly, Kumba Division

Dd. Divisional Reports – Quarterly and Half-yearly, Mamfe Division

De. Divisional Reports – Quarterly and Half-yearly, Victoria Division

S. Social services and welfare

Sd. Missions

Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun Archives, Akwa-Douala, Cameroon

The Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun (EEC) is the Cameroonian daughter Church of the PEMS and partly shares a common history with the PCC. There was some discussion in the 1960s on merging the two churches, but today they are both operating independently. Unfortunately, plans to upgrade and centralise the archive of the EEC have only recently begun, and all measures to render her impressive record accessible are preliminary to date. Nevertheless, I made use of several unclassified files on the collaboration between the BM and the PEMS. The items are fully cited under the relevant passages in Chapter 2.

Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archives and Library, Buea, Cameroon

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archives and Library (PCCCAL) are still in the process of being organised and catalogued. To date, over 10,000 files and additional records have been assembled, sorted out, classified and fed into a database. An ascending classification system is currently in use, following 'PCCCAL 1 to PCCCAL 10,000', and so on. The computerised database allows for a flexible search procedure. There is a partial overlap between the BMCA and the PCCCAL up to the late 1940s. However, the material of the two repositories is largely complementary. A wide range of sources was drawn from the entire collection of the PCCCAL, each of which is cited under its original heading in the footnotes. The files and additional items come under the following file groups, among which 'XII Church history' contains the bulk of the pre-1957 record:

I Education

II Presbyteries

III Health Services

IV Investment Projects (Prescraft, Presprint/Presbook, Tellco Preswood)

V Social Work (CMF, CWF, CYF)

VI Development, including landed property and general land matters

VII Communication, including journals, scholarship matters, and literature commission

VIII PCC administration, including pastors, evangelists, lay training, and church centres

IX Financial administration, including PESH

X PCC networking (with international partners)

XI PCC networking (with national partners)

XII Church history (especially Basel Mission)

- **XII/1** Upper administrative level: local administration and chairmanship, executive committees, conferences, synods
- **XII/2** Annual, Tertiary, Quarterly Reports
- **XII/3** Census material and general statistics
- **XII/4** Personal level: private correspondence
- **XII/5** Stations

XIII Personal files

XIV Miscellaneous (photographs, maps, plans, special reports, etc.)

XV Books, journals, and other publications

(**XVI** General business transactions, for example United Trading Company (UTC))

File volumes used (by number):

4	47b	469	589	674	800	1035	1347	2598
6	313	556	593	716	846	1080	1659	3442
14	373	560	603	718	939	1082	1660	
28-33	427	562	651	723	949	1100	1884	

Public Record Office, London, United Kingdom

The Public Record Office (PRO) served primarily to supplement the information collated in the Buea National Archives. Although the registers and series in the PRO are valuable sources, particularly up to the early 1930s, a good number of records have unfortunately been destroyed under statute. The material illuminates both the metroplitan perspective of Britain in her dealings with Cameroon and the efforts of British troops as well as colonial officials to assert themselves on the ground. Most importantly, the PRO sources offer an excellent idea of how the Basel Mission's activity and future were discussed and assessed in British circles. Moreover, they provide useful insights about the mechanisms of control which were put in place in order to stem subversive tendencies from the ranks of the Basel Mission and other German mission bodies. The following CO series were consulted:

CO 649 Cameroons: Original correspondence, 1915-1926, 31 vols.

CO 750 Cameroons: Register of correspondence, 1915-1926, vols 1-5, nos. 1-48.

CO 751 Cameroons: Register of Out-Letters, 1915-1926, 4 vols.

CO 763 Nigeria: Register of correspondence, 1915-1951, nos. 3-43.

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Thurston, Anne. *Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Ofice, Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office*. London: HMSO, 1995.

b) Journals, Periodicals, Reviews

- Abbia
- Africa
- African Studies Review
- Archives de Sociologie de Religions
- Cameroon Panorama
- Canadian Journal of African Studies
- Current Anthropology
- Der Evangelische Heidenbote[1]
- Ethnohistory
- Evangelisches Missionsmagazin
- Genève-Afrique
- History in Africa
- History of Religions
- International Bulletin of Missionary Research

[1] Numerous articles in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* have not been included in the bibliography. The titles of all articles referred to in the study are fully cited in the footnotes.

- International Journal of African Historical Studies
- International Review of Missions
- Itinerario
- Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte
- Journal of African History
- Journal of Inculturation Theology
- Journal of Religion in Africa
- Man
- Neue Allgemeine Missions Zeitschrift
- Paideuma
- Past and Present
- Presbyterian Newslettter
- Religion
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