

Review

Missionary activity in Bakunduland, Cameroon, 1873 – 1960: An historical appraisal

Joseph Ebune Betoto

Department of history, faculty of arts, university of Buea, P O Box 63 Cameroon.
E-mail: mbuagbo@yahoo.com

Accepted 20 March, 2012

This paper is a historical analysis of Missionary activities in Bakunduland in the southwest region of Cameroon in the 18th and 19th Centuries. These activities such as Christian proselytization, Western education, health care took place in a context of opposition from the Bakundu local population. This opposition can be explained as a form of resistance to what was perceived by Western colonists and missionary officials as a civilizing mission, and by the same token considered traditional culture of the Bakundu inferior. As a result of these missionary activities, the Bakundu society was transformed. But this transformation was never complete for as the paper highlights, there is a blend of Western and African cultures expressed in syncretism, a situation that still prevails among the Bakundu.

Keywords: Missionary, Bakunduland, Evangelization, Culture

INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries from Europe penetrated into the interior of Africa before colonial occupation. The African image of Christianity was coloured by colonial rule and all that it entailed, although missionary enterprise and progress sometimes preceded imperial annexation and expansion in Africa.

African society is intensely religious (John. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. Second Edition (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Publishers 1997), 1.), and religion was the strong factor in traditional African worldview since it exerted the strongest influence on the people's daily life. African religious and belief systems and practices rose from one people to the other in general. The traditional religious were born of and sustained a strong community life and values which required individual participation in ceremonies, rituals and festivals. These traditional values became a source of tension and conflict between the Bakundu and Europeans as the Bakundu became literate, semi-literate and were exposed to the secular forces of urbanisation

and industrialisation.

The Pioneer Phase

Missionary explorations in the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the pioneer phase of the missionary effort in Bakunduland. The first missionary to reach the interior and contact the Bakundu from the coastal base at Bimbia was Quintin Thomson in 1873. The arrival of George Grenfell and Thomas Comber in 1875 and 1876 respectively marked a new era in the history of the mission in Bakunduland. They formed populous ethnic groups eager for the missionaries and teachers. Comber penetrated to Bakundu territory, where Thomas Levis subsequently settled as a missionary (J. Du Plessis, *The Evangelisation of Pagan Africa, A History of Christian Missions to the Pagan Tribes of Central Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: C Juta and Co., Ltd. 1929) 115.). In Bakunduland, effective mission work started in

1897 with the building of the first chapel at Bombe on the banks of the Mungo. That same year, the station had its first resident missionary, the Rev. Nathaniel Lauffer, and in a short time six out-stations were opened in neighbouring Bakundu and Balong villages (W. Keller, J. Schnellbach and R. Brutsch, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (Victoria: Presbook Printing Press, 1969), 10.).

The opening of a mission station at Bombe began the pioneering phase of effective missionary activity among the Bakundu thereby making Bombe a 'model' station. As a result, other stations were created based on the Bombe model. The station was built away from the native village and on a hill which marked a sharp contrast to the village community because of its well organised community life, which provided a striking example of the European way of life to which the Africans would aspire.

The Bombe station was a complex which comprised the missionary residences, a school, a catechist's house, a dispensary, a chapel and a garden.

Missionary Evangelism

To aid understanding of the conversion process among the Bakundu, it is necessary to begin with a description of Bakundu cosmological ideas in order to show their compatibility or incompatibility with western beliefs. These beliefs included the belief in a supreme deity, the relation between man and his environment on which he depends, the belief in the ancestors who were seen as the intermediaries between the living and the dead. On the other hand Bakundu chiefs, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, were thought to be endowed with spiritual powers, were sacred, and could not live like ordinary people. This was the essence of divine kingship.

Conversion to Christianity among the Bakundu therefore began with the social context in which it occurred including the economic interests of the people like farming and trade. Christianity and Bakundu belief system had much in common. For example, the Bakundu believe in a supernatural being, while Christians believe in one God or monotheism. Also, the fact that the missionaries contributed to the people's well-being was an important factor in the process of conversion. Therefore, belief in a supreme deity, love for one's neighbour, the fulfilment of people's economic and social needs were common in Christian and Bakundu belief systems. In this view, the Bakundu saw Christianity as close to what they believed was essential for happy living. Since Christian teaching did not seem to differ much from what they knew was good for them, they accepted it believing that it would improve their well-being. In view of these compatibilities, they were able to grasp the essentials of western Christianity and to adopt

it as their own without abandoning everything of the old ways.

The Basel Mission missionaries, and later the Catholics and Baptists took different approaches in converting the Bakundu to Christianity.

Evangelism

The missionaries took different approaches in converting the Bakundu to Christianity. First they preached a message of love and equality. This message appealed most to social groups like slaves, outcasts and the lowly in the Bakundu society because for the first time they were recognised as people with the same rights as the other members of their communities. Gifts of European goods like textiles, mirrors and wrist watches, essentially "bribes", were sometimes made to people to entice them to the new religion (Interview with Ebenezer Obase, a retired Presbyterian Church head teacher at Kumba on 16 October 2011.). Such methods are only one of the reasons why "conversion" is a difficult concept. It is possible that many early Bakundu converts were not converted from conviction but from such ulterior material interests.

One notable convert was Ndo Mbile of Mbu, a freeborn, in northern Bakundu. A farmer and a hunter, he was apparently a man of outstanding qualities and father of seven children. He was touched by the Christian message which led him to abandon secret societies. He became more tolerant, condemned witchcraft, and called on his family to accept Christianity and western education (Interview with Andrew Diongo, an accountant, and is a member of the Bakundu royal family, in Douala on 16 November 2011.). He became a lay preacher and always welcomed Basel Mission missionaries to his home and wanted one of his sons to become a pastor. This dream was fulfilled when his nephew, Abel Modika, became a pastor. He also hoped that his daughters would marry pastors, a dream that was also fulfilled when his first daughter married Pastor Ekembe from Nyassoso in Bakossiland (Ibid.).

To show how much he valued the new teaching and education, he expressed it in simple terms when he told Andrew Diongo that, "when you write a letter, you take it to the post office and drop it there. You do not see when the letter gets to its destination and after sometime, the reply comes; that is the best witchcraft and not that which kills" (Ibid.). This was the testimony of a truly transformed life and worldview. Rare as it was, it is a measure of the depth of change among Bakundu by Christian missionaries.

To bring genuine conversion, the Bakundu were asked to abandon their works of art and totems which they worshipped as gods. Objects like carved statues,

portions and other traditional amulets worn round the waist in villages were destroyed. The leaders of the people of Bakundu like Abia of Supe and Mosongo of Mbu were also prime targets for conversion. It was believed that once they were converted, their subjects would follow them.

The Bakundu had values inherited from the distant forebears, which included solidarity among them, the development of resources for common good of the community, and the veneration of ancestors who were considered the intermediaries between the living and God. These were ultimately tied to their worldview.

In their fight to convert the people, the missionaries challenged the worldview and lifestyle and sought to change it radically. They denounced the objects the people worshipped as false gods which could not hear prayers. Slave dealing, witchcraft, polygamy and traditional post-mortems were all considered primitive and demonic. However, it was in the missionary crusade against slavery that the Bakundu responses were most direct and dramatic, no doubt because it threatened an institution that was fundamental to the Bakundu way of life, its economy especially.

The institution of slavery among the Bakundu can best be understood by looking at the duties slaves performed and their status over time. Slaves repaired houses of their owners, served as carriers, farmed for their masters, and gave a substantial portion of their hunt or fish catch to them. They tapped palm wine, collected palm kernels and made kernel oil and palm oil for their masters. Generally, slaves performed menial, sometimes exhausting and occasionally dangerous duties.

The slaves received the gospel by attending church services and through catechumen classes. They received the gospel for a number of reasons. The christian message was one that taught love and freedom for all irrespective of their social class. The gospel brought hope to them and a better future with opportunities for self-advancement. On the other hand, slavery implied that people lived in bondage and were not valued as human beings and this was true of Bakundu slaves. In principle, therefore, Christianity and slavery were incompatible. Yet it is also important to note that the christian attitude to slavery is rather ambiguous. In Biblical teaching, St. Paul did not say unequivocally that slavery was bad. He merely advised Onesimus to accommodate himself to it. Europeans engaged in the slave trade without qualms, and when they abolished it they did not do so primarily from christian motives but largely from economic necessity (¹ Joseph C. Anene and Godfrey N. Brown, *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), 276.).

The conversion of slaves meant that they were recognised as human beings with rights like other human beings. The impact on Bakundu society cannot be

overemphasised. Their conversion was the beginning of a social revolution as their place in Bakundu society changed after they received western education which enabled them to express themselves in the European language, first German and later English, dressed like Europeans, worked for the missionaries and the colonial government, and the economic freedom they now enjoyed enhanced their social status and prestige in Bakundu society.

Another group to whom the christian message appealed a lot was the women. They like the slaves enjoyed no liberty in Bakunduland. They were traditionally subject to men and were regarded as their property and had no control over their sexuality and did not own property. The christian message of equality appealed to the womenfolk because it promised liberation. The missionaries were conscious of one thing: that the Bakundu and other Africans would never be Christianised until their women were converted and liberated from male domination. Their repression called for relief (Edwin W. Smith, *The Christian Mission in Africa: A Study Based on the Work of the International Conference at le Zoute, Belgium, September 14th to 21st, 1926, 45.*). The quest for relief together with the new awareness of being recognised as human beings with equal rights made many Bakundu women to accept the new teaching (Interview with Joan Namowango, Buea, 15 September 2011.). According to Joan Namowango, a Bakundu woman could now eat chicken, discuss family matters with the husband and visit friends at will (Ibid). Among those who were converted were Mariana Ete of Marumba and Ngonde Isokwe of Banga, who in turn persuaded their husbands to become Christians (Conversation with Joseph Maloba, Buea, 5 May 2006.). In such ways, slowly but surely, women contributed to the work of evangelisation, to their liberation and ultimately to change of attitude by Bakundu men. In other words, women ceased to be only victims and became agents of change in creating the new society with new values.

The whole question of the repression and domination of women is a complex and controversial one. As feminist studies are now revealing, this has been largely misunderstood and we are now beginning to learn more about the status and rights of African women in traditional society which were undermined under colonialism.

Without doubt, African women suffered a lot of disabilities including polygamous marriages: men's attitude towards them and the fact that they were considered men's property under the bridewealth regime are only the most obvious. All of this gave them low social status in society, and low self-esteem. The status of the woman in the family was thus limited to the gendered roles of raising children, looking after the home and generally to domesticity. Women were excluded from rituals such as initiations which prepared the young for

adulthood. Thus, the coming of christian missionaries brought awareness and liberation for women in Bakunduland who eventually contributed in the development of their society.

Resistance to Missionary Enterprise

The work of the christian missionaries in Bakunduland did not go without opposition from the people. Hostility to the missionary presence and effort was common throughout Bakunduland (W. Keller, J. Schnellbach and R. Brutsch, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (Victoria: Presbook Printing Press, 1969), 49.). For example, only a few years of the creation of the mission station at Bombe, the people burnt the church house and had the Christians severely beaten to show their disapproval of their new religion (Interview with Rev. Elangwe Namaya, Buea, 20 November 2011. He is a Presbyterian Pastor at the Mutengene Congregation.), which preached against those Bakundu values like ancestral veneration and about marriage and family.

The missionary teaching about marriage centred on monogamy as the best form of marriage. For this reason, the European missionary from an individualist society found the African family system not only odd, but a negation of some of the things he considered most vital in life, not only monogamous marriage, but also the freedom of worship and the responsibility of each adult to God for his own soul (J.F. A. Ajayi *Christian Missions in Nigeria, The Making of a New Elite*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 15). The Africans defended polygamy by pointing to early Biblical tradition of polygamy but the missionaries responded simply by quoting the church's teaching on monogamy as God's only sanctioned form of marriage (Vincent Khapoya, *African Experience: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 157.). The African defense of polygamy is echoed by Hodgkin who notes:

But in general, while polygamy tends to be more tolerantly regarded in independent than in Mission Churches, this is essentially one aspect of the broader separatist principle – that christian ethics, as commonly understood in Western Europe, must be adapted to the African tradition and social setting; and those elements in Mission teaching which derive primarily from European customs discarded. As a Nigerian pamphleteer, somewhat naively argue: "In England [polygamy] is regarded as an offence against the state. I dare suggest reasons for this. The English woman is very jealous of love and does not like to share her husband's love with another. Our women are not like this...." Monogamy is thus frequently regarded not as a christian, but a European institution,

lacking scriptural sanction (Thomas Hodgkin., Nationalism in Colonial Africa (New York: University Press, 1968), 103.)

As the account above shows, polygamy was viewed as an African institution that had to be preserved. Therefore, the condemnation of polygamous marriages among the Bakundu bred a lot of ill will against the missionaries.

The idea of christian monotheism clashed with African polytheism. The conventional christian teaching of belief in one God precluded ancestral veneration. For the Bakundu, such a teaching in the belief in one God implied a potential rupture between the living and the dead, which was fundamental to their worldview. African religions are monotheistic because there is a single high God who created the world and humankind and he is the central source of order (Paul Bohannon and Philip Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, Fourth Edition (Illinois: Waveland Press. Inc., 1988), 116.). But many African religions are also polytheistic in that several gods or large number of spirits or ancestors, or some other kind of divinities stand between human beings and the ultimate deity. Rituals are / were part of all religions. Prayers were requested for health and well-being while sacrifices were used for cleansing and to provide paths of communication between human beings and the deity. Sacrifices of goats or chickens were a means of getting in touch with the source of life and enhancing human well being (Ibid.).

Individuals and families had their own deities they worshipped who acted as intermediaries between them and God. This religious attitude of the Bakundu and the desire and attempt by missionaries to end such "superstitions" inevitably led to tension and conflict notably in Bakundu. The outcome of such tension was that conversion was slow and polytheism and monotheism co-existed – a situation which led to heightened tension between the people and missionaries. To the Bakundu, such teaching reflected missionary disrespect for their religious beliefs. For them, their various deities provided multiple avenues of contact between them and the supreme God.

Another area of conflict was centred around the place of a woman in the Bakundu society and as seen above, she had no prominent role to play since she was property to man. The christian teaching that women were equal to men in all respects was resisted by men. Although records are lacking to show women's response to this new teaching, one can only suppose that the men became even more severe on those women who tried to claim and exercise their rights in the face of men's protest. The Bakundu proverb, *miyari ma mwalana ma sa tombaka mokoko* (when a woman urinates her urine never goes further than that of a man), indicates male evaluation of women. No matter what a woman did, no matter how intelligent she was, no matter how professional, her status or family background, a woman

could never be a man's equal in Bakunduland before and under colonial rule.

Missionary and western attitudes towards the extended family were at odds with the family values and the kinship structure of Africans who shared a common ancestry. The extended family system is the most prevalent family system in Africa. It is a larger social unit and includes more blood relatives than the nuclear family in the Western world (Khapoya, *Africa.*, 48.). In extended families, three or more generations of relatives live side by side intimately - grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces - working together for the common good. The extended family system seemed to fit nicely into the African communal ethic and pattern of life.

Among the Bakundu, such large families are highly valued even today. Children are prized because they perpetuate the family name and the social values and norms handed down by ancestors. Children belong to the parents and to the community of relatives. It was common for children to be sent to live with relatives in other villages for years without parents having to worry about how they were being raised. This was an indication of the harmony and communal ethic of society. In the past this practice of sending the children to live with other relatives also served to strengthen kinship bonds (Ibid., 49.).

The missionary ideal of family was based on the idea of monogamous christian marriage in which one man and one woman formed a nuclear family. But to the Bakundu, marriage means more than that; it is/was an institution of prime importance, a vital social condition linked to reproduction, and therefore to the survival of the community. Having children is an important contribution which each individual is expected to make to the society. Society recognises that contribution by elevating the status of a married person above that of an unmarried one (Victor T. LeVine *The Cameroons from Mandated to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 70.). So, the missionaries' idea of family was at odds with that of the Bakundu. The missionary condemnation of it was seen as total disregard for African values and was resisted by the Bakundu and was resisted severely by them. No doubt then that, in all of Bakunduland, it took time for the new religious ideas to be accepted by the people.

Missionary Humanitarianism

The missionaries did not only want to convert but to provide the 'civilised' context within which the values of Christianity could best be propagated. The mission effort was intended to encourage people to live like christians, an orientation that involved a new set of behaviour patterns that included individualism, new dress styles and

church attendance (LeVine, *Cameroons*, 70). The aim of the missionaries was to improve on the living conditions of the people first in order to ensure proper conversion. To achieve these secular and religious goals, they introduced formal education, besides the informal system, as an agent or instrument of evangelisation.

Missionary Schooling

Education and schools were not established to "encourage trade" but to provide at best literate and semi-literate clerks to serve European traders in managing their businesses, or the government in subordinate administrative functions. In this regard, the missionaries and the colonial government were partners in fostering education as a vehicle of westernisation (Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 120-121.). Schools were established by the missionaries to train Bakundu children to acquire skills in writing, reading and in other trades like bricklaying.

Education was a means to an end as well as an end in itself. As a means to an end it facilitated evangelisation, making it possible here as elsewhere in Africa, for converts to read the scriptures. As an end in itself, it provided new skills that helped to transmit western values like reading and writing, keeping of records and new communication skills that changed people's outlook. Eventually, it led to the mastery of other skills that were not necessarily needed for evangelism and sectarian purposes but were vehicles of secular values.

Victoria, founded in 1858 by Alfred Saker, a member of the London Baptist Missionary Society provided a useful model. Victoria was a Christian community and a model of how such a community supposedly worked. It was a magnet to attract the indigenous people to the new religion and way of life (LeVine, *Cameroons*, 70.). In Bakunduland, Bombe provided such a model. It was there that western education was first introduced and from there it later spread to other Bakundu villages and later to the other parts of Southern Cameroons.

In Bakunduland, the Basel Mission led the way in spreading western education. From the very beginning, great stress was laid on building a well organised school system. To this end, various kinds of schools were established to serve two purposes: to promote literacy so that every convert could read the Bible and to produce the catechists, teachers and pastors for church congregations, as well as christian clerks, traders and future leaders of the country (Keller, Brutsch and Schnellbach, *Presbyterian Church*, 20.). In this connection, the mission stressed the use of the native languages; Duala became a medium of instruction in the schools of the coastal region and Mungaka in the

Grassfields. *Idubwan a Jombe* was the reading manual for Basel Mission schools in the coastal region. It was used mainly to teach the pupils the Duala language.

The curriculum was designed with incomplete understanding of cultures where the needs of the community and not those of individuals were considered paramount and should have determined what was taught and how schools were managed. There were four determinants of the education provided in the schools in Bakunduland. The first was emphasis on the health and sanitation intended to teach new habits of hygiene and healthcare. It was believed that once people were healthy and lived in a clean environment, their behaviour would change, and with it changes in the use of the physical environment. The environment had to be carefully utilised in the interest of all and people were taught not to destroy plants or to use the streams and rivers in unsanitary ways. In colonial times, this was known as Rural Science.

The Basel Mission began with vernacular schools although not in all villages. They were called vernacular schools because indigenous languages were the languages of instruction. The first Bakundu village to have a vernacular school was Bombe in 1898 (Keller, Brutsch and Schnellbach, *Presbyterian Church*, 21.). In 1900, there were 131 in the territory and their popularity earned the name “schools for everybody” (Ibid.). The training in these schools lasted three years. Since many Bakundu villages had no school buildings, classes were held in the church house and the compound of the chief who was a convert. Catechists taught in these schools while serving their congregations (Ibid.).

Above the vernacular schools were the boy’s schools and the middle schools. In 1902, a boy’s school was opened at Bombe (Ibid.). The training lasted two years after which the brightest boys were sent to a middle school. Until 1910, all these schools had one African and one European teacher and the language of instruction was German alongside the local languages. Arithmetic, History, Geography, German, Religious Instruction and Manual Work were the subjects taught. Besides this, a minor seminary was established at Bombe to train catechists. The training lasted two years. Unfortunately, the seminary was closed barely two years after its creation because a Catechist’s Training Centre was opened in Buea with Rev. Schuler as its first principal (Ibid.). Bakundu children attended this centre and Dikonge of Banga completed the two year programme, which enabled him to become a model for others to copy as he taught them many things including new farming techniques (Interview with John Moki, a Bakundu notable and resource person for this research, November, 2011.).

The wives of missionaries also played a part in the education of Bakundu girls as they trained them in the rudiments of domestic science. The girls from Bombe and Banga benefited most from this experiment since Bombe

had resident missionaries. Mariana Ete and Mary Basaka became those from whom other girls in the village learnt many things from especially lessons on personal hygiene. Their homes set the new standards of hygiene and home care that they were taught by missionaries. They also did needlework and sewing and thus were able to employ themselves. These new skills made them more desirable as wives and models of a new Bakundu womanhood, aspects which motivated other parents to send their daughters to be trained by the wives of missionaries.

The initial rejection of education particularly among the members of secret societies was gradually being abandoned as the people began to see the visible signs of change among members of those families that welcomed Christianity, slaves and outcasts. If anything else, it was in the field of formal schooling that missionary enterprise exerted much influence among the Bakundu as well as health care.

Healthcare

The health of the people was also one of the earliest preoccupations of the missionaries. Basic rules of hygiene and sanitation were taught and routine checks were carried out to ensure a clean environment. Also, the danger of living with animals in homes was made known to the people (Ibid.). A dispensary was set up at Bombe in 1900 and at Itoki in 1923 where the people and the members of missionaries’ families were given western healthcare. Illnesses like malaria, small pox and fever were treated here (Ibid., 101 – 102.).

Before the coming of the missionaries there were medicine-men who provided healthcare to the people. These men and women were sometimes called “herbalists” or “traditional doctors” commonly referred to among the Bakundu as *moba* *boa* or *nganga*. Prominent among them in the 1900 were Ekuka Motanga from Ibemi, Ngoe from Mbu, Sese Mekoli from Pete and Abunaka from Mabonji. There were also female healers like Iya Imbia Sakwe from Kake I and Ongie Motuba from Banga (Interview with John Moki at Kake I on 2 November 2011.). These healers were highly respected in Bakundu society as they were seen as those who obtained powers to heal diseases from God.

According to Mbiti, these medicine-men and women are the greatest gift to society and its most valuable source of help. But they have suffered most from European – American writers who pejoratively call them “witch-doctors” (Mbiti, *African Religion*, 162.). They and diviners were accessible to everyone and at all times. They used plants, herbs, bones, seeds, roots, potions and sometimes sacrificed a chicken or a goat to appease the spirits when the illness was diagnosed to have been

caused by them. These healers formed the medical establishment of Bakunduland. They often knew each other and each other's specialty and referred patients accordingly.

Disease and misfortune among the Bakundu were religious experiences and attempts were made to deal with them in a religious manner although such methods can be deemed scientific or pre-scientific or a mixture or both (Mbiti, *African Religion*, 165.). These medicine-men and women treated sexual impotence and infertility, and were deemed as "legitimate", their competence inspired hopes of good health, protection and security from evil forces, prosperity and good fortune and ritual cleansing when harm or impurities were contracted (Ibid., 166.).

The introduction of western medicine did not bring an end to the traditional methods of healing or therapies. Eventually, the Bakundu combined the western and traditional methods although many of them tended to believe more in the power of the traditional healers whom they understood and trusted. Despite this state of affairs, the missionaries continued to teach the people the need to rely more on European medicine given at the health centre because of its modern methods and therapies, than on the traditional methods. This eventual acceptance of western medicine by the Bakundu is a good example of additive innovation. The Bakundu saw it as something new to add to their traditional medicine chest. They did not thereby abandon what pre-existed

The Economy – Agriculture

The missionary experiments and innovations in agriculture were an important aspect of the ideology of the "Bible and the plough" which the nineteenth century secular humanitarians had adopted for the "moral" and material "regeneration" of Africa and which was tried with some success in Nigeria under the leadership of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, the first Anglican Bishop on the Niger (J.F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Elite* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 17.).

In spite of this slogan, it was not so much agriculture that the missionaries considered the civilising occupation, as the commerce that resulted from it. Agriculture was recommended to the African as a way of producing the legitimate articles of the trade that would link him with christian Europe (Ibid.).

These new agricultural methods were first introduced in the christian community. One reason for missionary involvement in agriculture was the desire to grow more food to feed the pupils in the boarding schools especially at Bombe. In 1890, a garden, basically for themselves, was opened at Bombe where new crops like bananas and cassava were grown alongside fruit trees like paw-

paw, oranges, lemon and a variety of vegetables like cabbage (Martin Atinda "The Bakundu Under Colonial Rule, 1897 – 1961" (M.A. Thesis, University of Yaounde 1, 2006), 44.). In this garden, people were taught new agricultural techniques like the application of compost manure and mixed farming. The first people to work here were the converts and later individuals who sold their labour.

To encourage agricultural production, seedlings of plants like lemon and oranges were distributed to farmers. In this way, the people were able to grow more food and became more food self-sufficient. This experimental food cultivation supplemented traditional hunting and gathering. The new farming techniques employed in the cultivation of these crops had a profound effect on the people as many of them took to growing these new crops thereby improving their diet.

Such innovations turned many Bakundu into full-time farmers. In this way, the economic activity became more diversified as more people adopted new agricultural techniques and crops. These were not religious activities in the sectarian sense; rather, they were secular and can be best characterised as humanitarianism. Such missionary humanitarianism was part of the effort to improve the material circumstances of the Bakundu. The missionaries realised that their mission of evangelism could better succeed only if the living standards of the people improved simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century, the Missionary movement provided ideological support for the new imperialism in Africa. The biblical command "to go into the world, and preach the gospel..." was literally taken up by Protestant men and women as they moved out from their homes, cultures and societies to make their contributions to the new imperialism through evangelisation and conversion to Christianity (Goucher, LeGuin and Walton, *Global History*, 736.). Evangelism and conversion went hand in hand with healing work and teaching and were mutually reinforcing.

The missions built the foundation on which the colonial powers later worked on when colonial rule was established. In the early days, not many Bakundu were interested in changes brought by the missionaries. They resisted them because of the condemnation of African values.

The formal schooling introduced in Bakunduland helped in the introduction of new values, and stimulated innovation and change thereby expanding people's horizons and enabling them to cope with the challenges of modernity. Nyerere alluded to this experience in the following words:

“... It widens the mental horizons of pupils and teaches them new ways of looking at themselves and their society. It may be an agent for promoting a better understanding of societal traditions and for the development of local culture in the forms of arts, music and literature; it has been used to politicise future citizens and foster national integration through the inculcation of a common culture and, by the missions to foster religious conversions (Peil, Consensus and Conflicts, 176.).

To the missionaries, christian discipleship was not experienced in isolation. The Christian Missionary in Africa, and Bakunduland in particular, looked to the formation of a christian society in which men and women could live in corporate worship and service. But the missionaries failed to understand the ideas of the Bakundu including polytheism, polygamy and the extended family which they described as primitive and demonic. Bakundu acceptance of Christianity did not mean that they ceased to be Africans. However, they were sometimes torn between being christians and being faithful to their values and traditions. On the whole, the modern Bakundu society has been rooted upon the ideals and foundations of modernity provided by the Christian missionaries.

REFERENCES

- Ajayi JFA (1969). *Christian Missions in Nigeria, The Making of a New Elite*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press,) pp. 15-17
- Conversation with Joseph Maloba, Buea, 5 May 2006.
- Du Plessis J, *The Evangelisation of Pagan Africa, A History of Christian Missions to the Pagan Tribes of Central Africa (1929)*. (Cape Town and Johannesburg: C Juta and Co., Ltd.) p. 115.
- Edwin WS (1926). *The Christian Mission in Africa: A Study Based on the Work of the International Conference at le Zoute, Belgium, September 14th to 21st, 1926*, 45.
- Goucher LeGuin Walton, *Global History*, p. 736.
- Interview with Andrew Diongo, an accountant, and is a member of the Bakundu royal family, in Douala on 16 November 2011.
- Interview with Ebenezer Obase, a retired Presbyterian Church head teacher at Kumba on 16 October 2011.
- Interview with Joan Namowango, Buea, 15 September 2011.
- Interview with John Moki at Kake I on 2 November 2011.
- Interview with John Moki, a Bakundu notable and resource person for this research, November, 2011.
- Interview with Rev. Elangwe Namaya, Buea, 20 November 2011. He is a Presbyterian Pastor at the Mutengene Congregation.
- John SM (1997). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Second Edition (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Publishers), p. 1.
- Joseph CA, Godfrey NB (1970). *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press), p. 276.
- Keller Brutsch, Schnellbach. *Presbyterian Church*, pp.20-21.
- Keller W, Schnellbach J, Brutsch R (1969). *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (Victoria: Presbook Printing Press.), pp. 10 and 49.
- Khapoya, Africa., 48-49.
- LeVine, Cameroons, p. 70
- Martin Atinda (2006). “The Bakundu Under Colonial Rule, 1897 – 1961” (M.A. Thesis, University of Yaounde 1), p. 44.
- Mbiti, *African Religion*, 162-166.
- Paul Bohannan, Philip Curtin (1988). *Africa and Africans*, Fourth Edition (Illinois: Waveland Press. Inc.), 116.
- Peil *Consensus and Conflicts*, p. 176.
- Robert Redfield (1966). *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press) pp. 120-121.
- Thomas Hodgkin (1968). *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York: University Press,) p. 103.
- Victor TL (1964). *The Cameroons from Mandated to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,) p.70.
- Vincent Khapoya (1994). *African Experience: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall,) p.157.