

We have toiled all night: Christianity in The Gambia

1456-2000

**We have toiled all night: Christianity in The Gambia
1456-2000**

Martha Theodora Frederiks

Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer

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Dedication

To the memory of Aunti Marie C.N.. Conteh

To the memory of Dr. Faith E.R. Renner

To Dr. Florence K. Mahoney

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This book is dedicated to three Gambia women. It is dedicated to the memory of Auntie Marie C.N. Conteh, who was my neighbour but also my mother during those six years in The Gambia. I cherish the memories of her companionship, her love and her sense of humour. It is also dedicated to the memory of Dr. Faithful E.R. Renner. Faith was the person who raised my interest in Gambian history and who introduced me to the Gambia National Archives. Her own research has stimulated mine. She was also a sincere Christian. Her life was a testimony that sometimes difficulties do not distance people from God, but rather draw them closer to Him. I am grateful that she was willing to share that part of her life's story with me as well. Dr. Florence K. Mahoney is the third person to whom the book is dedicated. During my years in The Gambia she has been my mentor, always willing to explain things or to introduce me to people when necessary. She also is an ardent advocate of ecumenism and of good relations between Christians and Muslims. Her dedication to the church, to the Gambia Christian Council and to continental and world-wide Christianity has been a source of continued inspiration. It was my privilege meeting her and having her supervise my thesis and it is with joy that I dedicate this book to her.

Martha Frederiks

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AECAWA	Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa
AFPRC	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
ATR	African Traditional Religions
AWM	Abiding Word Ministries
CMF	Christian Mission Fellowship
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DCA	Democratic Congress Alliance
DCLM	Deeper Christian Life Ministries
ECG	Evangelical Church of The Gambia
EFG	Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia
GCC	Gambia Christian Council
GDP	Gambia Democratic Party
GMC	Gambia Muslim Congress
IAP	Islam in Africa Project
IFAN	Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire
MBHS	Methodist Boys' High School
MGHS	Methodist Girls' High School
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PROCMURA	Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
UP	United Party
WAM	West Africa Mission
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEC	World Evangelism for Christ (formerly: World Evangelical Crusade)
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
YFC	Youth For Christ

GLOSSARY

alfaya	Muslim clerical party in the religious state of Futa Jallon
alkalo	al-qadi; originally a judge who is trained in Islamic law; in the Gambian setting the alkalo functions as chief and mayor of a village
almami	title for the leader of the Islamic state of Bondu
askiya	title of the ruler of the Songhay Empire
awasane	Jola traditional religion
awujoh	charity to remember a deceased person
baraka	blessing
bixirin	Portuguese name for West African Muslim clerics
bulagum	ancestor (Manjago)
bur	title of the chief of one of the states of the Wolof Empire
bukut	Jola circumcision ceremony for men
cherreh	traditional dish of pounded millet, served at festive occasions such as the end of Ramadan
dairah	circle; group of people belonging to a brotherhood who meet on regular basis
dema	witch (ATR Wolof)
dembajasa	clowning mothers; association of women who have lost many children (Mandinka)
dyula	Muslim traders who spread Islam through West Africa
egugu	hunting society
fangbondi	masquerade (Mandinka)
faren	title of the chief of the Kaabu Empire
fatwa	a legal opinion offered by a mufti
fodekunda	settlement of Muslims, often around a Muslim cleric
ge-caay	(u-caay sing.) spirits (ATR Manjago)
gewel	musician (Wolof)
greegrees	amulets
griot	praise-singer (Mandinka); the fino griot were Islamic praise-singers, while the joka griots were more general praise-singers
hajj	pilgrimage to Mecca
hijab	veiling; covering of body parts by Muslim women
hijra	withdrawal; emigration of the first Muslim community from Mecca to Medina
hore	masquerade (Mandinka)
icop	stick representing an ancestor (ATR Manjago)
ijma	consensus; one of the four sources for Islamic law
imamat	Muslim state (Bondu)
imami	title of the leader of the Islamic state of Futa Jallon
jahiliya	time of ignorance; also used as a description of the un-Islamic character of a certain society

jalang	objects that represent the life-giving force (ATR Mandinka)
jam	slave (Wolof)
jambur	freeborn (Wolof)
jeliba	praise singer (Mandinka)
jihad	holy war (Islam)
jihadist	someone pursuing a jihad/holy war
jongolu	caste of the slaves (Mandinka)
kafir	unbeliever (Islam)
kafo	age-group (Mandinka)
kahat	Jola circumcision ceremony for men
kangkaroa	masquerade dance (Mandinka)
kankoran	masquerade dance (Jola)
ka-sara	messenger from God (ATR Manjago)
khalifa	deputy, representative of the prophet; also used for the representative of the shaykh of a brotherhood in a certain area
khalwa	retreat; often a stage before the declaration of a jihad
komojade	naming ceremony (Krio)
kondorong	dwarfs with long beards and long feet (ATR Wolof)
kumpu	masquerade dance (Jola)
laare	spirits protecting the cattle (ATR Fula)
lançados	Portuguese and Cape Verdian settlers on the mainland of West Africa; originally from the verb lançar, to throw
laman	local chief (Wolof)
mansa	chief (Mandinka); also title of the ruler of the Mali Empire
marabouts	al-Murabitun: those who live in castles; a combination of a traditional healer and a Muslim cleric
morikunda	settlement of Muslims, often around a Muslim cleric
mujaddid	reformer (Islam)
muqaddam	sectional leader of a Sufi brotherhood
nanburu	a porridge served at special occasion; e.g. on Good Friday to break the fast of Lent
nanjafu	warrior stage of an ancestor (ATR Manjago)
Nasin Batsi	name for God (ATR Manjago)
ngenyo	artisan caste (Wolof)
ninkinanka	fabulous snake (ATR Wolof)
nyamo	power (ATR Mandinka)
oeyi	priest-king (ATR Jola)
padroado	series of papal bulls from the 15 th century which divided the newly discovered world between Spain and Portugal
pul na do	naming ceremony (Krio)
pul na stop	ceremony in which the family of the groom begs for the hand of the bride (Krio)
sabu-tiyolu	traditional healers (Mandinka)
seitane	creature that steals small children (ATR Wolof)
shariah	Muslim code of law

shaykh	leader of a Sufi brotherhood
signares	African or Mulatto women who had married European traders; many signares were influential traders themselves
sinaati	(<i>enaati sing.</i>) spirits (ATR Jola)
soninke ^{yaa}	Mandinka traditional religion
soriya	warrior party in the Islam state of Futa Jallon
tariqa	term for a Sufi (mystical Islam) path
tega	smiths (Wolof)
tessito	sharing; e.g. <i>tessito</i> building means building a structure while everyone participates
tobaski	local name for Id al Kabir
tubabobanko	literally: settlement of the whites; that part of Combo which was occupied by the British in the 19 th century; also known as British Combo
tyeddo	aristocracy (Wolof)
ude	leatherworkers (Wolof)
wali	saint (Islam)
wird	Muslim Sufi brotherhood

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Stating the problem

In 1456 the Portuguese explorer Diogo Gomes set foot ashore on the banks of the river Gambia. Gomes was sent by Prince Henry the Navigator to explore the riches of West Africa and to search for Prester John, the Christian king who could serve as an ally against the Muslim forces of North Africa. But alas for Gomes, there was no Christian king in West Africa. Most people in 15th century West Africa confessed the African traditional religions and Islam had begun to make headway at the courts. Undisturbed by and possibly unaware of these facts, Gomes visited the chief of Niimi, a state on the North Bank of the river Gambia. The *Mansa* received Gomes hospitably. In the conversation that ensued between the two men, religion featured prominently. Gomes answered questions about Christianity and challenged the Muslim faith of the *Niimi Mansa* and his Muslim adviser. The result of the conversation, according to Gomes, was that the *Mansa* expelled the Muslim counsellor from his court and requested baptism. Gomes therefore travelled home with the joyful news that, though he had not found Prester John, there was an African chief who had requested baptism. The prospects for bringing Christianity to The Gambia seemed bright.

About 500 years later the Anglican bishop Timothy Olufosoye no longer shared this optimism. Most of the people in The Gambia had become Muslims and the Christian community was small. When Olufosoye reflected on the history of Christianity and of the Anglican Church in The Gambia in the 1960s, he exclaimed: 'There are no more than 3 percent who are Christians. (...) The attitude is that we have "toiled all night and caught nothing".'¹ The title of this dissertation refers to this statement.

Olufosoye's estimate that the Christian community in The Gambia was about three percent is still valid. According to the latest census of 1993 42.083 people in The Gambia profess Christianity, a number which, compared to the statistics of the Gambian churches, seems rather high.² The total population of the country is estimated at about 1.2 million. This would imply that around 3.5 percent of the total

¹ T. Olufosoye, *The condition of the diocese of Gambia and Rio Pongas*, 2 (actual page number should be 5 because the page number 2 is repeated page after page), Anglican Archives, Bishops Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File. Note: This quotation seems to have been a favourite passage of Samuel M. Zwemer, who worked amongst Muslims in Egypt and Arabia for more than 38 years (1890-1929) and was active as a publisher and conference speaker on the relation Christianity and Islam. W. Miller, *A Christian's response to Islam*, Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne 1986 (1976), 90. See also A. Neely, 'Samuel Marinus Zwemer' in G. Anderson, *Biographical dictionary of Christian mission*, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, New York 1998, 763.

² A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, The Scarecrow Press, London 1999 (third edition), 146. According to the churches' statistics 35.000 would be more in line with reality.

population is Christian. According to the same statistics some 95 percent of the population professes Islam. Diogo Gomes' optimism with regard to a speedy evangelisation of The Gambia proved wrong. Five and a half centuries of Christian endeavour in The Gambia did not lead to mass conversion of either traditional believers or Muslims to Christianity.

This book is first of all the story of the missionary toil, European as well as African, on the banks of the river Gambia. It endeavours to give an overview of the history of Christianity in that area of West Africa, which later became known as The Gambia. This history starts in 1456, when the first Portuguese set foot ashore in the Gambia. The year 2000 has been chosen as the closing date for the research. In the description of the history of Christianity, special attention is paid to the relation with Islam because Islam undeniably forms the context for Christianity in The Gambia.

The study does not merely want to be a history of Christianity in The Gambia. When Olufosoye quoted from Luke 5:5 he did not just vent his disillusionment at the situation in The Gambia. From the remaining part of the report it becomes clear that Olufosoye had the whole story of Luke 5 in mind when he quoted the passage. To grasp his line of thought we have to go back to the gospel story.

The context of the verse is the calling of the first disciples. According to the story the disciples were fishermen. They had gone out all night fishing, but caught nothing. Jesus, standing on the shore, then suggests to the fishermen to 'put out into deep water'. In other words: to try again, but differently. From that moment onwards the story takes an unexpected turn: the nets are breaking because of the fish and the fishermen are called to become disciples, followers of Jesus. The story marks a turning point in the life of the disciples. A similar turning point can be detected in Olufosoye's report. There, the quotation from Luke 'we have toiled all night but caught nothing' is followed by suggestions how to relate to Muslims in a new way and how to become a meaningful and credible witness in Muslim society in a non-confrontational manner.

This book, in its description of the history of Christianity in The Gambia, wants to give special attention to the journey of the Christian community in The Gambia in relating to Muslims. This has often proven to be an up-hill journey, but prayerfully searching the churches are finding new avenues into the future. Below, in paragraph 1.3, some past and present models of being a Christian community in a non-Christian (Muslim) society are described. These models serve as focal points for the churches' attitude towards the Muslim community and are used as evaluative criteria to define the stance of the Christian community in the various periods discussed. The last chapter of this book explicitly reflects on the effectiveness of the models. The ultimate aim of this study is not to offer a solution to the quest of the Gambian Christian community. It rather wants to help reflect and search. Only at the very end some suggestions for a new direction are made; a direction that hopefully might not prove too heavy a burden nor end up in a blind alley.

A history of Christianity in The Gambia can be written from many perspectives. It can be written from a Gambian Christian perspective, written by someone who him or herself is a Gambian Christian. It is also possible that someone from outside the Christian community, a Muslim for example, would write a history. It would be interesting to see how the Muslim community experienced the

emergence of the Christian Church in its midst. It is also possibly to describe the history of Christianity as part of the larger, secular history of the country. My perspective is none of the before. I am looking at the history of Gambian Christianity as outsider, and yet an involved outsider. For six years (1993-1999) I have worked as a minister in the Gambian Methodist Church and was attached to Gambia Christian Council as an adviser for the Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa. I was young, white, female, ordained and Protestant. That is where I stand.

The sources used for this research (for details see paragraph 1.6) are far from unbiased. Most of the archival material was written by men, white ordained men for that matter. Only in the 20th century Africans have had a fair share in the correspondence and the reports. Women hardly feature. Though many of the Methodist and Anglican missionaries had wives, they were never invited to contribute to quarterly letters and rarely does one even find a first name. Wives of missionaries were considered to be exactly that: wives of missionaries: Mrs. William Moister, Mrs. Henry Wilkinson etc. No doubt these women have made their own substantial contributions to the life of the church but most of it has been lost in history. Only in the 20th century single women were sent out as missionaries, mainly as educationalists and nurses. But their contribution to the written material is limited. On the Roman Catholic side the female religious have greatly contributed to the development of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny served in The Gambia in the early 1820s and returned to The Gambia in 1883. Since their return they have played a significant role in medical work and girls' education. They and other female congregations have taken upon themselves tasks that otherwise would have been neglected: education for school dropouts, nursery schools, vocational education, orphanages etc. To the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary who worked in The Gambia from 1850-1883 belongs the honour of having started with consistent and continuous female education in The Gambia. Yet the nuns are hardly mentioned in the official reports, except in the statistical overviews of personnel. Only their own private archives, or rather what is left of them for much has been lost due to fire and other calamities, mention their contribution.

The biases, in the sources and in personal stand, are many. Nevertheless, an effort has been made to paint a fair yet involved picture of the history of Christianity in The Gambia. Where possible, the archival material was crosschecked by other sources. In reading the material I have endeavoured to keep in mind that many of the missionaries were racially and culturally biased in their description of Africans and African culture. Especially in cases of conflict between white missionaries and African church workers this awareness has guided my descriptions. Letters and reports written by Africans, few as they are in 19th and early 20th centuries, have received extra attention and importance. In the missionary reports and letters I have tried to read between the lines in an effort to recover the large, but undocumented, African contribution to the history of Christianity in The Gambia.

Writing this book was a journey of exploration. And as many explorers have discovered before me: exploring is at times a tedious job. But the joy of discovering unexpected riches makes it all worthwhile.

1.2 The Gambia: a short description

The Gambia is a small West African country of about 10403 square kilometres. It is Africa's smallest country. It consists of the Gambia river, which takes its rise in the Futa Jallon plateau, and its two riverbanks. In the West, the Atlantic Ocean borders the country. On all other sides, Senegal surrounds the country. The borders follow the river for about 487 kilometres inland and are drawn at about 10 kilometres from the riverside. The colonial officer Henry Reeve spoke about the country as 'a snake dying a French grey desert'³, while Harry Gailey, less poetically, has called it 'the most ridiculous borders ever drawn'.⁴ A history of the country can be found in chapter 3.

According to the 1993 census the population around the millenium change was about 1.2 million. Around 95 percent of the people are Muslim and 3.5 percent Christian. The remaining 1.5 percent belongs to the African traditional religions. But the dividing lines are not as clear as these statistics seem to suggest. Many Muslims and Christians still participate in traditional ceremonies.

The country has a large number of ethnic groups, most of which can also be found in neighbouring Senegal. The Mandinka, the Wolof, the Fula, the Jola, the Serer, the Serahuli, the Manjago and the Akou are the most important ones. Their history and religion are described in chapter 2. Though in certain areas of the country there are concentration settlements of a particular ethnic group, The Gambia has a tradition of interethnic and interreligious mingling. Villages seldom consist of one ethnic group only and the different ethnic groups intermarry. Muslims, Christians and traditional believers can be found living side by side. An exception is formed in those cases where the Christians or traditional believers (e.g. Manjago) rear pigs. This has been found an obstacle in cohabitation with Muslims.

The Gambia is a predominantly agricultural society, but the soil is poor and rainfall scarce. Rain only falls during the rainy season, which lasts from July to October. In recent years many a crop has failed due to irregular or limited precipitation. Therefore only a limited number of crops can be grown. Groundnuts are the prime export product and have been the country's cash crop since the late 19th century. In more recent years, with the groundnut prices tumbling, sesame seed has grown in importance as export product. Rice, millet and vegetables are grown for local use, but the arid savannah climate and the increasing desertification of the country have made agriculture difficult. The country has no industry to speak off, but tourism has been an importance source of income since the 1960s.

The Gambia is a predominantly rural country. There is a concentration of people in what is called 'the greater Banjul area', near the coast on the south bank. There are also a few towns in the rural areas but these are small and of limited importance. In many ways the rural areas are still lagging behind in development. The two main roads in the rural areas are of debatable quality. There is no electricity

³ H.F. Reeve, *The Gambia: its history ancient, mediaeval and modern: together with its geographical and ethnographical conditions and a description of the birds, beasts and fishes found therein*, Smith, Elder & Co, London 1912, 104.

⁴ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1964, x.

in the majority of the rural villages and only recently most villages have access to clean drinking water provisions. Only in the late 1990s a country wide telephone system was installed. Before that, communication with people up-country was difficult and could only be done by personal carrier.

1.3 Sketching the models

The Gambia is a predominantly Muslim country with a small Christian community, which forms a minority of about 3.5 percent. Throughout history the Christian community has had different ways of relating to Muslims. These attitudes can be abstracted into models of interacting with Muslims. Four of these models, the ones that have featured in the history of Christianity in The Gambia, are described below. They are the models of expansion, of diakonia, of presence and of dialogue. This study wants to discern how, in the history of Christianity in The Gambia, these models have functioned, what their strengths and weaknesses have been, what responses they have evoked and whether they have aided the churches in their witness in society.

The models used are relational models. They focus on the relation between the Christian and the Muslim community. They are to some extent different from and in other areas overlap the classic models of mission, such as those described by Voetius: 'the conversion of the heathen', 'the implantation of churches' and 'the glory and manifestation of the grace of God'.⁵ Also the model of the Christianisation of society is not discussed. The models discussed in this study are solely those, which are relevant in the Gambian context in relation to Muslims.

Two remarks need to be made when discussing models. First of all, models are always a fabrication of a writer. They are abstract 'ideals' or 'ideas' rather than that they represent existing realities. Therefore they might not actually be found in a 'pure' form. A model is first of all meant as an aid to clarify reality. Secondly, the models mentioned are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Different models may balance or complement each other and may occur simultaneously in history, even within one and the same church at the same time. Some of the models however, would seem to exclude each other because they are based on principles that contradict each other.⁶

The model of expansion

The model of expansion is that model which seeks the geographical and/or numerical spread of Christianity.⁷ The 'other' is a person to be converted to

⁵ J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary missiology: an introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1978, 183.

⁶ H. Snyder, 'Models of the Kingdom: sorting out the practical meaning of God's reign' in V. Samuel and C. Sugden, *Mission as transformation: a theology of the whole gospel*, Regnum, Carlisle 1999, 119.

⁷ K. Steenbrink, 'The mission of dialogue after 11 September 2001', *Exchange* 31/2 (2002), 115. Steenbrink draws a parallel between the Muslim conception of the world, which divides into the 'dar al-Islam' and the 'dar al-harb' and the Christian model of expansion, which divides the world into 'the church', and in 'partis infidelium.'

Christianity, to be incorporated into the folds of the church. The model of expansion has been interpreted in a variety of ways: as the conversion of individuals, as the extension of the corpus Christianum, as the planting of churches, as an emphasis on numerical church growth etc

The understanding of the church's mission as 'geographical and/or numerical expansion' has a long tradition. Timothy Yates detects this notion already in *The Acts of the Apostles*. According to Yates Luke composed his book of *Acts* around the theme of the geographical spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome.⁸ Throughout church history the model of expansion has played a key role. Much of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries Protestant and Roman missionary activity saw the spread of Christianity as the main missionary task. Conversion of individuals, the planting of churches and to some extent the Christianisation of African societies and cultures were key elements in the missionary movement.⁹ Yates has observed that the model of expansion was the predominant understanding of mission until well into the 20th century.¹⁰ The slogan of the missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was 'evangelisation of the world in this generation'.¹¹ A Roman Catholic encyclical letter called *Maximum Illud*, from 1919 breathes the same atmosphere. It was subtitled 'On spreading the Catholic faith throughout the world'.¹² The model of expansion is still regarded important in the mainline churches: the spread of Christianity through the evangelisation is still a priority on the churches' agenda's. But in more recent years other models of relating to people of other faiths have gradually gained in significance. In circles of the Lausanne committee, founded in 1974, the model expansion is still the predominant model of relating to people of other faiths.¹³ In the Manila Manifesto of 1989, the participants (again) committed themselves to world-evangelism and called for the evangelisation of the world by AD 2000.¹⁴ A statement from 1995 speaks about 'a church for every people and the

⁸ T. Yates, *Christian missions in the twentieth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, 7.

⁹ L. Sanneh, 'Should Christianity be missionary? An appraisal and an agenda', *Dialogue: a journal of theology*, 40/2 (summer 2001), 91. Also the church-growth movement of D.A. McGavran emphasises the model of expansion. Numbers and statistics play an important role in this movement. D.A. McGavran, *Understanding church growth*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1987, 7, 9.

¹⁰ T. Yates, *Christian missions in the twentieth century*, 7.

¹¹ T. Yates, *Christian missions in the twentieth century*, 12. I.P.C. van 't Hof has shown that the terminology used in Edinburgh was one of conquest and militancy: the world had to be 'conquered' by 'Christian forces' and missionaries were 'soldiers in the army of God.' I.P.C. van 't Hof, *Op zoek naar het geheim van de zending: in dialoog met de wereldzendingconferenties 1910-1963*, H. Veenman en Zonen, Wageningen 1972, 28.

¹² R.J. Schreier, 'Changes in Roman Catholic attitudes towards proselytism and mission' in J.A. Scherer; S.B. Bevans, *New Directions in mission and evangelism 2: theological foundation*, Orbis books, Maryknoll 1994, 114, 115.

¹³ J.A. Scherer; S.B. Bevans, *New directions in mission and evangelization 1: basic statements 1974-1991*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll 1992, 256.

¹⁴ The document speaks about 'the unreached' and 'the unevangelised'. J.A. Scherer; S.B. Bevans, *New directions in mission and evangelisation 1: basic statements*, 303.

gospel for every person by AD 2000'.¹⁵ David Bosch has observed that the challenge of the Lausanne committee has led to a renewed interest in evangelism among ecumenicals.¹⁶

The model of expansion has been tainted by its close association with power throughout most of the Christian history. Expansion, the spread of Christianity, became expansionism: territorial expansion. Thomas Thangaraj believes that from the Edict of Milan (313 CE) onwards, the spread of Christianity was linked with power. Lamin Sanneh points to the close connection between power and the spread of Christianity at the time of maritime expansion of Europe and the beginning of the colonisation and exploitation of the non-western world from the 15th century onwards.¹⁷ Most writers see the *Padroado* as the classical example of the alliance between power and Christian expansion.¹⁸ But also in later centuries, for example during the colonial period in the 19th and 20th centuries, this link between power and Christian expansion persisted.¹⁹ Many of the Church Missionary Society missionaries were paid by the British government and the missionary societies received government subventions for their medical and educational work. Only after the decolonisation the close alliance between the spread of Christianity and power disappeared. Only certain evangelical circles continue to stress territorial expansion. Their language is one of militancy. Some groups speak about 'targeting people' and 'penetrating every geographical and political border'.²⁰

The model of expansion – often in the sense of expansionism – is closely linked with the history of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. From the time of the Portuguese explorers onwards until the modern era the model of expansion has played a key role in the motivation for missionary activities (ecumenical as well as evangelical, Western as well as African) in Africa. The African, traditional believer or Muslim, was 'the other', a non-Christian, who had to be converted. Kenneth Scott Latourette places the whole history of Christianity in Africa under the heading of *A history of the expansion of Christianity*.²¹

¹⁵ GCOWE 1995 Declaration: AD 2000 and beyond movement.

www.ad2000.org/handbook/gcowedcl.htm. Date: May 16 2003.

¹⁶ D.J. Bosch, 'In search for a new evangelical understanding' in B.J. Nicholls, *In word and deed: evangelism and social responsibility*, Paternoster Press, Exeter 1985, 67.

¹⁷ L. Sanneh, 'Should Christianity be missionary?', 89, 90. See also D.J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Orbis Book, Maryknoll 1997, 228.

¹⁸ The *Padroado* consisted of a series of papal bulls in the late 15th century in which the Holy See delegated the absolute authority over the newly discovered and to be discovered territories to the thrones of Portugal and Spain. The delegated authority was both in worldly and in religious matters, meaning that the kings of Spain and Portugal had absolute control over the churches in the 'New World.'

¹⁹ According to D. O'Connor the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) was established in 1701 following the 'English charters to "conquer, occupy and possess" lands occupied by "heathen and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world".' D. O'Connor e.o. (ed.) *Three centuries of mission: the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701-2000*, Continuum, London 2000, 7.

²⁰ www.ad2000.org/histover.htm. Date: May 16 2003.

²¹ K.S. Latourette, *A history of the expansion of Christianity*, Harper and Brothers publishers, New York 1937-1945. Vol. 5, called *The great advance*, deals with Africa.

In Africa the setting of the model of expansion has often been the competition with Islam. Thangaraj points that out for the period of the rise of Islam, Sanneh for the period of Crusades and the Reconquista which formed the background to the *Padroado* and Yates for the beginning of the 20th century, when the 'race for Africa' between Islam and Christianity occupied the thoughts of Christian missionary societies.²² L. Rasmussen cites a quotation, which gives an excellent example of the model of expansion as competition with Islam:

Christian mission in the early period in both countries was seen by missionaries as a race against Islam. The headpiece of DFSM's [the Danish Sudan Mission] writing paper from the early mission period reads: 'DFSM wants to bring the Gospel to Sudan's millions of pagans before they are conquered by the advancing Muhammedanism. WHO WILL BE THE VICTOR? CHRIST OR MUHAMMAD?'²³

The model of diakonia

The model of diakonia stands for the fundamental choice of the church to identify itself with God's ministry of reconciliation of the world, in word and deed and attitude. It finds its inspiration and ultimate foundation in the church's own reconciliation with God and her willingness and call to follow Christ in this holistic ministry of reconciliation. In this model 'the other', Christian and non-Christian, is first all conceived as a person, who is included in God's mission of reconciliation and therefore he or she is a fellow human being to be served.

The model of diakonia is as old as the Christian community itself. Though the concept can be founded on both Old Testament and New Testament values,²⁴ ultimately diakonia finds its model and inspiration in Jesus Christ as the great *Diakonos*.²⁵ Throughout the history of Christianity diakonia has been part of the Christian mission. Hans van der Lee, Frederick Herzog and others give examples of diakonia in the history of Christianity.²⁶ Also in the mission history of the 19th and 20th centuries, diakonia has played a significant role. J.A.B. Jongeneel calls this

²² M.T. Thangaraj, *The common task: a theology of Christian mission*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1999, 107, 108; L. Sanneh, 'Should Christianity be missionary?', 90; T. Yates, *Christian missions in the twentieth century*, 28, 29.

²³ L. Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim relations in Africa: the case of Northern Nigeria and Tanzania compared*, British Academic Press London, 1993, 38. Note DFSM stands for Dansk Forenet Sudan Mission, the Danish branch of the Sudan United Mission.

²⁴ N.W. Proteous, 'The care for the poor in the Old Testament' in J.I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (ed.), *Service in Christ: essays presented to Karl Barth on his 80th birthday*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1966, 27-36; C.E.B. Cranfield, 'Diakonia in the New Testament' in J.I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (ed.), *Service in Christ: essays presented to Karl Barth on his 80th birthday*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1966, 37-48. See also H. van der Lee, *Verkondig het Koninkrijk: een bijbelse visie voor diaconaat onder de armen in de Derde Wereld*, Buijten & Schipperheijn, Amsterdam 2001, 58, 59.

²⁵ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, science and theology of mission in the 19th and 20th centuries*, II, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 309.

²⁶ H. van der Lee, *Verkondig het Koninkrijk*, 26-34; F. Herzog, 'Diakonia in modern times: eighteenth–twentieth centuries' in J.I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (ed.), *Service in Christ: essays presented to Karl Barth on his 80th birthday*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1966, 135-150.

'missionary diaconics' or 'missionary service'.²⁷ Missionary diakonia has often taken the form of education, medical, welfare and relief work and development projects such as agricultural programmes, well-digging etc.²⁸

During the 19th century awareness grew that there was a difference between 'charity' and 'diakonia': charity just alleviated the needs of people, whereas diakonia addressed the more fundamental underlying issues such as poverty, oppression, power structures etc.²⁹ Only in the 20th century the church drew its conclusions from this discovery and the view of diakonia changed radically.

From the 1950s onward the theological foundation of diakonia changed.³⁰ Within WCC circles diakonia was no longer first of all grounded in the signs and miracles of Jesus Christ during his life-time but in the totality of Jesus' life and ministry in the service of reconciliation: Jesus as the servant who gave his life as a ransom for all. In the Roman Catholic Church a similar development took place. J.M.R. Tillard observed that diakonia belonged to the very *being* of the church.³¹ Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians alike have come to share this fundamental change in interpretation of diakonia.³² This has implied a much more holistic and encompassing approach of diakonia. It was more than being 'just service', which so often had a 'from top to bottom', a 'from rich to poor' approach.³³ Diakonia changed from being a service of the church to an attitude of the whole people of God, participating in the *missio Dei*.³⁴ Herzog has pointedly stated: 'Sharing completely in the mysterious love of Christ, it does not calculate whether the neighbour merits love. The basic question of *diakonia* is not whether the

²⁷ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, science and theology of mission in the 19th and 20th centuries*, II, 307.

²⁸ See for example J. Verkuyl, *Daar en nu: over de assistentie aan de kerken in Azië, Afrika en Latijns America in de huidige situatie*, Kok, Kampen 1966, 108-122 and J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, science and theology of mission in the 19th and 20th centuries*, II, 313-336.

²⁹ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, science and theology of mission in the 19th and 20th centuries*, II, 312.

³⁰ For the reasons of this change, see J. Verkuyl, 'Het werelddiakonaat' in I.H. Enklaar, *Onze blijvende opdracht: de Nederlandse deelname aan wereldzending en werelddiakonaat in een nieuwe tijd*, Kok, Kampen 1968, 115, 116. This development coincided with a change of focus within theology from being church-centred to being kingdom-centred. The world rather than the church became the centre of attention. In addition, Berkhof noted that in the 1960s the apostolic commitment to the world shifted into a diaconal commitment. H. Berkhof, *Christian faith: an introduction to the study of the faith*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1986 (revised edition), 418.

³¹ J.M.R. Tillard, 'The mission of the Councils of Churches', *The Ecumenical Review* 45/3 (1993), 272.

³² D. Bosch, 'In search of a new evangelical understanding', 79; W.A. Whitehouse, 'Christological understanding', in J.I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (ed.), *Service in Christ: essays presented to Karl Barth on his 80th birthday*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1966, 155.

³³ K. Bediako, 'Theological reflections' in T. Yamamori, B.L. Myers, K. Bediako, L. Reed (ed.), *Serving with the poor in Africa: cases in holistic ministry*, MARC, Monrovia 1996, 186, 187.

³⁴ R.J. Schreiter, 'Changes in Roman Catholic attitudes towards proselytism and mission', 116, 117.

neighbour needs my love, but whether I am capable of sharing God's love.³⁵ This holistic interpretation of diakonia has led to the participation of the church in ministries of reconciliation, liberation and social change.³⁶ It has implied questioning power structures, including its own, putting everything in the revealing light of reconciliation.³⁷

In evangelical circles this change in interpretation of diakonia is not shared and the subordination of diakonia to evangelisation is maintained. A joint statement of Lausanne Committee and the World Evangelical Fellowship from Grand Rapids, 1982 saw diakonia as 'a gift of the Spirit', which can be 'a bridge to evangelism' and a way to 'break down prejudices and suspicion, open closed doors and gain a hearing for the Gospel'.³⁸ However, there is no agreement among evangelicals about the relation between diakonia and evangelism.³⁹ Newer evangelical publications stress the need for a holistic ministry of both word and deed.⁴⁰ But all these views maintain that diakonia is an aspect of the church rather than its being.

Diakonia has played a crucial role in the evangelisation of Africa. As early as the late 18th century schools were built in Sierra Leone. Thousands of schools, medical centres and development projects followed all over Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁴¹ After the independence of the various countries, most governments have nationalised the schools and hospitals. There has also been an influx of non-governmental organisations that have addressed problems in society. This increase in aid and relief organisations and pressure groups has posed the pungent question to the churches what distinguishes Christian diakonia from secular aid organisations and NGO's and what new form diakonia could assume in this new situation.

The model of presence

The model of presence is that model which interprets witness as the silent testimony of living and working with and among people in the name of Christ, as a sign of

³⁵ F. Herzog, 'Diakonia in modern times: eighteenth-twentieth centuries', 136.

³⁶ Most authors underline that this does not negate the dimension of spiritual reconciliation, quoting the words of Visser 't Hooft that the deepest need of people consists of not knowing or not having heard of Christ. E.g. F.J. Pop, *Zo is God bij de mensen*, Boekencentrum, Den Haag 1967, 49.

³⁷ One of the intensely debated issues in missiology has been the relation of diakonia to mission. Hoekendijk spoke about diakonia as the 'pantomime of salvation', rejecting the view that diakonia was a preparation for evangelisation. According to Hoekendijk 'service (...) is itself a proclamation of the gospel in living works. Pantomime of salvation, even without an accompanying spoken text.' F.J. Pop considered diakonia as one of the ministries of the church and as 'signs of the kingdom'. J.C. Hoekendijk, 'Pantomime van het heil', *Wending*, XI (1956/1957), 680-694; F.J. Pop, *Zo is God bij de mensen*, 48.

³⁸ J.A. Scherer; S.B. Bevans, *New directions in mission and evangelization 1: basic statements 1974-1991*, 278, 279.

³⁹ T. Adeyemo, 'A critical evaluation of contemporary perspectives', in B.J. Nicholls, *In word and deed*, Paternoster Press, Exeter 1985, 48-57.

⁴⁰ E.g. P. Hiebert 'Anthropological and missiological reflections' in T. Yamamori, *Serving with the poor in Asia*, MARC, Grand Rapids 1995, 134.

⁴¹ In the 20th century also Muslim organisations have begun to use schools, hospitals and development projects in the propagation of Islam in Africa.

Christ's involvement with and presence in the world.⁴² In this model 'the other, his religion or his choice to refrain from religion, and his culture are respected for what they are and an attempt is made to witness to Christ in an incarnational, non-confrontational way by sharing the ups and downs of life.

There are two different traditions within the Christian heritage that emphasise the importance of presence. The oldest is the monastic tradition. According to J. Hoeberichts, Francis of Assisi was among the first to stress the value of presence in a Muslim society, though the word presence is not used in his writings.⁴³ Cardinal Charles Lavigerie of Algiers, founder of the missionary society the White Fathers does explicitly mention the concept.⁴⁴ Lavigerie instructed his missionaries to see inculturation and presence as pre-requisites for mission.⁴⁵ Missionaries were instructed to go and live among Muslims, adopting their culture, their dress, their food and their language in order to gain their confidence and create a conducive atmosphere for future witness. An age mate of Lavigerie, Charles de Foucauld reiterated the importance of presence and inculturation for mission. He saw an inculturated presence, which took the shape of friendship and service, as a form of 'pre-evangelism'.⁴⁶ Foucauld, who lived among the Tuareg in the Sahara, based his approach of presence on the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth during the first thirty years of his life.⁴⁷ Max Warren, another advocate of presence taking the form of

⁴² See for certain aspects of this definition C.E. Shenk, *A relevant theology of presence*, Mission Focus Pamphlet, Elkhart 1982, 34.

⁴³ In chapter 16 of his *Regula non bullata* Francis of Assisi gives guidelines for his brothers who work among Muslims. He calls upon his brothers to live humbly and in submission in an Islamic society in order to live out a ministry of reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. J. Hoeberichts, *Franciscus en de Islam*, Van Gorcum, Assen 1994, 50; J.M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes: Islam and Christianity in history I*, PISAI, Rome 1990, 152, 153. Arnulf Camps disputes the idea that chapter 16 of the *Regula non bullata* should be interpreted in terms of 'presence.' See J. Hoeberichts and A. Camps, *Franciscus en de Islam*, Franciscans Studiecentrum, Utrecht 1991, 39. It is often suggested that the famous prayer of Francis of Assisi 'Lord make me an instrument of your peace', was formulated against the background of the encounter between Francis of Assisi and the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Mamluk Egypt in 1219

⁴⁴ According to Hoedemaker and others the term 'presence' as mission strategy was first used among the White Fathers. See L.A. Hoedemaker; A. Houtepen; T. Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces, inleiding in de oecumene*, Meinema, Zoetermeer 1993, 68.

⁴⁵ M..J. Dor; J. Fisset, 'Pères Blancs et Soeurs Blanches, Tunisie et Algérie: fondation, développement, travaux apostolique' in H. Tessier (ed.), *Histoire des Chrétiens d'Afrique du Nord, Lybia, Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc*, Desclée, Paris 1991, 174. In a way Muslim clerics such as the Jakhanke have also practised the concept of presence. They spread Islam through settling in a non-Muslim environment and living out their faith, while practising services for the community. For more details see 4.3.

⁴⁶ M. Boucrot, *Une recontre vécue de l'Islam et du Christianisme: Charles de Foucauld*, Thesis written to obtain the degree of 'Maîtrise en Théologie' (unpublished) Paris 1977, 52. See also J.A.C. Rullmann, "'Présence chrétienne" als legitieme zendingsmethode', *De Heerbaan, tijdschrift voor zendingswetenschap*, 24/5 en 6 (1971), 298.

⁴⁷ B. Bürkert-Engel, *Charles de Foucauld: Christliche Präsenz unter Muslime: Analyse and kritische Auseinandersetzung mit einer Islamrezeption in Biographie und Nachlass*, Lit, Münster 2000, 253, 254. See also C. Wright, 'Nazareth as model for mission in the life of Charles de Foucauld', *Mission Studies*, XIX, 1-37 (2002), 44. Also Christ's presence in the

friendship, summarised Foucauld's position as 'being *present* among people with a presence willed and intended as a witness of the love of Christ.'⁴⁸

Several people have drawn inspiration from Foucauld's ideas about presence as 'imitation of the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth'. Louis Massignon and Mary Kalil together founded the community of the Badaliya, 'a sort of "invisible community" of people who accepted to offer their lives to God for Muslims, for their salvation in union with Christ crucified for all men.'⁴⁹ In the footsteps of Charles Foucauld the religious orders of the Little Brothers of Jesus (1933) and the Little Sisters of Jesus (1939) were founded. These brothers and sisters endeavour to live out the 'hidden life of Nazareth' in places where Christ seems to be not (or no longer) present.⁵⁰

The second tradition of presence gained prominence in post-World War II Europe. In France 'presence' came to represent the way in which Roman Catholic priest-labourers endeavoured to restore contact with those parts of society from which the church had become estranged.⁵¹ This new tradition applied the concept of presence to the industrialised and secularised world from which the church seemed to have disappeared or seemed irrelevant, rather than to a predominantly Muslim setting.⁵²

The World Student Christian Federation, headed by Phillip Potter, took up the term 'presence' for use in the student world. There it came to mean a new mission endeavour in a world in which the words 'mission' and 'witness' had become too pretentious. Potter described 'presence' as:

The adventure of being there in the name of Christ, often anonymously, listening before we speak, hoping that men will recognize Jesus for what he is and stay where they are, involved in the fierce fight against all that dehumanizes, ready to act against demonic powers, to identify with the outcast, merciless in ridiculing modern idols and new myths. (...) In one sense of the word, presence precedes witness. In another, the very presence is witness.⁵³

Both among the priest-labourers and within WSCF circles the Christian presence implied a subversion of the *status quo*, in society as well as in the Christian community, and a continuous struggle for the restoration of human dignity.⁵⁴

Eucharist played a key-role in Foucauld's theology of presence: bringing the host into a certain area, meant bringing Christ there. B. Bürkert-Engel, *Charles de Foucauld: Christliche Präsenz unter Muslime*, 255, 256.

⁴⁸ M. Warren, *A theology of attention*, Diocesan Press, Madras 1971, 68.

⁴⁹ J.M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes I*, 323.

⁵⁰ B. Bürkert-Engel, *Charles de Foucauld: Christliche Präsenz unter Muslime*, 293, 294.

⁵¹ J. Verkuyl, *Inleiding in de evangelistiek*, Kok, Kampen 1978, 128ff.; See also J. Dimmet, 'Towards the discovery of a genuine presence', *Student world*, 3 (1965), 225, 226.

⁵² J. Ellul, *Staan in de wereld van nu*, Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, Amsterdam s.n. (The original French title is called: *Présence au monde moderne*).

⁵³ P. Potter, 'Editorial', *Student world*, 3 (1965), 210. Potter saw the concepts of 'God's Shekinah (Ex. 3:1-14) and Jesus as the Shekinah who had become incarnate (Emmanuel) as the biblical foundations for his theology of presence.

⁵⁴ General Committee Statement WSCF, 'The Christian community in the academic world', *Student world*, 3 (1965), 234. See also M.A. Thung, 'Christian presence and collective choices', *Student World*, 3 (1965), 274.

The double function of 'presence' as a preparation for witness and as the witness itself can also be found with the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, Max Warren. Warren applied the concept of 'presence' to the theology of religions. To Warren 'presence' indicated an attitude of openness and friendship, of listening before speaking and truly trying to understand the other in his/her otherness. Rather than speaking about 'a theology of presence', Warren preferred the term 'theology of attention'.⁵⁵ The Chang Mai meeting of the WCC honoured 'presence' as an authentic and distinct form of mission.⁵⁶

The model of 'presence' was developed in North Africa by the White Fathers and by Charles the Foucauld. In the 20th century it was taken into sub-Saharan Africa by the same White Fathers. Their example has been followed by both Roman Catholics of other congregations and by missionaries from other Christian denominations and has especially been practised in areas with a predominantly Muslim population, like The Gambia.

The model of dialogue

The model of dialogue is that model which advocates an attitude of openness and respect to people of other faiths and the willingness of Christians to be challenged and changed in the encounter with people of other faiths, be it that the encounter takes place in an organised setting, be it that the encounter is the consequence of living in a plural religious society. The model of dialogue sees 'the other' first of all as a fellow pilgrim in the journey of life and as person who through his/her religion has some grasp of God, however partial is grasp may be.

Since the 1960s the term 'dialogue' has gained prominence in missiology.⁵⁷ The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, meeting in Mexico in 1963 stated: 'True dialogue with a man of another faith requires a concern both for the Gospel and for the other man. Without the first, dialogue becomes a pleasant conversation. Without the second, it becomes irrelevant, unconvincing or arrogant.'⁵⁸ The report of the Kandy meeting of 1967 went a step further by stating that dialogue was 'a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness.'⁵⁹ At the Chiang Mai consultation of 'Dialogue in Community' in 1977 dialogue was

⁵⁵ For a discussion of Warren's theology of presence and attention see G. Kings, *Christianity connected: Hindus, Muslims and the world in the letters of Max Warren and Roger Hooker*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer 2002, 122-133.

⁵⁶ D. Kerr, 'Christianity and Islam: an overview' in *Living among Muslims: experiences and concerns 5-12 July 1987*, Centre International Reformé, Genève 1987, 40.

⁵⁷ In some ways dialogue is not a new phenomenon. Verkuyl has pointed out that throughout history there have been people who have advocated a two-way rather than one-way communication in relation to people of other faiths and cultures. It seems fair however to state that in most cases this two-way conversation had an apologetic and/or polemic undertone. The dialogue was geared towards conversion rather than towards mutual understanding and mutual growth. J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary missiology: an introduction*, 362ff.

⁵⁸ Cites as in T. Yates, *Christian mission in the twentieth century*, 165, 166.

⁵⁹ V.E.W. Hayward, 'Three Kandy Meetings', *Study Encounter*, III/2 (1967), 55.

affirmed as an authentic vocation of the church, having its proper integrity alongside the many other specific ministries, which the church is called to fulfil in mission.⁶⁰

For the Roman Catholic Church the second Vatican Council formed a turning point in the relations with peoples of other faiths. In 1964 the Secretariat for non-Christians was founded to reflect on the encounter with non-Christians⁶¹ and a series of statements on the relations with non-Christians was issued. *Ad Gentes* stated that the Roman Catholic Church advocated a dialogue with the whole world about a diversity of problems⁶² while *Nostra Aetate* was the first official document to use the term dialogue in relation to people of other faiths.⁶³ The document re-evaluated the relations with Muslims (amongst others) and urged Christians and Muslims 'to strive sincerely for mutual understanding.' The encyclical was followed in 1969 by 'Guidelines for a dialogue between Muslims and Christians.' The guidelines recognised that though organised sessions of dialogue are significant, the most intense and important dialogue takes place in everyday life among people working and living together.⁶⁴ The present Pope, John Paul II, has actively promoted interreligious dialogue and has addressed the issue in his many visits to Africa.

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC have appreciated that dialogue is not just an occasion for mutual sharing and listening but also an event for mutual learning and enriching. The WCC *Study Encounter* 'Living in dialogue' states: 'It involves an expectation of something new happening - the opening of a new dimension of which one was not aware before. Dialogue implies the readiness to be changed as well as to influence others.'⁶⁵ Aylward Shorter in his book *The African synod: a personal response to the outline document* says:

Because the Church lives in a state of continual conversion, it welcomes dialogue with other religions. It is through dialogue that our understanding of the Christian faith develops, new insights are learned, and new discoveries are made. It is through dialogue that the historical Church is able to assume new cultural forms (inculturation) and be the instrument through which the existing cultures are increasingly permeated by Gospel values (evangelization). The Church and other religions become more what they are by growing closer together in dialogue.⁶⁶

In evangelical circles dialogue is regarded with suspicion. In the Frankfurt Declaration (1970) the evangelicals noted with concern that dialogue had replaced

⁶⁰ D. Kerr, 'Christianity and Islam: an overview', 40, 41.

⁶¹ In 1988 the Secretariat was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

⁶² M. Borrmans, *De dialoog tussen Christenen en Moslims*, De Horstink/Lannoo Den Haag 1981, 31.

⁶³ K. Steenbrink, 'The mission of dialogue', 123.

⁶⁴ Secretariat for non-Christians, *Guidelines for a dialogue between Muslims and Christians*, Ancora, Rome 1971, 7, 9.

⁶⁵ V.E.W. Hayward, 'Three Kandy Meetings', 54.

⁶⁶ A. Shorter, *The African synod: a personal response to the outline document*, St. Paul Publications-Africa, Nairobi 1991, 75.

the proclamation of the gospel and stressed that dialogue is valid only in those cases where it serves as a preparation for witness.⁶⁷

In the African setting, dialogue is first of all 'dialogue of life', the reality of living in a religiously plural society. Therefore the theme of dialogue, and especially the theme of dialogue with Muslims, was picked up with eagerness in the African churches. As early as 1959 European Protestant mission organisations in co-operation with African churches started the Islam in Africa project, which advocated a respectful attitude towards Muslims. The word dialogue became a key word within the project, which was later renamed PROCURA.⁶⁸ Christian Muslim relations also featured high on the agenda at the first meeting of the All African Conference of Churches in 1963 in Kampala. The Episcopal conferences of West Africa have responded enthusiastically to the call of promoting dialogue and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. The bishops of francophone West Africa nearly immediately took action upon the publication of the *Guidelines* published and a series of encounters with Muslims was organised from 1969 onwards.⁶⁹ The Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA), inaugurated in 1977, has set up a special commission on interreligious dialogue. The Commission has published a large number of documents on Christian Muslim relations since its inception.⁷⁰ Of late also the theme of dialogue with the African traditional religions is receiving attention.

1.4 Methodology

Describing and evaluating the history of Christianity in The Gambia in its context of a predominantly Muslim society is best done by a multi-dimensional approach. Therefore this study has employed resources from different disciplines of humanities and has used three methods of research: the historical method, the method of systematic theology and the comparative method.

The historical method has been used in the organisation, analysis and description of the primary and secondary sources. This method prevails in the chapters on the Gambian context and on the history of Christianity in The Gambia.

The systematic method is used in the evaluation of the historical chapters. Each of the historical chapters is evaluated with the help of the models of being a Christian community in a Muslim society, introduced in paragraph 1.3.

Both the systematic and comparative methods are used in chapter 10. In this last chapter the history of Christianity in The Gambia is evaluated and the different

⁶⁷ J.A.B. Jongeneel; J.M. van Engelen, 'Contemporary currents in missiology' in F.J. Verstraelen (ed.), *Missiology: an ecumenical introduction: texts and contexts of global Christianity*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1995, 454.

⁶⁸ Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa.

⁶⁹ P.B. Clarke, 'Christian approaches to Islam in Francophone West Africa in the post-independence era (1960-1983): from confrontation to dialogue', *Bulletin on Islam and Christian Muslim relations in Africa*, 1/2 (April 1983), 2, 3 ff.

⁷⁰ The Inter Religious Dialogue Commission was set up in 1981 and has been very active since. See http://membres.lycos.fr/cerao/anglais/aecawa/index_ae.htm. Date: May 28 2003.

models are compared and evaluated. The chapter ends with a proposal for a new model of being a Christian community in a Muslim society.

1.5 The structure of the study

This study is divided into three parts. The first part is formed by the chapters 2, 3 and 4. They serve as an introductory background to the core of this study: the history of Christianity in The Gambia. Chapter two makes a few introductory remarks about the different concepts of culture and about racist theories, after which the main ethnic groups in The Gambia are discussed. Special attention is paid to the religion of the ethnic groups and the missionary perceptions of the various ethnic groups. Chapter three gives a general overview of the history of the area, which is now called The Gambia. The chapter is not intended as an extensive research into the history of the country, but mainly wants to sketch the general background against which the Christian community in The Gambia emerged. A study about Christianity in The Gambia would not be complete if it would not pay attention to The Gambia's main religion: Islam. Chapter 4 therefore gives an overview of the history of Islam in The Gambia up till the present day. It also tries to discern when and how Islam became the predominant religion of the country.

The second part of the study consists of the chapters 5 to 9. They give an overview of the history of Christianity in The Gambia from the period 1456 until 2000. These chapters form the core of this study and most of the research that was conducted has served to piece together the story of Christianity in The Gambia. The chapters follow a chronological order and are divided into periods by dates from within the church history itself. Each of the chapters pays special attention to the indigenisation of the ministry and the relation between the Christian churches and the Islamic community, provided the material for a certain period was available. Each chapter ends with a reflection on the model or models used by the churches in relating to Muslims.

Chapter 5 discusses the earliest history of Christianity in The Gambia, starting from 1456 when the Portuguese set foot ashore in The Gambia. It gives an overview of the earliest attempts of the Portuguese, the French and the Courlanders to evangelise The Gambia and describes the Mulatto Christianity that emerged on the banks of the river Gambia. The chapter ends in 1820.

The year 1821 marked a new phase in the history of Christianity in The Gambia. After a period in which The Gambia was neglected as a missionary territory, different mission agencies were invited to settle in The Gambia by Governor Charles MacCarthy. This invitation resulted in vigorous attempts to evangelise the country. Chapter 6, discussing the period 1821-1848, describes the initial endeavours of missionary societies to establish themselves in The Gambia. Quakers, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Methodists all pass the review. The emphasis in chapter 6 is on the Methodist Church, the only mission that was able to consolidate its work in The Gambia in the early 19th century.

Chapter 7 begins with the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia in 1849 and discusses the period until 1916. It was a difficult period,

with much hardship, many wars, epidemics and a high death rate among missionaries. In 1917 the Methodist district gained its independence from Sierra Leone. This development was the beginning of the road to independence for the three main churches in The Gambia: the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church. This development is discussed in chapter 8. Chapter 8 also pays elaborate attention to an Anglican attempt to establish a Christian village as a witnessing community in the rural areas. The chapter ends in 1965, the year of Gambia's independence.

The last historical chapter, chapter 9, discusses the most recent history of Christianity in The Gambia. Apart from describing the development within the mainline churches, attention is paid to newly established Charismatic and Pentecostal churches and to the creation of the two ecumenical platforms in The Gambia: the Gambia Christian Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia. Also themes like inculturation, indigenisation and Christian Muslim relations are examined in this chapter.

Chapter 10 forms the third part of the study. In this chapter the history of Christianity is summarised and evaluated. Also the models of expansion, of diakonia, of presence and of dialogue are put in their Gambian historical context and evaluated. This chapter ends with a proposal for a different model of relating to Muslims: a model of kenosis.

The book has three appendices. Appendix I is an Anglican draft liturgy for the making of a catechumen. Appendix II consists of an AECAWA communiqué of 1986 while appendix III is a map of The Gambia, which is glued to the back cover of the book. The map comes from B. Southorn's book *The Gambia: the story of the groundnut colony*. Care has been taken to request permission for publication in this book. In case of incorrect or incomplete references to sources or in case someone has not been contacted who should have been, please get in touch with the publisher or author of this book.

1.6 Sources

Primary sources, such as letters, reports and interviews, have been important for the research of this book. Very little secondary material deals with the history of Christianity in The Gambia. General books on the history of Africa such as A. Hastings's *A history of the Church in Africa*⁷¹, Elizabeth Isichei's *A history of Christianity in Africa: from antiquity to the present*⁷² and B. Sundkler and C. Steed's *A history of the Church in Africa*⁷³ pay little attention to The Gambia. Also specific books on Christianity in West Africa, such as L. Sanneh's *West African*

⁷¹ A. Hastings, *The church in Africa: 14150-1950*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994.

⁷² E. Isichei, *A history of Christianity in Africa: from antiquity to the present*, SPCK London 1995.

⁷³ B. Sundkler; C. Steed, *A history of the church in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000.

*Christianity*⁷⁴ and Ogbo Kalu's *The history of Christianity in West Africa*⁷⁵ hardly mention The Gambia. P.B. Clarke's *West Africa and Christianity*⁷⁶ forms an exception. He gives an overview of the Senegambia for each period but his emphasis is mainly on Senegal.

There are a few publications that deal explicitly with Gambian Christianity. In the 1970s Barbara Prickett wrote a book on the history of the Methodist Church in The Gambia, called *Island Base*.⁷⁷ The book is more a history of missionaries in the Gambian Methodist Church than a history of the Gambian Methodist Church itself. Though based on archival material, the book does not give an academic account of its research. It has neither footnotes nor a bibliography. There are two short books dealing with the history of the Anglican Church in The Gambia. Both books start take their starting point in 1935, when the diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas was created. They do not discuss the Anglican Church in The Gambia in the 19th century. J. Laughton's book *The Gambia: country, people and church in the diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas* only covers the background to the creation of the Diocese and the first five years, while the booklet *The diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas 1935-1951, its origins and early history*, written by S.M.H. Jones, ends in 1965.⁷⁸ Fr. William Cleary wrote a popular history of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia, called *Reaping a rich harvest*.⁷⁹ It is evident that Cleary used the Spiritan archives for his works, but no references to the archives are made. The book is, just like Prickett's book, first of all the story of missionaries working in The Gambia. Little attention is paid to policy and indigenous personnel.

Most of this thesis is therefore based on archival research. Because there was a lot of archival material available, I have had to make some choices. I have opted to use the churches' archives only. I realise that this was a choice. The government archives could have thrown more light on the relationship between the government and the missionaries and on the colonial chaplains in the 19th century. I did not use the USPG archives in London either. The reason for this is that the first Anglican Bishop of The Gambia and Rio Pongas, Bishop John Daly in his diary mentions that there was very little material on the 19th century Gambian Anglican Church available in England. Neither did I consult the archives of the Sierra Leone Anglican Church. This might have given some information about the Gambian Anglican Church in the 19th century, because the parish in Bathurst was officially part of the Sierra Leonean Anglican Church from the late 1880s when the colonial chaplain was withdrawn until 1935. But the upheaval in Sierra Leone due to the civil war has

⁷⁴ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the religious impact*, C. Hurst & Co, London 1983.

⁷⁵ O.U. Kalu, *The history of Christianity in West Africa*, Longman, London 1980.

⁷⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity: a study of religious development from the 15th to the 20th century*, Edward Arnold, London 1986.

⁷⁷ B. Prickett, *Island Base: a history of the Methodist Church in The Gambia 1821-1969*, Bunumbu Press, Bo (Sierra Leone) [s.a.].

⁷⁸ J. Laughton, *The Gambia: country, people and church in the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, SPG, London 1949 (1938); S.H.M. Jones, S.H.M., *The diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas 1935-1951, its origins and early history*, BPMRU, Banjul 1986.

⁷⁹ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest: a history of the Catholic Church in The Gambia*, New Type Press, Kanifing 1990.

prevented a visit to Freetown. I have not travelled to Rome to visit the archives of Propaganda Fide either. These archives might have thrown some more light on the earliest period of Christianity in The Gambia. In stead I have gratefully used the labours of others: the translated and annotated letters of missionaries and the reports of explorers to the Guinea Coast have formed the basis to write chapter V.

For this thesis I have used the archives of the Gambian Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Gambia Christian Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia. For the newer churches very little archival material was available and I have used interviews and pamphlets to supplement information.

The condition of the different archives varies considerably. The Gambian Methodist Archives are very well preserved. The material from the period 1821-1946 is overwhelming. Even bills for mosquito netting have been kept. I have used the microfiche edition that was produced by IDC. The original material is kept at the archives of the World Church Office in London. References to the material mention both the original cataloguing and the microfiche system. Apart from the archives, several missionaries from the first half of the 19th century have published their diaries. These have aided in putting together the picture of the 19th century Methodist Church. For the period after 1946 the material is more sporadic. I have used available synod reports and made interviews with members and clergy to fill in the gaps.

Where the Methodist material was abundant and well organised, the Anglican Church archives seemed to form the extreme opposite. The documents, which are located at Bishop's Court in Banjul, are few, fragmentary and not accessibly catalogued. Documents are kept in file boxes, but are neither chronologically nor thematically arranged. Of most documents only parts remain. Even on the remaining parts, bookworms, fish-mots and mice have feasted lusciously. The archival material starts with the arrival of Bishop John Daly in 1935. No documents on the 19th century are available and documents after 1975 were not accessible. Archival information on the Anglican Church in The Gambia was complemented by the memoirs of Bishop John Daly, which have been published under the title *Four mitres* and the two afore mentioned booklets.⁸⁰

The Roman Catholic archives are not complete either. The diocese has not kept an official record of documents. The newsletters of the diocese, which began to appear in the 1960s have been a great help to fill in the details. Older material, such as journals, correspondence and reports, is available at the Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Chevilly-Larue, Paris. Also the Bulletin of the Congregation, *Bulletin Général de la Congregation du St. Esprit et du Sacre Coeur de Marie*, which first appeared in 1857 and still continues to be published, gives a wealth of information. The longest serving female congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, have only preserved part of the material on The Gambia. I was told that all material before 1940 had been lost in a fire and that journal from 1940 onwards would not be accessible for research because some of the people mentioned in it

⁸⁰ J. Daly, *Four mitres, reminiscences of an irrepressible bishop*, vol. 1 (*Being prepared*) and 2 (*The Gambia and The Rio Pongas*), USPG, London 1983.

were still alive. Some fragments of the archives of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary seem to be available at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) in Dakar, but I have not visited the institute. Again, I have tried to fill in the gaps with interviews, in order to get not just a clerical white male perspective of the missionaries, but also have an African and female perspective. The sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny have published a centenary booklet called *100 Years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*.⁸¹ Another pamphlet *Margareta Edenius Gambia: the years from 1970-1990 and 1990-1996*⁸² tells the story of work of Roman Catholic Church among the Manjago in Western Division.

The documents of the Gambia Christian Council are well kept and available at the Secretariat of the Council at Kanifing, but minutes and reports from the period 1965-1981 are missing. A few papers from this period were found in the Anglican and Methodist archives. For the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia I have used my personal file which consisted of material handed over to me by my predecessor the Rev. Cokkie van 't Leven and material collected by myself during my stay in The Gambia. The EFG has no official record keeping. Information on more recently established churches was gathered by interviews mainly, because little documentation was available.

For the introductory chapters about the ethnic groups of The Gambia, The Gambia's general history and the history of Islam in The Gambia, as well as for the systematic analysis made in this book, I have relied secondary literature from the disciplines of theology, history and anthropology.

⁸¹ *100 Years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*, BPMRU, Banjul 1983. This pamphlet interprets the work of the Cluny sisters from the perspective of the model of diakonia.

⁸² *Margareta Edenius Gambia: the years from 1970-1990 and 1990-1996*.

2. ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE GAMBIA

2.1 Introduction

Anyone describing the history of a certain country is confronted with the question: How to begin? Should one start with a description of the country or should one rather commence by describing the people living in the country, in the conviction that the human agency gives a decisive turn to history. This thesis set off with a description of the various ethnic groups in The Gambia, in the belief that people are of key importance to the development of a country and its history. Thus, this chapter offers the reader a description of the actors on the scene: the various ethnic groups in the country. The next chapter, chapter three will give the reader a chronological history of The Gambia.

This chapter does not pretend to be an anthropological research, though use has been made of materials produced by anthropologists. The aim of the chapter is to give an overview of the main ethnic groups in The Gambia, their history and their religious affiliation. Where possible mention is made of the missionary perceptions of the ethnic group under discussion. The missionary perceptions of ethnic groups were influenced by the racist theories prevalent in colonial Europe, the climate in which most of the missionaries were raised. These theories and perceptions were often decisive for the evangelisation policy of the missionaries. The missionaries for example, had high hopes of converting to Fula to Christianity because they thought that the Fula had 'whites as ancestors', making them more susceptible to the gospel, while they were convinced that the Jola were 'ferocious and wild', reason enough to keep at a distance. Paragraph 2.2 makes some remarks about the racist theories prevailing in the 19th and early 20th century. This paragraph also pays attention to the concepts of ethnicity and culture, used by anthropologists over the years and the way this has influenced their arrangement and description of the material.

The paragraphs 2.3 to 2.10 describe the main ethnic groups in The Gambia: the Jola (2.3), the Fula (2.4), the Wolof (2.5), the Serer (2.6), the Mandinka (2.7), the Serahuli (2.8), the Krio (2.9) and the smaller ethnic groups (2.10). Where possible the traditional religion of the ethnic group under discussion is depicted. There has been much discussion about the correct way to speak about African traditional religions. Some scholars, like John B. Taylor prefer to talk about African traditional religions in the plural.¹ Others, like Laurenti Magesa, prefer to speak about African traditional religion in the singular.² John Mbiti initially defended the plurality of

¹ J.B. Taylor, *Primal world views: Christian dialogue with traditional thought forms*, Daystar Press, Ibadan 1976, vi. 'We did not try to decide whether there is such a thing as a single "primal world-view". We preferred to speak of primal world-views until such time as an overall unity was demonstrated.'

² L. Magesa, *African religion: the moral traditions of abundant life*, Orbis books, Maryknoll 1998, 14ff.

African traditional religion, but later emphasised its underlying oneness.³ Kwame Bediako, opting for the plural form, has a preference for the term 'primal religions' over 'African traditional religions'.⁴ In this book we have chosen to use the widely accepted term 'traditional religions', opting for the plural rather than the singular, thus emphasising the differences within the religions which together constitute the African worldview. In using 'traditional religions' it is assumed that the readers will understand that, when speaking of The Gambia, African traditional religions are meant.

Traditionally the ethnic groups in The Gambia were all strictly hierarchically organised. The society was organised in castes, the top layer of which consisted of the freeborn (among whom the nobility and the peasants), followed by the artisans and the slaves. In the past there was no intermarriage between the different castes, but in modern times these divisions are no longer strictly observed. The lowest hierarchical governing structure was that of the head of the family, while the highest usually was that of the regional chief or king. The Jola formed an exception to this societal organisation. They had an egalitarian, acephalous society. Some believe that the traditional Serer society, before it came under Wolof influence, was also egalitarian, but not much evidence of it is left. An elaborate description of the social political organisation of the Senegambian ethnic groups can be found in the booklet of Patience Sonko-Godwin *Social and political structures in the precolonial periods*.⁵

2.2 Some preliminary remarks

Ethnicity and culture

Writing about ethnic groups, their traditional cultures and their traditional religions is a tricky business. Though anthropological material might seem to be 'just' describing a certain ethnic group in a certain area, it is soon clear that underlying ideas about culture and race influence the methodology, approach and arrangement of material. Therefore this paragraph will pay some attention to those two main issues. First of all the term 'ethnicity' needs some comments. In the past the word 'ethnicity' has often been used to indicate a certain group of a common descent, based on blood relationship. It implied that this group, based on descent of a common ancestor, shared a common past, a language and certain cultural values and traditions. Nowadays there is a growing awareness that ethnicity can also be an identification process.⁶ People who share a common language, a common past or

³ J.S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African religion*, Heineman Educational Publishers, Oxford 1991 (second revised edition), 10ff. See for Mbiti's idea that African traditional religions are plural: J.S. Mbiti, 'Christianity and traditional religions in Africa', *International review of mission*, 236 (Oct. 1970), 430-440.

⁴ K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: the renewal of a non-Western religion*, Orbis books, Maryknoll 1995, 96.

⁵ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Social and political structures in the precolonial periods: ethnic groups of the Senegambia region*, Sunrise Publishers, Banjul 1997 (1986).

⁶ F. Wijssen, *I am just a Sukuma: globalization and identity construction in Northwest Tanzania*, Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam 2002, 22.

cultural tradition, can form an ethnic group, even though this does not necessarily imply a common ancestor. The case of the Krio is discussed below and a similar development took place among the Mulattos, people of mixed African and European descent.⁷

The second concept that needs clarification is the term 'culture'. In the past most anthropologists have looked at African cultures with an integrated concept of culture in mind.⁸ This means that they have treated African cultures as relatively independent, self-sufficient and small-scale entities that are governed by a rule-bound tradition. This approach presumes a rather pure and static concept of culture that is transmitted more or less unchangingly from one generation to the other. Nowadays this concept of culture is under discussion. There is a growing awareness that culture is a process, rather than an entity. Research has shown that interaction between cultures is not new and that cultures have been influencing each other since time immemorial. This ongoing interaction process between cultures has led to a continuous reformulation of identity. The result of this interaction is that some cultures disappear or, as in the case of the Bagnun in Southern Senegal, are absorbed into another culture, in this case the Jola culture.⁹ Others change due to contact with other ethnic groups or with Islamic culture. The Fulani culture might serve as an example here. Again other cultures are created, such as Krio culture.¹⁰

Schreiter calls this perception of culture, the idea that the identity of a culture is constantly under discussion and changing, a globalised concept of culture.¹¹ Within the framework of a globalised cultural concept attention is paid to the influence that different cultures exercise on one another and to the fluid identity of each culture. Especially the increased global interaction through media and travel, the awareness that we live in the global village and the world-wide economic and political interdependency have opened people's eyes to the cultural interaction process and the domination of some cultures over others. In more recent times this process of world-wide interaction has been called globalisation.¹² Others, such as Hannerz¹³

⁷ For a discussion of the Krio ethnicity see H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations: The Gambian Akus' responses to dethronement*, a thesis for obtaining an M.A. in Social Anthropology at the University of Trondheim, 1986 (unpublished). Location: Gambia National Archives, Thesis 1/2, 26. For a discussion of the Mulattos of Portuguese-African descent see paragraph 5.3 of this book. For Gambian Mulattos in general see F.K. Mahoney, 'Notes on the Mulattoes of the Gambia before the mid nineteenth century', *Transactions of the historical society of Ghana*, 9 (1965), 120-129.

⁸ R.J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: theology between the global and the local*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll 1997, 48.

⁹ P.A. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance since 1500*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, Stuttgart 1985, 82; R. M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in precolonial Senegambia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, 72.

¹⁰ M. Frederiks, 'The Krio in The Gambia and the concept of inculturation', *Exchange*, 31/3 (2002), 219-229.

¹¹ R. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 53 ff.

¹² Globalisation is mainly used to indicate the influence of Western culture on the rest of the world. Schreiter indicates that the term can also be used for the influence Western culture has exercised since the European discovery voyages of the 15th century or even as far back as the

speak of the 'creolisation' of the world, because radio, television, western education and Coca-Cola have reached even the most remote areas of the world. In a 'creolized' world people form a cultural identity rather than just receive it passively.¹⁴ They chose elements of different cultures available to them and use these elements to construct a new identity. At times, people live in more than one culture at the same time: at work they may partake in a Western oriented culture, while privately they participate in a traditional African or Asian culture.

This ongoing process of 'creolisation' and 'globalisation' makes it more difficult to describe 'Jola culture', 'Fula' or 'Krio' culture. There is no such thing as a 'Krio culture', but 'Krio culture' is being made. With this in mind one can only attempt to sketch some characteristics of the cultures of the people of The Gambia, who are generally indicated as 'Jola', 'Krio' or 'Manjago', while being aware that these are 'constituted identities' in a process of change.

Racist theories

Another issue with regard to African cultures and traditions that needs to be addressed is the issue of racism. Racist theories and especially the Hamitic hypothesis have influenced the perception of Africans not only by Westerners but even by Africans themselves.¹⁵

The Hamitic hypothesis in short states that 'everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by Hamites, allegedly a branch of the Causasian race.'¹⁶ The Hamitic hypothesis has gone through various stages and finds its origin in the story of Noah and his three sons of Genesis 5. The story tells that one of Noah's sons Ham finds his father drunk and naked in his tent, but makes no attempt to cover him. Because of this, one of Ham's sons, Canaan, is cursed. This came to be known as 'the curse of Ham'. Gradually Jewish sources began to interpret the story of Genesis 5 as a description of the world. Noah was seen as the 'ruler of the world' and his three sons came to be identified with the different races of the world. Shem was identified with the Shemites and was to rule over the middle of the earth i.e. Asia and Greece, Japhet was associated with Northern countries, while Ham (his name means 'hot') and his four sons Canaan, Cush ('black'= Ethiopia), Misraim

emergence of the intercultural trade in the Late Bronze Age. A wider definition of the concept of globalisation would also allow for the influence of the Islamic culture on Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia to be interpreted as 'globalisation'. R. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 5.

¹³ U. Hannerz, 'The world in creolisation', *Africa* 57/4 (1987), 546-559.

¹⁴ One of the interviewees, Sr. Sarian Gomez, indicated that though she is of mixed descent (her father is a Manjago, her mother a Serer) and has grown up in the capital city, she identifies with the Serer culture more than with Manjago culture. Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999.

¹⁵ A. Duchateau, 'Confrontation and acculturation in early African myths and legends' in S. Biernaczky, *Folklore in Africa today: proceedings of the international workshop*, Budapest Lorand Eotvos University, Budapest 1984, 633-654. Duchateau gives an overview of how certain racist perceptions have been internalised by Africans and how these are reflected in African myths of origin.

¹⁶ E.R. Sanders, 'The Hamitic hypothesis: its origins and functions in time perspective', *Journal of African History* X/4 (1969), 521.

(Egypt) and Put (Libya) would populate Africa.¹⁷ According to E.R. Sanders, the Babylonian Talmud was the first to make the connection between the curse on the descendants of Ham and their being black.¹⁸ It also ascribed certain physiognomic attributes and an undesirable character to them. The church father Augustine, though not the first nor the last to make the link, was one of the early and influential people to make the association between black people and slavery.¹⁹

During the Enlightenment the theory of monogenism, the idea that mankind had a common origin as the story of Noah implied, came under discussion and was replaced by the theory of polygenism, the thesis that the races were created separately. The polygenist theory led to the widespread belief that the Negro was sub-human.²⁰ Economic motives may have played a crucial role here: slavery was a constitutive element of the Western economy and theories that endeavoured to prove that the Negro did not form part of the human family were welcomed.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt marked a new phase in the development of the Hamitic hypothesis. Scientists following the armies discovered that the Egyptian civilisation was older than the Greek and Roman civilisations, which had contributed to the Western European civilisation. Scholars also discovered that the Egyptians were negroid. The question was raised how a descendant of Ham, who was cursed, could be the creator of such a great civilisation. This led to an adaptation of the Hamitic hypothesis, stating that only Canaan was cursed and that the Egyptians as Hamites were of Caucasian descent and therefore capable of building a high civilisation. Craniology was used to 'prove' the difference between the Hamite and the black Africans. Again it was underlined that black Africans were inferior and that the Hamitic pastoralists were responsible for the early civilisations in Africa. To quote Sanders: 'Such a viewpoint had a dual merit for Europeans purposes: it maintained the image of the Negro as an inferior being and it pointed to the alleged fact that development could come to him only by mediation of the white race.'²¹ Language studies were done to underscore this theory of the Caucasian origins of the Hamites with linguistic proofs. Though Africans, like the Segalese Anta Diop have combated this last version of the Hamitic hypothesis, its influence still continues.²²

It might be evident that these racist theories not only created the climate, which condoned the enslavement of Africans but also influenced the perceptions Europeans missionaries had about Africans. Europeans missionaries came to Africa, convinced of their moral – and often also racial – superiority. They did not expect to meet (high) civilisations in 'the dark continent Africa' but people who needed to be civilised. Christianisation was seen as the means of civilisation and education was to play a key role in this 'white man's burden'. Thus, in accordance with the expectations of their supporters in England, most of them painted the African

¹⁷ C. Angenent, 'About Ham and his wicked siblings', *Exchange* 24/2 (June 1995), 137.

¹⁸ E.R. Sanders, 'The Hamitic hypothesis', 522.

¹⁹ C. Angenent, 'About Ham and his wicked siblings', 140.

²⁰ E.R. Sanders, 'The Hamitic hypothesis', 524.

²¹ E.R. Sanders, 'The Hamitic hypothesis', 528, 529.

²² C. Angenent, 'About Ham and his wicked siblings', 154 ff.

cultures and religions in the darkest terms possible.²³ The Methodist missionary William Moister, serving in The Gambia from 1832 until 1834 wrote in his memoirs that both he and his wife were engaged in education and had to conclude that 'notwithstanding the statement which we had heard to their (the African children) disparagement, *we found them capable of receiving instruction.*'²⁴ The Methodist linguist Robert MacBrair, who worked at MacCarthy Island in 1835 wrote: 'The Negroes are mere children of nature; their wants are few and easily supplied.'²⁵ The most clear example of influence of the Hamitic hypothesis can be found in the book *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions on the coast of Africa* by the Methodist missionary William Fox. Fox worked in The Gambia in the 1830s. In many ways he was an enlightened missionary who actively combated the slave trade and slavery and stimulated the participation of Africans in the leadership of the church. Yet his publications testify that Fox as well was deeply influenced by racist theories. He wrote:

Whether Mahometan or Pagan, Africans are all ignorant, guilty and depraved, "earthly, sensual and devilish," "sitting in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death," "having no hope, and without God in the world." The moral degradation of both Mohammedans and Pagans in Western Africa is shown in many striking features, and fully corroborates the declaration of the Psalmist, "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." (...) It must be acknowledged, that a more degraded, barbarous, demoralized, and ignorant set of human beings are not found on the face of the globe, than are the native tribes on the Western Coast of Africa. This must be acknowledged by all; and yet hundreds of the present members of the Wesleyan society have been dug out of the dark and filthy hold of the slave-ship; they have been washed, redeemed, disenthralled, and set at liberty; and again they been "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" and what are they now? Not only "princes in Israel," but *many of them occupy a position in civil society equal and even superior to some of those of a fairer complexion.* (...) *The gospel is "the power of God." It cannot alter the colour of the Negro's skin; but it can change the blackest heart of the blackest of Ham's descendants, and make it "white as snow."*²⁶

Fox' description of Africa and Africans shows the racist theories at work. The quotation confirms all the prejudices against Africans, saying that they are sensual, devilish and barbarous. It makes a clear link between the skin colour and the character of a person – the fairer, the better – and points to conversion to Christianity as the only possible means of improvement for the black African. It is evident that the Hamitic hypothesis influenced Fox's perception of Africans and Africa. No doubt also other missionaries were affected by racist theories, though few

²³ J.G. Poikal, 'Racist assumptions of the 19th century missionary movement', *International review of mission*, 59 (1970), 272 ff.

²⁴ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours in West Africa*, 3rd ed., W. Nichols London 1866, 130. NB Italics mine MTF.

²⁵ R.M. MacBrair, *The Africans at home: being a popular description of Africa and the Africans*, Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, London 1864, 8.

²⁶ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions on the Western Coast of Africa*, Aylott and Jones, London 1851, 238, 613, 614, 623. Italics mine MTF.

voiced them as clearly as Fox.²⁷ The Hamitic hypothesis also explains the fascination of the missionaries with the Fula. The Fula were considered to be part of the Hamitic people and therefore closer to European civilisation. This led missionaries to believe that the Fula would be more receptive to Christianity than other ethnic groups. That last presumption proved wrong. But it shows how racist theories influenced the thinking, the actions and the methodology of the missionaries in the 19th and 20th century.

2.3 The Jola

The history

Of all the peoples presently living in the Gambia, the Jola²⁸ are said to be the oldest settlers in The Gambia valley.²⁹ The Jola are intensively studied nowadays³⁰, but not much is known about their early history.³¹ Only oral history gives some suggestions

²⁷ John Morgan, Methodist missionary to The Gambia from 1821 to 1826 states at his first encounter with Africans: 'Never having seen human beings in savage life before, doubt of their descent from Adam at once assailed him, and fears respecting their capability of benefiting by his labour.' J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the foundation of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, Wesleyan Mission House, London 1864, 8.

²⁸ According to oral tradition the Jola refer to themselves by the name of Aimat or Ajamatu. Some say that the word 'Jola' was given to them by the Mandinka, meaning 'some one who pays back for things given or done to him.' See: D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia, AD 1000-1965*, Print Promotion Ltd, Latrikunda 1997, 17. Others see a relation to the Wolof language. A. van Stel says in her M.A. thesis that 'Diola' in Wolof means 'all the people who are visibly alive.' A. van Stel, *Etniciteit in de strijd: een onderzoek naar de etniciteit van Diola in de Basse Casamance, Senegal*, M.A. thesis Cultural Anthropology at the Free University of Amsterdam 1987, 29 (unpublished). No doubt this term 'alle zichtbare levenden' translated as 'all people who are visibly alive' is supposed to be understood in pair with the term 'the living dead'. As is the case with most ethnic groups in Africa, the spelling of the name Jola differs slightly: Jola, Diola, Jula. Distinctly different is the name Floup (also: Feloup or Felop) which was used in the older documents to describe the Jola. The Floup are a clan within the Jola community. Other main clans are the Bliss, Karon, M'lomp, Elinkin, Cadjinol, Diamant, Djougout, Bayot, Brin, Seleky, Kabrouse, Jiwat and the Foni. The Foni and the Karon or Karoninka's have settled in the Western Division. P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia: a brief history*, BPMRU, Banjul 1985, 37. Note: the Jola or Diola should not be confused with the Dyula, who are not related to the Jola. The Dyula are the Mande Muslim traders who from the 12/13th century onwards spread Islam in the forest areas of West Africa. See: J. S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992 (1962), 30, 31.

²⁹ A. Meagher, (ed.), *Historic sites of The Gambia: an official guide to the monuments and sites of The Gambia*, NCAC, Banjul 1998, 17.

³⁰ Many M.A. students of the Africa Study Centre in Leiden (The Netherlands) have studied the Jola for their M.A. project. Also scholars as P. Mark, J.M. van der Klei and R.M. Baum have done research among the Jola, though they have concentrated on the Jola in the Casamance area.

³¹ Reliable details about the history of the Jola are scarce. One reason for the fragmentary information about the Jola is said to be the fact that the Jola, because of their acephalous structure, do not have a lineage or caste of *griots* (praise singers), which transmits, relates and

about the origin of the Jola, but the academic worth of oral traditions is ambiguous to say the least. Oral history means to transmit cultural heritage rather than historical facts.³²

According to one line of oral history the origin of the Jola is somewhere in the South East of Africa, possibly Zimbabwe. This tradition relates that the Jola left South East Africa some time in the second millennium BC and moved via Tanzania to Egypt, then across the Sahara and the Niger to settle ultimately in the Senegambia, first at the coast, later forced more inland by the Mandinka. It is there, in the Western Division of The Gambia, in the Casamance and in parts of Guinea-Bissau, that they can be found today.³³ This same tradition associates the Jola with the famous Stone Circles in Central River Division of The Gambia and parts of Senegal. The tradition presumes that the Jola, because they were familiar with the megalithic traditions of Old Zimbabwe and Egypt, used a technique similar to that of Egypt and Old Zimbabwe, to erect the Stone Circles.³⁴ Here we see the Hamitic hypothesis in full action: the Jola as black Africans could only have build the Stone Circles due to their contact with the Hamites.

guards the oral history of the clan. The people who serve as *griots* among the Jola do so on individual basis. Because of this incidental nature of the Jola *griots*, Jola *griots* are presumed to be only acquainted with the history of a particular village or family. It is said that their oral traditions usually do not go beyond two or three generations. R. Baum's book *Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in pre-colonial Senegambia* (1999) however, deals with oral history from the pre-colonial period. It seems to falsify the theory that there is no long oral tradition among the Jola. Baum states that certain details about the Jola history are considered so crucial to the well-being of the group that they are kept secret from outsiders and uninitiated, who do not have the maturity to use their knowledge responsibly. Therefore the Jola only seemingly are not interested in the past, but in reality use this attitude in an attempt to guard their tradition. See F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, BPMRU, Kanifing 1995 (1982), 24; P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 35; R. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in pre-colonial Senegambia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999.

³² For the importance of oral traditions in the inculturation process see A. Shorter, *Christianity and the African imagination: after the African synod, resources for inculturation*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 1996, 83 ff.

³³ According to an interview with Sahr William Jabang, Banjul January 29 1999, groups of Karoninka moved into The Gambia in the 1960s to settle in the Marakissa area. Up to the present day the migration continues. In recent years, due to fighting in the Casamance and the coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau many Jola have sought refuge with their families in The Gambia.

³⁴ A. Meagher (ed.), *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 18. This theory is based on the Jola connection with the megalithic cultures of Old Zimbabwe and Egypt and sees a parallel to the Stone Circles in a Jola ritual, documented in the past, where people were standing in concentric circles, arranged according to height. I have only found this tradition in A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 18. Mahoney makes a short reference to the possibility that the common ancestors of the Jola and the Serer might be connected to the Stone Circles. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 5. For more details on the Stone Circles see paragraph 3.3.

Another oral tradition points to the Mandinka area of Kaabu as place of origin of the Jola. This tradition links the Jola to the Serer.³⁵ According to the story told, two sisters left Kaabu by canoe and travelled down the Gambia river towards the sea. An accident occurred and the canoe split in two. One of the sisters swam to the North Bank and became the mother of the Serer, the other swam southwards and became the mother of the Jola. The common origin of the Jola and the Serer is questionable. First of all, the tradition is rarely found among the Serer. Secondly there are no strong linguistic or cultural indications that point to kinship between the Serer and the Jola. R.M. Baum suggests that the tradition might reflect a Jola effort to reinforce the alliance between the Jola and the Serer at the political and religious level. The Serer and Jola dominate the Roman Catholic Church in Senegal and the Serer have had a large influence in Senegalese politics since the 1960s.³⁶

A third tradition claims that the people groups, which later constituted the Jola, originate from Guinea-Bissau. This theory seems most plausible because there are linguistic similarities between the Jola language and that of the coastal people of Guinea-Bissau and all excel in wet rice culture. Probably in search for more rice fields the Jola moved northwards, crossing the San Domingo river. There, between the shores of the San Domingo and the Gambia river they settled, intermingling with the original residents of the area, the Bagnun and Conjagi, thus forming the present ethnic group of Jola.³⁷

European sources on the Jola are meagre. One reason for this is that the Jola lived inland, in an area that was not easily accessible because of its creeks and rivers. Another reason is that from the end of the 16th century until the end of the 19th century the Jola did not trade directly with the Europeans, but used the Mandinka as middlemen³⁸. The Jola also had a reputation of being ferocious and unfriendly to strangers. The Methodist missionary John Morgan, who worked in The Gambia in the 1820s describes in his diary an expedition 'to the wild Felloops', 'who are by some represented as a cannibal race of people.'³⁹ And his fellow

³⁵ C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, Longman, London 1972, 25; F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 5; P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 35.

³⁶ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 72.

³⁷ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 72. Van Stel states that the word 'Diola' was not used before the colonial period. French reports of 1828 and 1837 mention the word 'Jola' or 'Yola' for the first time to refer to a specific group of people living in the Casamance area. Later it became a generic term. Before the colonial period the Jola referred to themselves as 'aimat'. It was only after contacts with 'outsiders' that the different Jola settlements began to refer to themselves as a group and utilized the word 'Jola'. A. van Stel, *Etniciteit in de strijd*, 29.

³⁸ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 79/80; P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 35; J.M. van der Klei, *Trekarbeid en de roep van het heilige bos*, Iken, Nijmegen 1989, 46, 47.

³⁹ Extracts from the journal of John Morgan, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824. No date mentioned; probably 1821 or 1822. Morgan in this same extract describes a remarkable ceremony around a deceased king: '...when instead of burying him, they set him in the earth with his legs buried to place all his treasure such as his best country cloth, (...) guns etc by his side to perish with him or a shed is erected over all and on times the people will visit the perishing body and with whips or sticks chastise him for dying, proposing questions to him which are two [read:

missionary John Baker mentions in one of his letters: 'At present their people are so wild, that it is considered dangerous to go among them nor will one of the Maraboos venture.'⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Baker was convinced that a combination of Christianity and education would soon change this and the Jola would 'become as tractable and peaceable as any people in this world.'

All these factors combined, the lack of sources, the reputation of the Jola and the ambiguity of oral material, has caused the Jola past to be shrouded in darkness. Guesses are that the Jola were already in the Senegambia valley before the 13th century invasion of the Mandinka.⁴¹ Fact is that they were there in the 15th century. C.A. Quinn mentions that the Portuguese on their arrival met the Jola living in the coastal area.⁴² She guesses that by the 18th century they had been driven to the south bank of the River Gambia and below. Though P. Mark agrees that by the late 1600s the Jola settled in their present area, he thinks that the Jola moved up from the south, due to population increase, as does Baum.⁴³ Whichever way, we may safely assume that by 1700 the Jola were established in the Gambia-Casamance area, because both André Brue, who visited the French forts in the Senegambia in 1700 and Francis Moore, who worked as writer at James Island from 1730 onwards, mention them.⁴⁴

Jola religion: Awasane, Islam and Christianity

Possibly due to their reticence in contacts with 'outsiders', many Jola, especially in Casamance, have adhered to their traditional religion. Also those who did convert to Christianity and Islam, have retained distinct elements of Jola traditional religion and have continued to perform rites at the shrines in times of crisis.⁴⁵ The name for the Jola traditional religion is *Awasane*, literally meaning the one who performs rituals.⁴⁶ *Awasane* centres on the worship of the high God Emit or Emitai who created the Jola people. The same name Emitai also used by Muslims and Christians for God. Apart from the name of God, the word 'emitai' can also mean 'sky', 'rain' and 'year', thus pointing to the significance of God as giver of rain, fertility and life and his close connection to the agricultural cycle.⁴⁷ Thus he helps the Jola in their basic obligation of growing rice.⁴⁸ A Jola proverb states: 'The Diola was created in order that he farm [rice]'.⁴⁹

too MTF] hard for him there to answer such as why did you die, where do you expect to get a better country than this. It appears by these questions that they have a notion of a better place of existence.'

⁴⁰ Baker to WMMS, Mandinaree May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁴¹ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 35.

⁴² C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 25.

⁴³ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 31; R.M. Baum, *The shrines of the slave trade*, 72.

⁴⁴ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 13.

⁴⁵ R.M. Baum, 'The emergence of a Diola Christianity', *Africa* 60/3 (1990), 374.

⁴⁶ R.M. Baum, 'The emergence of a Diola Christianity', 370 and 395.

⁴⁷ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 84.

⁴⁸ R.M. Baum, 'Diola land/European country: religious representations of the French in twentieth-century Senegal', *AH number 20 (1992)*, African Studies Centre, Boston University, 5.

⁴⁹ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 28.

There is much discussion among anthropologists whether or not Emitai still plays a vital and direct role in the life of the Jola. According to Mark, Emitai cannot be approached directly. He has withdrawn himself from the world and is no longer directly involved in his creation. He is, to use a Deist term, 'deus otiosus'.⁵⁰ Therefore the Jola approach Emitai through intermediaries, such as the ancestors - the living dead - and the *sinaati* (sing. *enaati*)⁵¹, the spirits at the shrines that represent the life-giving forces. Baum differs in opinion from Mark with regard to the role of Emitai in *Awasane*. He maintains that Emitai is still directly involved in the life of the Jola and is approached directly with requests for rain and fertility, although the rites are performed at the shrines. An example he cites is the *nyakul emit*, the funeral dance for Emitai, in case of prolonged drought.⁵² Baum also maintains that Emitai continues to reveal himself to people in dreams and visions in order to introduce new shrines and teachings to the Jola community.⁵³ To underscore his point, he cites the famous example of Alinesitoué, a Senegalese woman who in the 1940s claimed to have received a revelation from Emitai. In her preaching Alinesitoué summoned the Jola back to their own tradition, to the cultivation of Jola rice (*oryza glaberrima*) and urged them to resist French Christian influences. As a result of her teachings, new shrines were initiated and many Jola reconverted from both Islam and Christianity to *Awasane*.⁵⁴ The French considered Alinesitoué to be a subversive element to the colonial government and deported her to the Sudan for an imprisonment of 10 years. She never returned.

Whether or not Emitai is still actively involved in the life of the Jola, it is clear that up till today the Jola perform rituals at the shrines. Most personal shrines consist of little more than a forked stick and some herbs, whereas the larger ones that have a local or regional function, might have a small shelter or building with a priest attached to it to perform the rites. It is through rituals, the sacrifices of rice, animals and palm-wine⁵⁵ that the Jola guarantee their personal well-being and the welfare of their society and the land. Rites and sacrifices at the shrines surround all events central to Jola life, such as the rice cultivation, the male initiation *bukut*⁵⁶ and female

⁵⁰ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 84.

⁵¹ In the Basse-Casamance the term *bukin* (sing. *ukin*) is used for the shrines. P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 80.

⁵² R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 137.

⁵³ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 39.

⁵⁴ R.M. Baum, 'Diola land/European country', 2ff.

⁵⁵ The sacrifices made at the shrines all represent something of the 'soul' of the sacrifices: the blood of animals represents the soul of the beast, palm-wine represents the blood or 'soul' of the palm tree and rice represents the 'soul' of the soil. Note: only proper 'Jola rice' and not imported varieties were used at the rituals. R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 44.

⁵⁶ The Jola perform the male initiation about once every twenty years. During the *bukut* a generation of men is initiated into adulthood. It seems that the *bukut* type of initiation was introduced into Jola society towards the end of the 18th century. It replaced the earlier *kahat* variety, which had a Conjagi origin and took place much more frequently. Reasons for the change from *kahat* to *bukut* are said to be the *bukut* emphasis on separation of the sexes, its secrecy, the better surgical technique and the longer period of initiation (approximately three months), during which the initiates received instructions about their responsibilities as men, warriors and elders of the society. R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 102. See also J.M.

fertility. In the rituals surrounding the rice cultivation, the *oeyi* or priest-king played a crucial role. The *oeyi* was chosen by the elders from a special lineage. His task was to perform the various rain-ceremonies that were to guarantee a bountiful harvest. Apart from rites to secure rain, the *oeyi* also played a role as peacekeeper between the different quarters of a settlement. The role of the priest-king disappeared in the beginning of the 20th century.⁵⁷

Masquerades are also part of Jola tradition. The *kumpo* and *kankoran*, masked figures who appear every now and then in the villages, serve to maintain the social order and combat witchcraft.⁵⁸ Young men who are initiated in the *kumpo* or *kankoran* together form the *kumpo* and the *kankoran* associations. While 'on duty' on occasions such as initiation or quarrels, they are covered from head to feet in grass or bark masks respectively and mete out discipline in the villages. Especially women and young uninitiated boys are their 'victims'. Witchcraft, strongly feared in Jola society, was combated by a poison ordeal or by a ritual in which the corpses of those who had died an 'unnatural death' were questioned.⁵⁹

In The Gambia many Jola converted to Islam during the 19th century *jihads*. Constantly harassed by Fode Kabba and Fode Sillah many Jola in Foni and Combo became Muslims.⁶⁰ Only few withstood the pressure and continued *Awasane*. Also after the Soninke-Marabout wars, the conversion of Jola to Islam continued. Social pressure and intermarriage were the most important factors in this development. Peter B. Clarke, an specialist in West African Islam, has observed that the islamisation of Jola men has been more successful than that of women and children. He states:

Many Diola family heads today who become Muslims do not oblige either their wives or sons to follow their path. Moreover, with regard to their sons they encourage them to wait until they have attained a mature age before making a decision as to whether or not they should become Muslims. Consequently, there are Diola villages in the Casamance region of Senegal, and in The Gambia, where although the adult male population is almost entirely Muslim the women and children have remained Traditional Religionists.⁶¹

The exposure of the Jola to Christianity goes back to the Portuguese period, when Cacheu became the seat of the archdeaconry of the diocese of Santiago, Cape Verde. Baum suggests that crucifixes and saint's medals – like the *greegrees* (amulets)

van der Klei, *Trekarbeid en de roep van het heilige bos*, 94ff. Mark mentions that parallel to the *bukut* the first Jola converts to Islam received an initiation led by *marabouts*. Later, when more Jola became Muslim, more and more Islamic elements became part of the *bukut* ritual. P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 113.

⁵⁷ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 78ff.

⁵⁸ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 36ff.

⁵⁹ R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 161-163.

⁶⁰ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse-Casamance*, 68ff. See also F. Renner, *Inter-group relations and British imperialism in Combo: 1850-1902*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan 1982, 148/149; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: a study of the development from the 8th to the 20th century*, Edward Arnold, London 1982, 143.

⁶¹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 240.

made by *marabouts* - soon found their way into the Jola community to complement their own amulets.⁶² From the 1870s onward serious attention was given to the christianisation of the Jola and mission stations were opened at Carabane and Sedhiou.⁶³ Only few converted and many of those who came in contact with Christianity via schools later re-converted to *Awasane*.⁶⁴ It was a combination of the use of catechists and the work of the Pierist fathers that resulted into a considerable⁶⁵ Jola Christian community in Casamance.⁶⁶

In The Gambia the Roman Catholic Church started work among the Jola in Foni around the turn of the 20th century. In 1885 the Catholic priest Jakob Haas was sent up the river to see where new mission stations could be established.⁶⁷ On his return he recommended a mission among the Jola 'among these people who were still savages.' But Alois Meyer, the then superior of the mission in St. Mary was of the opinion that it was better to wait, because the Soninke-Marabout wars were still raging. Therefore, the Foni mission was not pursued.⁶⁸ The issue of Foni mission was again raised in 1903.⁶⁹ This resulted in 1906 in the stationing of the priest Paul Meistermann and a catechist named Samuel in Boulelai.⁷⁰ After Meistermann's death in 1908 catechists continued the work in the Foni but gradually the work lapsed. The work among the Jola received a new impulse in the 1930s when a mission station was opened in Bwiam, which in due course became a large regional educational centre. Despite the fact that there has been missionary presence of nearly a century in the Foni, very few Jola-Foni have converted to Christianity.⁷¹ Some of the young Jola who were baptised while at school, later reconverted to Islam.⁷² In the late 1960s the WEC (World Evangelism for Christ) mission opened a clinic in Sibanor and has done evangelism among the Jola. Also their efforts did not result in a mass conversion of Jola to Christianity.⁷³

⁶² R.M. Baum, *Shrines of the slave trade*, 153.

⁶³ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 73ff.

⁶⁴ R.M. Baum, 'The emergence of a Diola Christianity', 383.

⁶⁵ According to the 1998 report on *Religious freedom in the majority Islamic countries* the present Catholic community in the Casamance consists of 313.396 members, most of whom are Jola. Source: www.alleanzaccattolica.org/acs/acs-english/report-98/senegal.htm. May 15 2002.

⁶⁶ R.M. Baum, 'The emergence of a Diola Christianity', 392; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 123ff.

⁶⁷ Meyer to Emonet, St. Mary January 19 1885, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁶⁸ Meyer to Riehl, St. Mary July 6 1886, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1885/1886.

⁶⁹ Entry April 30 1903, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923; *Bulletin Général* 272 (August 1904) 668.

⁷⁰ Entry October 3 1905, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁷¹ The Roman Catholic parish in Bwiam mainly consists of Manjago, Mankaing and Balanta. It has only a few Jola members. P. Crowe, 'Around the Diocese: Bwiam', *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 19/7 (July 1995), 13-15.

⁷² Interview with Fr. R. Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁷³ A. McLaren, *Evangelisation in The Gambia through Social work*, paper presented at the EFG conference 'Evangelisation of The Gambia by AD 2000 and beyond', Serekunda, Gambia, October 31 1998.

A slightly different story can be told about the Jola clan of the Karoninka. They began their gradual migration from Karoni in the Casamance into Combo in the 1960s. Most of the Karoninka were adherents of *Awasane* when arriving in Combo. When the Methodist Church in the 1960s started mission work in the Combo village of Marakissa, they met both Manjago and Karoninka there. A considerable number of them, living in Marakissa and the surrounding villages such as Kitti, Bajongkoto and Sifoe converted to Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church also opened a mission station in the area. In the 1960s the Kartong mission was started. From Kartong and Brikama work was done in Combo among the Manjagos and Karoninka and Christian communities sprung up in villages as Sanyang, Kitti and Darisalami. The majority of the membership of these churches consists of Manjago but some of them are Karoninka, Mankain and Balanta.⁷⁴ In the 1990s also the Church of Pentecost has directed its attention to the area. By now many of the approximately 1000 Karoninka living in The Gambia have become Christians, whereas most of the approximately 50.000 Jola-Foni have become Muslims.⁷⁵

Missionary perceptions

In the perception of the missionaries the Jola were the typical example of degraded Africans, who needed to be civilised. Even worse, according to the missionaries, the Jola formed the lowest class among the Africans. The Methodist missionary Fox, mentioned before, called the Jola 'nearly the zero of the thermometer of African civilization in this part of the continent. They are a wild and unsociable race of people, of a gloomy disposition and are supposed never to forgive an injury.'⁷⁶ The Methodist Synod of 1884 expressed a similar opinion: 'These Joulahs are about the lowest type of Africans known.'⁷⁷ The Roman Catholic missionary Jacob Haas who worked in the Senegambia in the mid 1880s called them 'distrustful, weak, simple, gullible, ignorant and miserable, people who treat their wives like beasts',⁷⁸ while the Methodist missionary John Morgan referred to them as 'the wild Felloops, who are by some represented as a cannibal race of people'⁷⁹, a tale still believed in 1899.⁸⁰ Haas was also convinced that the Jola were oppressed by other ethnic groups.⁸¹ The *Bulletin Général* of the Spiritans called the Jola 'the outcasts of

⁷⁴ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 60. See also F. Carroll, 'Around the Diocese: Kartong, *GPI Newsletter* Vol. 19/9 (November 1995), 13. The Roman Catholic Church also has some Jola members in the parish of Basse. See: P. Gomez, 'Around the diocese', *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 19/6 (June 1995), 16-18.

⁷⁵ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001.

⁷⁶ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions*, 238.

⁷⁷ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 17.

⁷⁸ J. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie*, Vicariate Apostolique de la Senegambie par le Rev. Père Jakob Haas, *Addition to Journal de Communauté de Sante Marie de Gambie III*, 1894-1923. Report over the period June 1916-July 1921, 4I1.1B

⁷⁹ Entry December 18 1821, Extracts from the journal of John Morgan, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

⁸⁰ Maude to WMMS, Bathurst March 3 1899, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1002.

⁸¹ Haas to Riehl, Dec. 10 1885, Box 160B/III; Entry April 4 1904, *Journal de Communauté de Sante Marie de Gambie III*, 1894-1923.

society'.⁸² Nevertheless, the Jola had successfully resisted Islamisation and could therefore still fairly easily be saved.⁸³

The traditional religion of the Jola, according to missionary observations, fulfilled all the racist expectations. According to Fox 'the Jollars are Pagans, and pay homage to no being than the devil; and him they worship, to him they offer sacrifice and consecrate a house, thinking, if they secure his friendship, they shall be safe.'⁸⁴ This opinion was shared by his colleague Moister.⁸⁵ Morgan however was convinced that the Jola did not possess any religion⁸⁶, an opinion shared by the Methodist Synod of 1884 which stated that the Jola have 'no religion and what is perhaps unique, so far as we are able at present to discover, have no word in their language expressing the idea of God.'⁸⁷

These observations had probably less to do with *Awasane* than with the missionary conviction that Africans did not have a religion or at best were 'idol worshippers' and 'pagans', provided they were not affected by 'the Mohammedan pest' which made evangelisation virtually impossible.⁸⁸ Traditional believers offered great possibilities for civilisation and the preaching of the gospel. The Methodist missionary John Baker was convinced that 'as soon as their people get to know us, I think they will be glad to have their children taught by us. At present their people are so wild, that it is considered dangerous to go among them, but after they have heard the gospel, they may become as tractable and peaceable as any people in this world.'⁸⁹ His Gambian colleague John Delmar Terry had a slightly more positive view of the Jola. In the 1870s he wrote that the Jola are 'harmless unless repeatedly provoked.' But he was nevertheless influenced by the Western racist ideas and saw the traditional religion of the Jola as a missionary advantage: 'being pure heathen, religious teaching may be impressed upon their minds with greater degree of success than that of the Mandingo.'⁹⁰ The Methodist Synod of 1881 repeated this conviction⁹¹ but the reality proved different. Only very few Jola converted to Christianity.

The missionary ideas about the Jola, their character and their religion clearly show how racist theories influenced the missionary perceptions. These perceptions of the Jola affected their ideas how to evangelise the Jola.

⁸² *Bulletin Général* 9 (October 1887), 305.

⁸³ Haas to Riehl, Dec. 10 1885, Box 160B/III; Entry April 4 1904, Journal de Communauté de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁸⁴ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions*, 238.

⁸⁵ Moister to Woodbrige, Nov. 25 1833, Box 293/294 H2709 mf. 840.

⁸⁶ Entry December 18 1821, Extracts from the journal of John Morgan, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824. He states: 'they seem to have less notion of religion than any people I have ever seen before. I could not find that they have any thing like worship op any kind.'

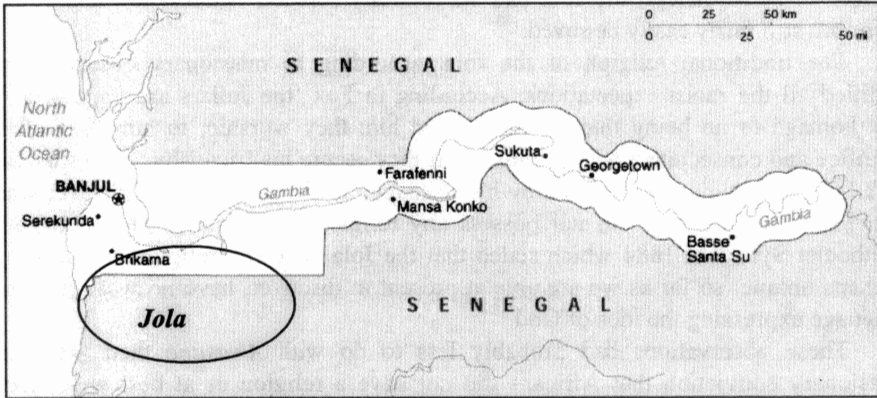
⁸⁷ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 17.

⁸⁸ Farelly to Mgr. August, August 25 1948, Boite 548A. 'Only for the Mohammedan pest in the area, our work would be light and pleasant.'

⁸⁹ Baker to home, Mandinaree May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁹⁰ Terry to WMMS, Cape St. Mary, May 6 1879, Box 296 H2709 mf. 916.

⁹¹ Synod 1881, Box 297 H2708 mf. 15.



The concentration area of the Jola in The Gambia

2.4 The Fula

The history

The Fula, sometimes called Fulani and in French-speaking countries known as the Peul or Poular, have fascinated visitors from outside West Africa from the start. Their light skin, their non-negroid features and their straight hair have raised the wildest speculations with regard to the Fula origin.⁹² All of them had, consistent with the Hamitic hypothesis, one thing in common: the claim that the Fula were not of black African descent. Some claimed a Semitic descent⁹³, others a relation with the Berbers or Tuareg⁹⁴, again others saw the Hyksos, Romans or Indians as forefathers of the Fula.⁹⁵ Also Fula oral history itself claims that the ancestors of the Fula were whites.⁹⁶ But as shown by J.G. Poikal in his article *Racist assumptions of the 19th century missionary movement*⁹⁷ this does not necessarily make a statement about the Fula origin but might be an indication of how deep the racist theories were internalised not only by Europeans but also by Africans. The truth therefore about the ethnic origin of the Fula will remain hidden.

⁹² For an overview of the various theories see: P. & G. Brasseur, 'Le Peul imaginaire', in G. Brasseur (ed.), *Le sol, la parole et l'écrit: 2000 ans d'histoire africaine*, Vol. I, Harmattan Paris 1981, 471-487 and S.U. Balagun, 'The Fulani in Arabic sources', *Research Bulletin*, Centre of Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan, Vol. 14-17, (1983-87), 88-107.

⁹³ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 25. Also the Roman Catholic Fr. J. Haas mentions that the Fula were a cross mixture between a black tribe and Moors. J. Haas, *Rapport sur la Mission de St. Marie de Gambie, Vicariate apostolique de la Senegambia par le Rev. Père Haas*, Boite 411.1B.

⁹⁴ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 14.

⁹⁵ S.U. Balagun, *The Fulani in Arabic sources*, 88ff.

⁹⁶ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 25.

⁹⁷ J.G. Poikal, 'Racist assumptions of the 19th century missionary movement', 271-284.

The cradle of the Fula in West Africa is Futa Toro, northeast of Senegal. From there the Fula, being nomadic cattle rearing people, spread all over West Africa in search of pasture. In the 16th century a Fula leader named Koli Tengala Bah, seized power in Tekkur, later renamed Futa Toro, and established the Denyanke dynasty. In its heyday Futa Toro stretched from Senegal to Jalonke region of present day Guinea Conakry. In 1776 the Tokolor clerics, related to the Fula, managed to take over power in Futa Toro and the Denyanke kingdom of Futa Toro was replaced by an Islamic state.

By the beginning of the 18th century two other powerful Fula kingdoms had risen to power in West Africa by means of Islam: the Islamic state of Futa Jalon, situated in the Guinea mountains and Bondu north-west of The Gambia.⁹⁸ Around the same time Uthman dan Fodio established the *imamat* of Sokoto in Northern Nigeria with the help of the pastoral Fula, while in the mid 18th century the Tokolor al-Hajj Umar Tall conquered the kingdoms of Kaarta and Segu. After the fall of the kingdom of Kaabu in 1868 the Gambian Fula Mollo Egue (after his conversion known as Alfa Molo), seized power from the Mandinka and established the Fula state of Fuladu in the Senegambia.⁹⁹ From 1870 till the deportation in 1919 of Alfa Molloh's son Musa Molloh to Sierra Leone, a considerable area of The Gambia was under Fula control.

To say 'Fula' is to say 'cow' because Fula life and Fula culture are centred on the rearing of cattle. Most of the Fula own cows themselves, but the poorer among them have rented themselves out as cattle herders to the Mandinka.¹⁰⁰ Young people grow up herding the cattle or, as the expression says 'following the cows'. A West African saying states that 'a Fula without a cow, is not a real Fula'. Cows take in such an important role in Fula life that the Fula have been accused of 'boomanie' or 'boolatri', the worship of cows.¹⁰¹ While this might be exaggerating things, cows are central to Fula life: they provide milk, meat, dung, leather, are used as an investment and function as a monetary unit for trade. Cows, in short, are the Fula's wealth.¹⁰² The fact that the Fula spend much time in the field has given rise to the belief that Fula are powerful healers. Due to their contact with nature, they are said to have an extensive knowledge of herbs and to be in constant relation with the spirits.¹⁰³

Religion

Most Fula are Muslims. The Fula are said to be among the earliest African sub-Saharan converts to Islam. P.B. Clarke states that in the period of 1000 – 1600 AD

⁹⁸ For more information about the Fula *jihads* see paragraph 4.2 and 4.4.

⁹⁹ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 25ff; D. Faal, *A history of the Gambia*, 73ff.

¹⁰⁰ D. Wright, *The world and a very small place in Africa*, Sources and Studies in world history, Sharpe, New York 1997, 184.

¹⁰¹ T. Diallo, 'Les sociétés et la civilisation des Peul' in M. Adamu & A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *Pastoralists of the West African Savanne*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1986, 228.

¹⁰² T. Diallo, 'Les sociétés et la civilisation des Peul', 228 ff.

¹⁰³ F. Moore, *Travels into the inland parts of Africa*, Cave, London 1738, 39, 40.

the majority of the Fula had become Muslims.¹⁰⁴ Francis Moore who worked in The Gambia in the 1730s observed: 'They are strict Mohemetans; none of them (...) will drink brandy, or any thing stronger than water and sugar (...) and very sober and abstemious in their way of living, chusing rather to dye than to eat anything which is not killed by one of their own way of thinking.'¹⁰⁵ And whether the 18th and 19th century Fula *jihads* were motivated by search for new pastures for the cattle, whether they were a form of slave-hunting, whether they were inspired by religious motives or whether it was a combination of these reasons, certain is that they enhanced the course of Islam in West Africa.¹⁰⁶ Though many Fula had become Muslims at an early stage, there was a group of nomadic Fula who continued practising the traditional religion.¹⁰⁷ Social pressure has caused many of them to opt for Islam.

Not much is known about the traditional religion of the Fula. G.V. Zubko states that the name of the supreme deity of some of the Fula groups is Geno or Dundari. He also mentions the role of *laare* spirits, which patronise the cattle and the role of the serpent spirit among the Bororo in Northern Nigeria.¹⁰⁸ But other details and their cohesion remain obscure.

The Christian missionaries to The Gambia cherished high hopes that these 'pagan' Fula would become Christians. At some time or other Methodists, Roman Catholics and Anglicans alike all attempted 'a mission to the Fula'. The high expectations of a mission to the Fula were based on the observation that these Fula had resisted Islamisation. The Hamitic hypothesis might have played a role as well. The Methodists were the first to design a plan for a mission to the Fula. John Morgan was the driving force behind the plan. He had observed that Fula were tributaries to the Mandinka and were oppressed by them. He therefore proposed to start a project to settle the Fula in a village at MacCarthy's island.¹⁰⁹ This village

¹⁰⁴ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ F. Moore, *Travels into the inland parts of Africa*, 33, 39.

¹⁰⁶ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 84ff.

¹⁰⁷ Sometimes a difference is made between 'red' and 'black' Fula. The 'red' Fula are said to be the original pure, nomadic traditionalist Fula (*Bodadyo*). The 'black' Fula have settled, often became agriculturists, are Muslims and have intermarried with other ethnic groups. See P. & G. Brasseur, 'Le Peul imaginaire', 472. Also other distinctions between the different groups of Fula are made. John Morgan mentions two types of Fula: the Fula and the Loobies. 'Observing striking resemblance, I enquired if the Foolahs had any knowledge of the relation to them (Loobies), I was informed that the Foolahs have a tradition that the heads of their tribes were originally white. Two sons of one father. The father of the Foolahs is having always proved himself industrious in cultivating the land and taking care of the cattle. When his father died, he left all to him. The Looby being idle. By way of severe disposition his father gave him nothing but an axe and sent him into the bush to work for his living and both tribes have continued their respective occupations ever since.' Journal of John Morgan, entry March 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 825.

¹⁰⁸ G. V. Zubko, 'Ethnic and cultural characteristics of the Fulbe', *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 35 (1993), 210ff.

¹⁰⁹ In an interview with the chief Morgan states: 'he asked him what he thought of the following plan for benefiting their tribe: the King of England to purchase of the neighbouring chiefs a large tract of land and throw it open to them, that, independently of the Mandingo Kings, they might enjoy the fruits of their own labour. The land to be under English

was meant to be a permanent place of settlement for the Fula, under the protection of the British Government. It was funded by a philanthropic society, the Southampton Committee, started by Morgan on his return to England. Though the village materialised and was called Lindoe village after its main beneficiary Dr. Robert Lindoe, it never led to settlement of the Fula nor to their conversion.

The Anglicans had dreams about a mission to the Fula as well. Bishop John Daly, the first Anglican bishop of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas, working in The Gambia from 1935 to 1951, was the driving force behind a plan to establish a Christian village in a Fula populated area. Two villages, Kristikunda and Saare Yesu, were built, which were to serve as a Christian presence in a non-Christian environment. The villages included a boarding school and a dispensary. However, after many years and much hardship the conclusion had to be: 'It is true that there are a few converts, but when it is realized that the Mission station is hard by a Foulah village, whose inhabitants daily pass through the mission compound, one cannot but feel that *the mission to the Foulahs has failed*¹¹⁰. (...) The Foulahs are polite, sometimes even friendly, but are indifferent to the missionary activity carried on in their midst and most certainly unresponsive.'¹¹¹ Presently there is only one Christian family in Saare Yesu left, the Baldeh family.¹¹²

The Anglicans made another attempt to evangelise the Fula in the 1980s. Muslim Fula villages around Farafenni were regularly visited and services were held. The response was meagre. A few people in the villages of Lala, Duntabulu and Kunjo became Christians, but it proved difficult to maintain the relationship with them. Since the late 1980s the Anglicans have a Fula diocesan evangelist, James Baldeh, who converted from Islam to Christianity when he was in his twenties. He has a special assignment for working among the Fula and is in contact with Christian organisations working among the Fula in Senegal, Mali and Conakry, with whom he co-operates in the production of pamphlets and cassettes for Fula evangelisation.¹¹³

The Roman Catholic Mission also made an attempt to convert the Fula. In the early 1930s they started a mission station in the Basse area. The Fula villages of Mansajang and Fulabantang were centres of outreach to the Fula. Fr. Michael Moloney, later Bishop Moloney, worked among the Fula in the 1940s. He learned Fula and translated the catechism into Fula together with Mr. John Baldeh.¹¹⁴ Education, development- and medical work were organised and still continue. But the mission to the Fula has mainly been a witness of presence and service. Very few

protection, until they could protect themselves; that they should receive a Christian teacher from England, but should live according their own laws until they desired something better. He (the headman) replied: It would be the greatest blessing that could be bestowed on us. Freed from the oppression of the Mandingoes, excepting the whites, we would soon be the richest people in the world.' J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission*, 112.

¹¹⁰ Italics mine MTF.

¹¹¹ *My visit to Krista Kunda*, S.H.M. Jones, 1955, Anglican Archives, Bishops Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4.

¹¹² Interview with James Baldeh, Basse November 24 1998.

¹¹³ Interview with James Baldeh, Basse November 24 1998.

¹¹⁴ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 41.

Fula have become Christians. Most of the Fula who converted to Christianity through their contact with Christian schools in the 1930s and 1940s, have re-converted to Islam.¹¹⁵

Missionary perceptions

The missionary perceptions of the Fula show a clear example of the Hamitic hypothesis at work. According to the ideas of the missionaries the Fula were not really black Africans. They had Hamitic or Semitic origins and were seen to be descendants of the Moors, the Cathagians, the Phoenicians or the Arabs. Robert MacBrair, a linguist working for the Methodist Church in The Gambia in 1835 and 1836, called the Fula 'relics of a civilised people' and said that 'they declare themselves to be descended from white men.'¹¹⁶ Haas concurs with this idea, speculating that the Fula were possibly the result of a mix of a black tribe and the Moors.¹¹⁷ John Morgan observed that their 'features seemed of European type, and formed a perfect contrast to the thick lips and flat noses of their neighbours'.¹¹⁸ All of them presumed that, because the Fula were not black Africans but somehow related to the European race, they would be more open to the Christian gospel. Hence the many 'missions to the Fula.' This presumption however proved wrong. Very few Fula became Christians.

The racist interpretation frame is also reflected in the descriptions of the Fula character. Where black Africans were 'barbarous' the Fula were 'very superior to other tribes, in personal appearance, dress, industry, moral virtue, and intelligence.'¹¹⁹ They were not at all war-like, but 'hospitality, kindness and peace lives among them and their houses are clean.'¹²⁰ And according to Moister 'their highest idea of virtue is to refrain from fighting and to live in peace with all men.'¹²¹ The Quaker educationalist Hannah Kilham called them, together with the Mandinka 'the aristocracy of West Africa.'¹²² A clan within the Fula which did not fit this image, was 'a degenerate race' and of course 'quite black.'¹²³

¹¹⁵ Interview with Fr. R. Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

¹¹⁶ R.M. MacBrair, *The Africans at home*, 28.

¹¹⁷ J. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie, vicariate apostolique de la Senegambie par le Rev. Père Haas*, Boite 4I1.1B.

¹¹⁸ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian Mission on The Gambia*, 112/113.

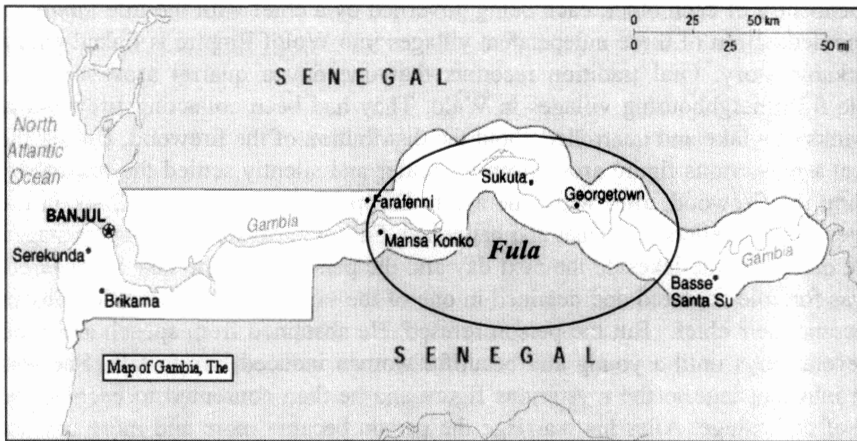
¹¹⁹ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions*, 237.

¹²⁰ Dove to WMMS, March 14 1834, Box 293 H2709 mf. 835.

¹²¹ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 24.

¹²² S. Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham, critically compiled from her journal and edited by her daughter in law Sarah Biller*, Darton and Harvey, London 1837, 221.

¹²³ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions*, 237.



The concentration area of the Fula in The Gambia

2.5 The Wolof

The history

The Wolof are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Senegambia area. The majority of them is resident in the Northern part of Senegal. The Gambian Wolof can be found on the North Bank Division in Niimi, Baddibu, Niani and in the capital of Banjul. According to the 1983 census the Gambian Wolof number about 120,100, forming the third largest ethnic group, after the Mandinka and Fula respectively.¹²⁴

Not much is known about the origins of the Wolof. Most researchers believe that the ancestors of the Wolof once lived north of the river Senegal and that circumstances forced them to migrate southwards.¹²⁵ One theory assumes that the ancestors of the Wolof lived in what is now the Sahara Desert from where they moved southwards because of the desiccation of the land. Others presume that the Arab conquest of North Africa gradually forced the Berbers southwards, who in their turn caused the southward migration of other peoples, among whom the ancestors of the Wolof.¹²⁶ Gailey is of the opinion that the ancestors of the Wolof were of Libyan or Yemeni descent and that they gradually conquered the Niger valley in the seventh century, later moving westwards towards the Senegambia where they settled. He believes that the name 'Wolof' is derived from the place in the Rio d'Ore valley where they settled: Gualata or Julafa.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: Aug. 9 2001.

¹²⁵ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 13; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 10; F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 19.

¹²⁶ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 13.

¹²⁷ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 10.

Oral tradition relates that in the olden days the Wolof villages functioned independently of each other, each being governed by a chief with the title *laman*.¹²⁸ The confederation of these independent villages into Wolof Empire is linked with a remarkable story. Oral tradition recounts that one day a quarrel arose between people from neighbouring villages in Walo. They had been collecting firewood at the banks of a lake and quarrelled about the distribution of the firewood. During the quarrel a mysterious figure arose from the water and silently settled the dispute by dividing the firewood, after which he again disappeared into the lake. Back in the villages the quarrellers told what had happened. Full of curiosity the villagers staged a fake quarrel at the lakeside the next day and the person from the lake reappeared. He was forcible captured and detained in one of the villages until he would consent to become their chief. But the person refused. He abstained from speech and food for several days until a young and beautiful woman induced him to talk. She was given into marriage to the mysterious figure and he then consented to become the chief of the village. After his marriage the person became more and more human. When the details of this apparition were told to the ruler (*Bur*) of Sine, the greatest magician in the land at that time, he exclaimed: "Ndyadyane Ndyaye", which was an expression of his astonishment at the events. Subsequently the person became known as Ndyadyane Ndyaye. The *Bur Sine* thereupon suggested that Ndyadyane Ndyaye would be appointed as head of all the Wolof. He himself recognised his authority by sending tribute to him as a sign of his submission. The chiefs of other areas followed his example. Thus the Wolof empire came into being.¹²⁹

Some traditions state that Ndyadyane Ndyaye was the son of Abu Bakr ibn Umar, one of the most important leaders of the Almoravid movement who led the battle against Ghana.¹³⁰ It would seem that this tradition is an attempt to trace the Islamisation of the Wolof back to the earliest beginnings of the Wolof empire around the 11th century.¹³¹

The oral traditions surrounding the origin of the Wolof empire are not just legends. It seems a historical fact that around the 13th or 14th century the different Wolof areas of Jolof, Kayor, Baol, Walo, Sine and Saloum were all governed by one person, the *Burba Jolof* to whom tribute was paid. From the 16th century onwards the coastal states became stronger due to trade with the Europeans. With firearms acquired from their trade-partners first Kayor and later also the other states secured

¹²⁸ D.P. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, International African Institute, London 1957, 16.

¹²⁹ D.P. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, 17.

¹³⁰ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 14-15. The tradition says that Abu Bakr after the conquest of Ghana did not return to his homeland nor did he rebuild Ghana but settled in the region and married a woman called Fatimata Sal. They had a son called Amadu Bubakar ibn Umar ibn Muhamed. When Abu Bakr died, Fatimata Sal remarried with her husband's former slave. As a sign of his disapproval of the marriage Amadu Bubakar threw himself in the river and many believed him to be dead. He however survived and lived an amphibious life on the banks of the river Senegal until he emerged from hiding to prevent bloodshed over the dispute of fire-wood mentioned above.

¹³¹ A. Diop, *La société wolof: tradition et changement: les systèmes d'inégalité et de dominion*, Karthala Paris 1981, 213.

their independence and the Wolof Empire broke apart.¹³² There were continuous clashes between the different Wolof states over the centuries and the succession to the thrones in the respective provinces was a constant source of conflict. Nevertheless, the states continued as more or less independent entities until the French colonisation of Senegal in the 19th century.¹³³

Religion

Most Wolof are Muslims nowadays. Yet despite traditions which trace the ancestry of Ndyanedyane Ndyane to the Almoravids, thus implying that Islam stood at the cradle of the Wolof Empire, the Islamisation of the Wolof was a gradual process which was completed in the 20th century. The sources about its beginning are vague. The first contacts with Islam seem to have been in the 11th century. Around that time the inhabitants of the neighbouring state of Tekrur became Muslim and propagated Islam to their neighbours.¹³⁴ From the 15th century there are more definite reports on the Islamisation of the Wolof. Alviso Cadamosto who visited the coast of Senegal in the middle of the 15th century reported:

The faith of these first Blacks is Muhammadanism: they are not however, as are the white Moors, very resolute in their faith, especially the common people. The chiefs adhere to the tenets of the Muhammadans because they have around them priests of the Azanaghi or Arabs, [who have reached this country]. These give them some instruction in the laws of Muhammad, enlarging upon the great disgrace of being rulers and yet living without any divine law, and behaving as do their people and lowly men, who live without laws; and since they have converse with none but these Azanaghi and Arab priests they are converted to the law of Muhammad. But since they have had converse with Christians, they believe less in it...¹³⁵

Cadamosto was too optimistic about the interest of the Wolof chiefs in Christianity. Superficial as the adherence to Islam might have been at that time, the Muslim influence at the court continued. But he rightly observed that the interest of the common people in Islam was limited. Valentim Fernandes, who visited Jolof about 50 years later, made a similar observation. He stated that while many at the court

¹³² F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 21.

¹³³ The Wolof society was (and to some extent still is) strictly hierarchical and was organised according to a caste system. The top of the system was formed by the freeborn or *jambur*, which included the royal lineages from which the rulers were chosen, the noble families and the peasants. The second caste, the *ngenyu* consisted of the artisans, such as the smiths (*tega*), the leatherworkers (*ude*) and the praise singers and musicians (*gewel*). The *jam* or slaves formed the lowest caste. Slaves in former days could be those who were born as slaves in a certain household and those who were bought or captured in war. The household slaves had a relatively good position and could assemble great wealth, depending on the position of their masters. The royal slaves often functioned as private guard for the ruler. Inter-marriages between the different castes did not take place. Up till the present day the Wolof are conscious of the caste divisions within their society. See D.P. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 44.

¹³⁴ A. Diop, *La société Wolof*, 213.

¹³⁵ G.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, Kraus, Nendeln 1967 (1937), 31.

were Muslim, the larger population continued to practice the traditional religion.¹³⁶ It seems that this situation where Islam was the religion of the court¹³⁷ and the traders, lasted several centuries. Until deep into the 19th century there were reports that the majority of the people was still not Muslim.¹³⁸ It was the influence of the Muslim brotherhoods and the 19th century *jihads*, which caused the change. In the Senegambia Tijani brotherhood and especially the Senegalese Mourid brotherhood founded by the Wolof Amadou Bamba led to the popularisation of Islam among the Wolof.¹³⁹ The fact that Islam was propagated as a way of resistance against the colonial oppression enhanced the conversion of the Wolof to Islam during the 19th century.¹⁴⁰

In The Gambia the short but influential reign of Ma Ba Diakhou Ba, a Tijani *jihadist* who established an Islamic state in Baddibu from 1861-1867, was decisive for the Islamisation of the Wolof. Though Ma Ba died six years after the commencement of his theocratic state Rip, most Wolof in The Gambia became Muslims because of his influence and his resistance against colonial powers.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ 'Le roi et tous ses nobles et seigneurs de la province de Giloffa sont mahométans et ont des bischerijs [marabouts] blancs qui sont prêtres et prédicateurs de Mahomet et savent écrire et lirent. (...) Une partie de la population ou menu peuple croit en Mahomet. Toutefois la plus grande partie est idolatre...' V. Fernandes, *Description de la côte occidentale d'Afrique 1506-1510 (Sénégal au Cap de Monte)*, Ed. Th. Monod, A. Teixeira du Mota, R. Mauny. Centro di Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, Bissau 1951, 7-9.

¹³⁷ Oral tradition maintains that a large part of the aristocracy (*tyeddo*) adhered to the traditional religion up to the 19th century *jihads*, because they considered the exercise of power incompatible with the adoption of Islam. Diop suggests that there might have been a difference between the various Wolof states in the acceptance of Islam. The Kayor nobility whose state had borders with the Tokolor and the Moors might have been more thoroughly influenced by Islam than those of Jolof and Baol who had no such contacts. It is also possible that Islam was only practised to a certain extent at the court, while at the same time traditional practices continued. It is a well-known fact that the Tijani *jihads* in the 19th century were as much aimed at reconverting syncretistic Muslims as at converting the traditionalists. The Methodist missionary Moister wrote in the 1830, before the major *jihads* took place: 'The Mandingos and Jollofs are of the Mahometan religion and are divided into two distinct classes, the one marabouts, a religious people who are superstitious to the extreme, wearing greegrees (charms) in which they place confidence instead of trusting in the living God and the other Soninke, or singing people, who profess nothing but drinking and debauchery.' These Soninke or *tyeddo* belonged to the nobility. It seems hard to establish the extent to which Islam had really touched the lives of people before the 19th century reform movements. It is a fact that in the 19th century the *jihads* thoroughly changed the religious life of the people in the Senegambia. A. Diop, *La société Wolof*, 216; Moister to WMMS, Woodbridge Nov. 25 1833, Box 294/95 H2709 mf. 840.

¹³⁸ G. Mollien, *Reis in de binnenlanden van Afrika, naar de bronnen van de Senegal en Gambia, gedaan in 1818 op last van het Fransch gouvernement*, Blussé en Van Braan, Dordrecht 1820, 102.

¹³⁹ A. Diop, *La société Wolof*, 232 ff and 249ff. For a description of the Muridiyya see P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 203-206.

¹⁴⁰ The most famous example of this is the conversion of *Damel* Lat Dior of Kayor to Islam.

¹⁴¹ A. Diop, *La société Wolof*, 233-234. For an elaborate discussion of Ma Ba Diakhou Ba see paragraph 4.5.

It is difficult to paint a coherent picture of the Wolof traditional religion. Olfert Dapper, who visited Senegal in the 17th century, described the traditional religion as 'they make sacrifices in the woods, there where there are hollow trees which serve them as churches, with many idols therein, to which they offer legumes, millet, rice and the blood of the sacrifice, but they eat the meat.'¹⁴² Dapper also observed that a number of the Wolof were Muslims and fiercely combated the Christian teachings.¹⁴³ Gasper Mollien who visited West Africa in the 19th century described Wolof traditional religion as 'pure fetishism; every object, without distinction, a tree, a snake, the horn of a ram, a stone, pieces of wood and pieces of paper on which Arabic characters are written, these are their gods.'¹⁴⁴

Due to longstanding exposure to Islam, only elements of the traditional religion have survived. Haas observed that already in the 19th century, when many Wolof were still traditional believers, the Wolof word for God had disappeared.¹⁴⁵ Gamble states that a mixture of Islam and traditional religion is still characteristic for the Saloum area.¹⁴⁶ The same is probably true for Christianity. Abbé David Boilat who wrote in his *Esquisses Sénégalaises* (1853) about the Wolof and the Senegambia specialist David Gamble both mention the vivid belief of the Wolof in witches or *dema*, who have the power to eat the souls of people and drink their blood, causing people to waste away.¹⁴⁷ Witchcraft, according to the Wolof, is inherited via the matrilineal line: a person whose mother is *dema* is *dema* him or herself. A person whose father is *dema* inherits the second sight, but is incapable of doing harm.¹⁴⁸ Because the fear for witches is great, people have endeavoured to protect themselves against the witches by wearing amulets, by saying prayers or by performing other rituals. In former days witches were tortured or killed. Nowadays this practice has ceased but social pressure might still cause a suspected witch to leave the village for a while. Certain animals, such as owls and hyenas are associated with witchcraft.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² O. Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewesten van Egypten, Barbarijen, Libyen, Biledulgerid, Negrosant, Guinea, Ethiopien, Abyssinie*, Jac. van Meurs, Amsterdam 1676, 414.

¹⁴³ O. Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewesten*, 414. 'Zij houden het Christen-geloof voor een gruwel-stuk, en trachten hun gevoelen, door ingeven hunner valsche leraers, met deze volgende reden te bevestigen; namelijk dat God, die alles bestiert, en doen kan wat hij wil, en doet donderen, blixemen, regenen en waaien, een almachtigh Godt zij, en zulk een almachtighe Godt geen aanroepinge, nocte een eenige zoon van nooden hebben'

¹⁴⁴ G. Mollien, *Reis in de binnenlanden van Afrika*, 102.

¹⁴⁵ J. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie, Vicariate apostolique de la Senegambie sur le Rev. Père J. Haas*, 411.1B.

¹⁴⁶ D. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, 72.

¹⁴⁷ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, Karthala, Paris 1984 (1853), 315ff; D. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, 71.

¹⁴⁸ Boilat tells that witchcraft according to the Wolof came into being at the beginning of human history. When mankind dispersed from the tower of Babel, the people had to pass two large lakes before they could reach land to settle. The first lake was filled with blood, the second lake with pure clean water. All people were tired and thirsty at the moment of departure but the majority of the people passed the first lake, before quenching their thirst at the second. Those who could not restrain themselves and drank from the first lake, became witches. D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 315.

¹⁴⁹ D. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, 71.

Belief in spirits or genies was also prominent among the Wolof.¹⁵⁰ Gamble mentions the water spirits and spirits associated with a certain location. *Kondorong*, dwarfs with long bears and feet were believed to look after and protect wild animals while *Ninkinanka*, a fabulous and immense snake, was said to hide in the swamps. Seeing the snake was said to be fatal for people. *Seitane* also played a role. Though the word is clearly derived from the Arabic word for Satan, in Wolof traditional religion *Seitane* is a creature that steals small children and changes them for abnormal or deformed children. Up to the present day this last belief that babies can be swapped by spirits for deformed children is still vividly alive. In many families a knife is kept close a newborn baby to scare off evil spirits and a small child is not easily left alone. The veneration of ancestors is also part of the Wolof traditional religion and traces of it can still be found in the funeral rites of both Muslim and Christian Wolof.¹⁵¹

Though the majority of the Wolof has become Muslim, there is also a Wolof Christian community, both in Senegal and in The Gambia. The first contacts of the Wolof with Christianity go back to the Portuguese period. Already in the 1480s a Wolof prince called Bemoy was baptised in Portugal, together with his nobility. For the sake of accuracy it seems fair to state that the motives of both the Portuguese and of Bemoy for this conversion might have been more inspired by politics than by religion. Bemoy wanted the Portuguese assistance to help him to the throne and the Portuguese wanted influence on the Guinea Coast. Bemoy's baptism did not bring him much blessing. On his return to Senegal one of his Portuguese hosts murdered him and it seems unlikely that his noble men after this incident had much taste for Christianity.¹⁵²

The Wolof also came in close contact with Christianity through the *lançados*, Portuguese and Cape Verdian traders who settled on the mainland of West Africa and married local women. Many Wolof worked for the *lançados* as servants or slaves and Wolof women were married to them or had children with them. These *lançados* and their descendants the Mulattos saw Christianity as part of their identity and clung to Christian rituals and symbols, even when they became more and more part of their African – in this case Wolof - environment. Inter-marriage, interaction and possibly the association that Christianity was the religion of the rich, led some Wolof to become Christians. Up till the present day most of the Christian Wolof can be found in places that were formerly Portuguese trading settlements: Portudal, St. Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Joal.¹⁵³

Most of the Wolof who reside in Banjul were not originally Gambians, but came from Gorée and St. Louis and migrated to Bathurst when the British restored St. Louis and Gorée to the French in 1815/1816. Many of these Wolof were traders by profession. Another group came to Bathurst as slaves. They were trained artisans

¹⁵⁰ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 317ff.

¹⁵¹ D. Gamble, *The Wolof of the Senegambia*, 68-72.

¹⁵² For more details about Bemoy see paragraph 5.2. The story of Bemoy can be found in J. de Barros, *The Asia of Joao de Barros*, in C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, Kraus, Nendeln 1967, 130-141.

¹⁵³ For more details about the *lançados* see paragraph 5.3.

who were sent to The Gambia by their owners to earn money in the construction of Bathurst. Several of these Wolof slaves, who were Christian or had converted to Christianity, were emancipated by the Methodist Church and employed as church workers: John Cupidon, Pierre Sallah, William Jouf and Amadi Gum were among the first.¹⁵⁴ Because of their 'positive experiences' with these Wolof from St. Louis and Gorée, the missionaries initially had high expectations of converting all the Wolof to Christianity. The Methodist missionary Morgan wrote in 1821: 'Jaloofs might be obtained with greater facility than the Mandingoes.'¹⁵⁵ The Quaker educationalist Hannah Kilham who worked in The Gambia in the early 1820s focussed in her work on the Wolof. She had prepared teaching material in Wolof while still in England and continued with the translation of religious texts while in The Gambia.¹⁵⁶ As early as 1829 the Methodist minister Richard Marshall compiled a dictionary of about 2000 Wolof words and translated a few chapters of the gospel of John.¹⁵⁷ Services in the Methodist Church in the 19th century were conducted both in English and in Wolof. The Methodists James Fieldhouse (1876-1879) and Robert Dixon (1880-1882 and 1903-1909) specialised in Wolof translations. Fieldhouse translated parts of the Book of Common Prayer into Wolof and composed a Wolof liturgy.¹⁵⁸ Dixon translated the gospels of Matthew and John and the Wesleyan Catechism and compiled a Wolof primer for primary schools and a Wolof hymnbook.¹⁵⁹

Despite these Methodist efforts in Wolof translations, Wolof always remained the second language in the Methodist Church. English, used by the Krio community, was the dominant language. Thus, when in 1848 the Holy Ghost fathers took up residence in The Gambia, many Wolof were attracted to the Roman Catholic Church. Many originally had been Roman Catholics when in Senegal, others were attracted because Wolof was chosen as the main liturgical language.¹⁶⁰ Until the present day, most masses in the Roman Catholic Church are celebrated in Wolof, even though there are few ethnic Wolof left in the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶¹ Also in areas where Wolof is not the dominant language, Wolof is often used as a liturgical lingua franca.

The Roman Catholic mission work among the Wolof and the translation of material into Wolof was greatly stimulated by Mgr. Aloysius Kobès, the second Apostolic Vicar of the Senegambia (1847-1872). Kobès himself studied Wolof and

¹⁵⁴ For more details about the liberated slaves, see paragraph 6.5. The fact that both the Akou and the Wolof have somewhere in their past a connection to slavery has caused Clarke to state that nearly all Christians in The Gambia are of slave descent. P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 125.

¹⁵⁵ J. Morgan to WMMS, Bethesda June 20 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

¹⁵⁶ M. Dickson, *The powerful bond: Hannah Kilham 1774-1832*, Dennis Dobson, London 1980, 116. For the Quaker mission to The Gambia see paragraph 6.3.

¹⁵⁷ R. Marshall to WMMS, Bathurst, February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831.

¹⁵⁸ J. Fieldhouse to WMMS, February 6 1877, Box 296 H2709 mf. 909.

¹⁵⁹ Synod minutes 1882, Box 297 H2708 mf. 16 and Synod minutes 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

¹⁶⁰ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 9.

¹⁶¹ An interview with Fr. T. Gabissi, Kanifing February 9 1999; Interview with Fr. M. Casey, Darsalami January 19 1999.

contributed to the compilation of a dictionary and the translation of religious works such as the Catechism and a work that describes the major Christian festivals.¹⁶² When after a while the first Senegalese Wolof priests were ordained, the Roman Catholic Church produced a wealth of Wolof religious material. Especially the Senegalese mission of St. Joseph in Ngasobil can be credited for this.¹⁶³

The missionaries soon found out that the Wolof in St. Mary's were different from the Wolof in Baddibu. Though racially and linguistically the same as those living on the North Bank, the Banjul Wolof historically came from a different community. Due to their long standing contacts with Western culture, their familiarity with Christianity and the influence of intercultural marriages the Wolof who originated from St. Louis and Gorée area responded more openly to the Christian gospel. The Baddibu Wolof did not have such a history of exposure. They became Muslims in the 1850s and have remained Muslims since.

Missionary perceptions

The Wolof formed a substantial part of the 19th century Christian community. This influenced the missionary perceptions of the Wolof. To many the Christian Wolof were an example of what could happen to 'uncivilised and barbarous' Africans, once they became Christians. As early as 1821 John Morgan wrote home that Wolof 'might be obtained with greater facility than the Mandingoes.'¹⁶⁴ They were generally considered to be 'open and intelligent', 'proverbial for gratitude and fidelity' though 'very superstitious' and 'much afraid of ghosts and evil spirits, against whose dreaded influence they have many imaginary means of defence.'¹⁶⁵ The conviction that the Wolof were 'more intelligent than most of the other Negroes' but at the same time very superstitious was shared by Moister. But the missionaries were convinced that the effects of the Christianisation were beneficial, not just to the Wolof but to their language as well. Moister stated that 'the Jolloff language is somewhat harsh and guttural in its tones; but, when brought into the service of the sanctuary by converted natives, as we have had the pleasure of hearing it, it is remarkably pathetic and impressive.'¹⁶⁶ Even clearer is Robert MacBrair's

¹⁶² J. Delcourt, *Histoire religieuse du Sénégal*, Editions Clairafrique, Dakar 1976, 43.

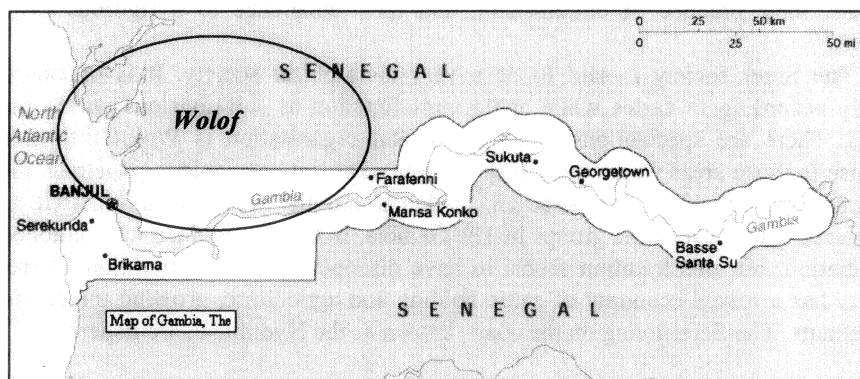
¹⁶³ D. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 22 and 83/84. The last pages of this book give an overview of religious material published in Wolof up till 1957. Complaints have been made that the Senegalese material is not suitable for The Gambia: 'In our present liturgy we have a 'rich mixture' of Latin, English and hymns in the local languages. That which saddens me most is that most of these are 'imported'. To confirm this fact I would ask the reader to find out how many of the hymns, used during any liturgical celebration in any of the Catholic Churches in The Gambia apart from Kunkujang, have been composed by Gambians? (...) As far as I know, there are Wolof and Kulawnaie translations of the Mass and the rites of the other sacraments in The Gambia. However, some people who can speak both languages quite well have said that they cannot read them. My question is: "Who did these translations?"' The author, the name is not mentioned, ends with a plea for 'a Gambian stamp' on the liturgy. *GPI Newsletter*, Vol 9/11 (1995), 9.

¹⁶⁴ Morgan to WMMS, Sept. 12 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

¹⁶⁵ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan missions*, 236.

¹⁶⁶ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours in West Africa*, 23.

statement: 'The Jollofs are a fine race of men, and *when christianised, they are brave, faithful and generous; good samples of what Africans can become.*'¹⁶⁷



The concentration area of the Wolof population in The Gambia

2.6 The Serer

The history

Linguistically the Serer are akin to the Wolof. Haas called them 'les proche parents du Wolof', close relatives of the Wolof.¹⁶⁸ They can be found in large numbers in the former kingdoms of Baol, Kayor and Jolof but their main area of residence is the Sine-Saloum. In The Gambia the Serer number about 20.800 and are mainly resident in Niimi.¹⁶⁹

There are different theories with regard to the place of origin of the Serer. Some say the Serer migrated from Kaabu and eventually settled in the Sine-Saloum.¹⁷⁰ Another theory about the origin of the Serer relates that the Serer originated from the Futa Toro area but were driven south, first by the Tokolar, later by the Wolof, until they settled in the Sine-Saloum around the 12th century.¹⁷¹ For a while the Sine-Saloum formed part of the Wolof Empire but later it gained its

¹⁶⁷ R. MacBrair, *The Africans at home*, 4, 5.

¹⁶⁸ J. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie, vicariate apostolique de la Senegambie par le Rev. Père Haas*, Boite 411.1B.

¹⁶⁹ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001.

¹⁷⁰ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 21. See also the legend told in paragraph 2.2, which links the Serer to the Jola and both of them to Kaabu. Another tradition only states that there is a link between the Serer and Kaabu, but says nothing about the origin of the Serer. This tradition relates that a group of Mandinka *Nyanchos* from Kaabu, who were members of the ruling class, migrated to the Niimi and managed to take control over the area. They came to be known as the *gelwar* or *gewart* in the Sine-Saloum. According to Sonko-Godwin the Jammeh, Manneh and Sonko families in turn ruled over Niimi. P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 7.

¹⁷¹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 14.

independence, which it maintained until the French colonisation of the area in the mid 19th century. The Roman Catholic missionary Haas saw a linkage between the Serer and ancient Egypt because of the Serer veneration of crocodiles, their belief in witches, their practice of circumcision and their adherence to a rigorous caste system.¹⁷²

The Serer society is said to be a very hierarchical society. It is organised strictly according to castes while age-groups function as sub-divisions within the castes. There are speculations that this societal organisation is Wolof influence because in those areas where the Wolof influence has not been able to penetrate, the Serer society is much more egalitarian.¹⁷³ Men among the Serer are circumcised, as is the case with most ethnic groups in The Gambia. In the past women were tattooed at initiation, but this tradition seems to have disappeared.¹⁷⁴ The traditional Serer society has a mixed economy of cattle holding and agriculture, growing millet and groundnuts. The Serer living on the coast, known as the Nyominka, are fishermen.¹⁷⁵

Religion

In matters of religion the Serer had a reputation for their fierce resistance of Islam.¹⁷⁶ Living in an environment that was not easily accessible for traders, travellers and clerics, the Serer were able to maintain their traditional religion and withstand foreign influence. During the 19th century *jihads* it was said that the Serer would rather commit suicide or be massacred than to convert to Islam.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in the first decades of the 20th century the Serer gradually began to convert to Islam and by the end of the colonial era about 50 percent of all the Serer had become Muslim.¹⁷⁸

Not much research has been done into the traditional religion of the Serer. Gamble mentions that the Serer know of a benevolent Creator called Rog, whose help was invoked in times of crisis. The Serer worship spirits who are said to live in small houses built at the foot of the cotton tree and regular sacrifices of milk and millet are made to them. Gamble also talks about of the veneration of ancestors. It seems ancestors were especially called upon at certain rain ceremonies.¹⁷⁹ Boilat, writing in the mid 19th century mentions different types of rituals to implement justice in the society. He adds that these powerful Serer practices were greatly feared by all, Christians included.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷² J. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie, vicariate apostolique de la Senegambie par le Rev. Père Haas*, Boite 411.1B.

¹⁷³ D.P. Gamble, 'A note on the Serer' in *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 101.

¹⁷⁴ J. M. Fayemi, 'Note on housing and rural environment in Serer country (Senegal)', *African environment, occasional papers*, no 5 (May 1976), 3. Note: several Gambian ethnic groups practice female circumcision as well, even though legally this is no longer allowed.

¹⁷⁵ D.P. Gamble, 'A note on the Serer' in *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 100.

¹⁷⁶ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 23 and D.P. Gamble 'A note on the Serer' in *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 102.

¹⁷⁷ D.P. Gamble, 'A note on the Serer', 102.

¹⁷⁸ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 202.

¹⁷⁹ D.P. Gamble, 'A note on the Serer', 102/103.

¹⁸⁰ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 102/103. One ritual was a sort of trial by ordeal in case of theft. The ritual consists of taking a certain type of lizard to the blacksmith after a theft had

The Serer have been exposed to Christianity for a long time. Since the time of the Portuguese, there was a Christian community of Mulattos at Joal in Serer territory. But these Christians of Portuguese ancestry were not interested in evangelising the surrounding people. They considered Christianity to be a personal privilege which should not be distributed too widely: to be a Christian meant to be white and to be a trader. The Roman Catholic missionaries however have used Joal as a base for evangelising the Serer.¹⁸¹ Presently the Serer and the Jola constitute the majority of the Roman Catholic Church in Senegal.

In The Gambia the Methodist Church had a parish in the Serer area of Niumi from the early 19th century onwards but the congregations mainly consisted of Liberated Africans and soldiers of the West Indian regiment. In the 1870s attempts were made at evangelising the Serer. Henry Quilter wrote:

Lately we have commenced extending our influence among the Serias. They are a tribe which are employed in the town and the neighbourhood as laborers; for the most part they are pagans, some have embraced Mahomedanism.¹⁸² Most of them understand the Jallof language as well as the Serias, as we are able to reach them by means of our Jallof local preacher.¹⁸³

Records do not give evidence of the results of this effort to evangelise the Serer and no lasting effect seems to have been reached. Eventually even the church at Barra was closed.

The Roman Catholic Church made several attempts to evangelise the Gambian Serer. A first attempt was made in the 1920s by John Meehan. The village Mbolett was chosen as a centre.¹⁸⁴ A catechist was stationed in the village to look after the parish and the vegetable garden. The mission station was extended by a small school in 1937 and a teacher/catechist named Joachim DaCosta was appointed to look after the parish. When Joachim DaCoasta died in December 1943, there was no one to replace him. Thus the first attempt to start a mission among the Serer failed due to lack of personnel.¹⁸⁵ Another effort was made in 1959. Njongon was chosen as the location for the mission station and a mission school was started. It seems that from

been discovered while a special drum was sounded. It was believed that when the smith put the lizard on his anvil and hit it with his hammer, the thief would receive the same blows and pain as the lizard. The sound of the drum, according to Boilat, was often enough to make the thief confess. Another ceremony to implement justice was performed at a certain type of tree-shrine. In this case a priest attached to the shrine was said to receive sacrifices from the victim after which he performed a ritual, which caused the soul of the culpable to be captured in the tree.

¹⁸¹ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 21, 28 and 108ff. Boilat mentions the priest Alexis de Saint-Lo and Bernardin de Renouard as having worked among the Nones, a subgroup of the Serer in the 17th century while in the 18th century someone called Coste, nick-named the apostle of Joal, spent most of his time teaching the Serer.

¹⁸² Possibly under influence of the *jihad* of Ma Ba Diakhou in the 1860s.

¹⁸³ Quilter to WMMS, July 15 1871, Box 295 H2709 mf 897.

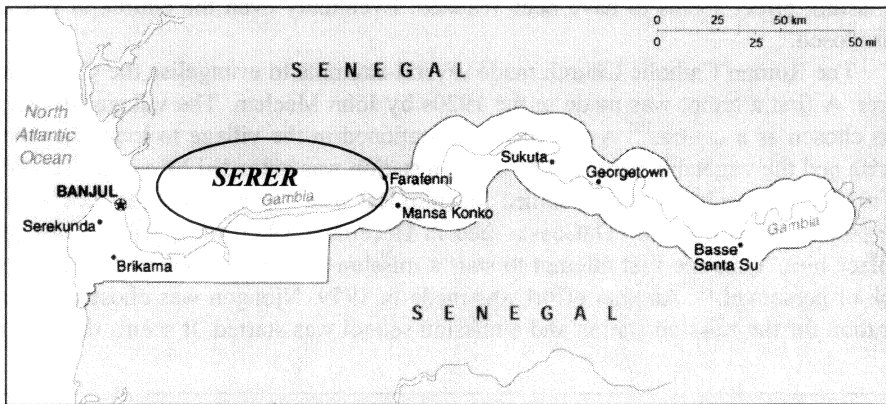
¹⁸⁴ Entry January 6 1924, Journal de Communauté de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁸⁵ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 38.

that moment onwards, slowly but surely, the Niimi mission took shape. In the 1960s a considerable number of young Gambian Serer converted to Christianity.¹⁸⁶ In the 1970s however, about 90 percent of the converts reverted to Islam.¹⁸⁷ In 1995 the Njongon parish was said to consist of about 500 people, most of whom Manjago, scattered over the area with Christian communities at Njongon, Berending, Barra, Lewna, Cassewa, Ker Jatta, Bakalar and Albreda. A team of priests, catechists and Cluny sisters pastorally supervises the churches and runs the schools.¹⁸⁸

Missionary perceptions

The missionaries did not make many comments on the Serer. Possibly there was little contact with the rural Serer in Niimi, the river forming an obstacle for intense contact.¹⁸⁹ According to the archives several Roman Catholic missionaries studied the traditional religion of the Serer, but no records have been left, apart from Haas' remark that the Serer were somehow connected to ancient Egypt because of their reverence for crocodiles.¹⁹⁰ In the 1880s the Roman Catholic missionaries expected the Serer to 'embrace the Christian religion' and were working on the translation of a prayer manual into Serer.¹⁹¹ The only other comment, which is repeated time and again, is the remark that the land of the Serer was a hard missionary district, because the Serer were 'steeped in superstition'.¹⁹²



The concentration area of the Serer in The Gambia

¹⁸⁶ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 61.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Fr. R. Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

¹⁸⁸ 'Around the Diocese: Njongon', *GPI Newsletter* Vol. 19/2 (February 1995), 10/11. Author unknown.

¹⁸⁹ There were also some Serer living on St. Mary's island, who worked as labourers in the town. Some of them became Christians.

¹⁹⁰ Fr. Gaillais, *Mission du Sénégal*, Boite 53A/III.

¹⁹¹ *Bulletin Général* 9 (Oct. 1887), 306; Riehl to Barrillec, Dakar 26 1878, Boite 160B/II, Letter Gambia 1876-1879.

¹⁹² Entry Feb. 4 1940, Journal de Communauté de St. Marie de Bathurst IV.

2.7 The Mandinka

The history

For anyone slightly familiar with the history of West Africa the word 'Mandinka' immediately calls to mind the epic tales of Sundiata Keita and the famous Mali Empire he founded. The tale of the heroic founder of the Mali Empire is still sung by the *jeliba* or *griots* today.¹⁹³

At the time of Sundiata Keita's birth, which must have been around the beginning of the 13th century, the Mandinka lived in Kangaba, in the Niger Valley. Kangaba was at that time a vassal to the Susu state of Kaniaga, the successor of the Ghana Empire.¹⁹⁴ The story of Sundiata Keita begins by telling that Sundiata Keita¹⁹⁵, the nickname of Makhara Makhang Konnate¹⁹⁶, was born as the oldest son of Fatakung Makhang, who was at that time king of the Mandinka. At the death of his father his half-brother was declared king, even though Sundiata, as the first born, was the rightful heir to the throne. Sundiata did not dispute this decision immediately but in 1234/35 assembled an army and fought Sumangura Konteh, the king of the Susu. Having beaten Sumangura Konteh in battle and liberated the Mandinka of the Susu domination, Sundiata Keita seized the throne of his half-brother and the Mali Empire was born. Most of the expansion of the Mali Empire, stretching at its heydays from Tekrur in the north, the Atlantic ocean in the east, present day Liberia and Sierra Leone in the south and Goa and Tadmekka in the west, took place during the life-time of Sundiata and his son *Mansa Uli*.¹⁹⁷ The most famous *Mansa* of the Mali Empire was no doubt *Mansa Kankan Musa* (1312-1337) who on his pilgrimage to Mecca put the Mali Empire on the map by spending so much gold in Egypt that the gold prices devaluated. *Mansa Musa* re-structured the administration of the Mali Empire into a well-oiled machinery of civil servants, scribes, judges and officers so that Mali could reign its provinces more effectively.

¹⁹³ The words *jeliba* and *griot* are the Mandinka and Wolof terms respectively for the praise-singers. For a detailed study of the griots in The Gambia see M. Janson, *The best hand is the hand that always gives: griottes and their profession in Eastern Gambia*, CNWS Publications, Leiden 2002.

¹⁹⁴ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Sundiata Keita was a nickname. Sundiata means 'the lion has committed theft' referring to the story that Sundiata when pressed by the *griots* for a gift, stole a strip of cloth from his half brother. Keita in Mandinka means 'to take inheritance' referring to the moment that Sundiata assumed his rightful place as heir to the throne. See. D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 45-47.

¹⁹⁶ Researchers have identified Sundiata Keita or Makhara Makhang Konnata with *Mansa Mari-Djata* who ruled the Mali Empire from 1230 until 1255. See B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjogbin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, Collins Educational, London 1983, 11.

¹⁹⁷ A more elaborate version of the tale of Sundiata Keita can be found in D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 43-47. A scientific edition based on Gambian oral traditions has been prepared by W. Galloway, *Sunjata*, Oral history and Antiquities division of the Vice-President's Office, Banjul 1980.

Mansa Musa was also known for his piety. He stimulated Islamic studies to the extent that Timbuktu became a renown centre for Islamic learning.¹⁹⁸

It is believed that the migration of the first groups of Mandinka into the Senegambia had already begun before the foundation of the Mali Empire. In the 11th and 12th century small groups of Mandinka, in search of farmland settled in the Senegambia and Guinea-Bissau and intermarried with the local people. Also during the glory time of the Mali empire, migrations continued. Young princes and generals who had little chance to become rulers or governors, left the Mali Empire with their people to settle elsewhere. The biggest and most famous migration from Mali to the Senegambia occurred during the reign of Sundiata Keita. One of his generals, Tiramang Touray¹⁹⁹ was sent on a punitive mission to the Wolof Empire, because the *Bur Jolof* had offended Sundiata by refusing to sell him horses and by killing his messengers. It seems that Tiramang left for the expedition with about 75.000 people. The group did not consist of soldiers only, but also entailed noble men, farmers, artisans and slaves. After having conquered Jolof and killed the king, Tiramang proceeded to conquer the Kassa region. Mandinka families who had settled earlier in the region helped him in his conquest of the Casamance. The Kassa region became the nucleus of what came to be known as the Kaabu Empire.

By the end of the 14th century most of the kingdoms along the river Gambia, with the exception of Foni, were under Mandinka control. They either formed part of the Kaabu Empire or paid tribute to it. Kaabu in its turn paid tribute to Mali. After the decline of Mali, Kaabu became an independent state. The Kaabu Empire came to end when Fula from the Futa Jallon invaded Kaabu in 1868. Though the figures of the Fula army involved vary between 25.000 and 40.000, all sources seem to agree that the battle of Kansala was one of the most bloody of the Senegambian history. Only about 4000 soldiers of the Fula army seem to have survived to celebrate the victory.²⁰⁰ One of the most important consequences of the fall of Kaabu was the fact that the Fula along the river realised that the Mandinka could be conquered. One revolt after another followed and in several cases the Fula were able to throw off the Mandinka yoke. One of these people was the Fula Alfa Molloh Baldeh, who established Fuladu.

According to the 1983 census the Mandinka form about 40 percent of the Gambian population and Mandinka is more or less the lingua franca in The Gambia. The capital Banjul where Wolof is the market language, forms an exception to this rule.²⁰¹ The Mandinka society is organised along caste structures. There is a division in the society between the nobility (*angsarlu*), the freemen or farmers (*sano*), the artisans (*nyamakala*) and the slaves (*jongolu*). Also age-groups (*kafos*) and special associations such as the masquerades (*kangkaroo*) and the women's associations such as the *dembajasa* or 'clowning mothers' for women who has lost several

¹⁹⁸ K.B.C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa: AD 1000-1800, Book I*, Africana-FEP Publishers Ltd. Ibadan 1982 (1967), 33-39.

¹⁹⁹ Sometimes he was also called Tiramangan Traore. See. P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 4.

²⁰⁰ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 7-9; D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 73ff.

²⁰¹ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001.

children in a row, have played and continue to play an important role in the Mandinka society.²⁰²

Mandinka religion: Soninkeya and Islam

For many centuries there was another dividing line in the Mandinka society: the distinction between those Mandinka who adhered to the traditional religion and those who were Muslims. The adherents of the traditional religion were called the 'Soninke' and the Muslims were called 'Marabouts'. Valentim Fernandes, who visited the area in the first decade of the 17th century stated:

Beaucoup dans ce pays suivent la religion de Mahomet et là aussi vont beaucoup de bisserijs qui sont des prêtres maures allant dans cette région pour enseigner leur foi à ce peuple. Et tous les autres sont idolâtres à la mode et façon des Gyloffos comme on l'a dit.²⁰³

Other visitors to the Senegambia, such as Jobson, Moore and Park have also observed the coexistence of the two religious persuasions.²⁰⁴ It is assumed that the influence of the Muslims gradually increased. Muslim clerics gradually replaced the smiths in the circumcision ceremonies.²⁰⁵ The *fino griots* who sing religious hymns and recite lists of people in the Qur'an, have gradually, both in number and respect, surpassed the *joka* who are the more general praise-singers.²⁰⁶ But as late as the 1899, when the Soninke-Marabout wars had more or less died down, the Methodist missionary R. Williams wrote: 'There are two great divisions of Mandingoes: 1. The Mohammedans 2. The Soninke who drink alcoholic liquors and do not 'pray Mohammad'.'²⁰⁷

The traditional religion of the Mandinka or *Soninkeya* consisted of the worship of objects called *jalang*. *Jalang* could be many things: stones, trees, man-made instruments like spears or unusually shaped rocks, but also animals like the crocodile. All these were said to represent a life-giving force, in Mandinka called *nyamo*.²⁰⁸ It was believed that *nyamo* could be encapsulated at certain places and be influenced by those who had 'captured' it. Many sites where *jalang* were said to be present, are still known and in use: the crocodile-pools at Katchikally, Kartong²⁰⁹ and Berending and the sacred grove or baobab tree at Sannementereing, the grove at Farankunko, the sacred tree at Santangba and the boulder stone at Berewuleng might

²⁰² M. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko: the ethnography of a West African holy land*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1980, 44ff.; F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 13ff.

²⁰³ V. Fernandes, *Description de la côte*, 45.

²⁰⁴ M. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko*, 70.

²⁰⁵ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 27.

²⁰⁶ M. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko*, 66/67.

²⁰⁷ Williams to WMMS, Bathurst March 3 1899, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1002.

²⁰⁸ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 31ff.

²⁰⁹ The residence of the Roman Catholic priest in Kartong is at the entrance of the path leading to the crocodile-pool of Mama Folonko, which is said to be a white crocodile. The priest told me that every year just before the common entrance exams the grade six students of the Roman Catholic primary school accompanied by their teachers, some of whom were Roman Catholic, go to the pool to give sacrifices, hoping that this would enhance the positive results of the exams.

serve as examples.²¹⁰ Certain forms of *jalang* worship were individual and aimed at personal welfare; others were communal practices and were aimed at the well being of the community as a whole, especially in times of crises. It seems that at communal festivities or gatherings, animal sacrifices and cowry offerings were made and large amounts of alcohol were consumed, giving the *Soninke* their reputation of 'drunkards'.

The *jalang* were also consulted as oracle. The Mandinka know various forms of divination. In some cases an animal was slaughtered and the kidneys were examined (*haruspex*). Dark kidneys implied a negative answer, whereas light-coloured kidneys implied a positive indication. In other cases, where the *jalang* had taken the form of a tree, a seance took place under the tree. A positive answer was given when the tree shook violently – at night it was said that a whirlwind shook the tree – whereas when all remain quiet, the reply was considered to be negative.²¹¹ Dropping seven red, elongated beans on the ground was another forms of Mandinka divination. Afterwards the pattern was read and interpreted. Throwing four sticks in a gourd of water was a similar form of divination.²¹²

There were also areas of life in which the *jalang* were considered to be of little use. In those cases the assistance of the *Sabu-Tiyolu*, the traditional healers was called in. When illnesses or wounds were to be healed or amulets and potions were to be fabricated, the people turned to the traditional healers. The *Sabu-Tiyolu* were said to possess the knowledge of the secrets of certain herbs and roots and were said to be endowed with special powers derived from *nyamo*. Only few of the traditional healers were Mandinka. Most of them were Fula, who were thought to have a greater knowledge of the supernatural world because of their habits of sleeping in the open air and their nomadic way of life.²¹³

Soninke also consisted in passing on moral values. Usually the elders and the *jeliba* took this task upon them. Tales, stories and proverbs were passed on informally in the evenings near the fire side while more formalised instruction took place during the seclusion at the time of circumcision.²¹⁴ Also the masks played their role in the *Soninke* and the maintenance of social order: the *kangkura*, the *fangbondi* and a demon type mask called *Hore* are known.²¹⁵ *Soninke* seems to have had nothing to do with ancestor-worship per se, nor does it seem to have had a

²¹⁰ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 29ff.

²¹¹ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 35/36.

²¹² F. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko*, 34. The four sticks were said to represent a boy, a girl, an older man and an older woman. Presently these methods of divination are still used by *marabouts*. Note: the *Jakhanke* clerics, a clerical tradition prevalent in the Senegambia and popular among the Mandinka, were very skilled in divination. This can hardly be a coincidence.

²¹³ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 38/39.

²¹⁴ With the Mandinka both boys and girls are circumcised. For a description see M. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko*, 95ff.

²¹⁵ M. Schaffer; C. Cooper, *Mandinko*, 101-104. Moister calls this masks 'Mumbo Jumbo', see W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 37.

concept of a Supreme Being that could be reached by means of lesser deities or spirits.²¹⁶

Islam has a long history among the Mandinka. It is assumed that the first Mandinka Muslims arrived in the Senegambia around the 12th or 13th century. Oral tradition recalls the names of the Janneh, Darbo and Turay families who were Muslims when they arrived in the Senegambia.²¹⁷ Initially the Muslims were looked at with suspicion and lived in separate villages, the so-called Fodekundas or Morikundas. These villages were governed by the Islamic calendar and the Islamic way of life and abstinence from pork and alcohol was observed. The Muslims were granted land in exchange for certain services they performed for the *Mansa* of the area.²¹⁸ Gradually their influence increased and more people converted to Islam. The two different life-styles of Muslims and Soninke came to clash in what came to be known as the Soninke-Marabout wars, which raged through the Senegambia in the second half of the 19th century.²¹⁹ It is believed that they were partly caused by the continuous harassments of the Muslims by the *Soninke* rulers, partly by the influx of Muslims of a more militant persuasion. The – for the Soninke unexpected – result was the victory of the Muslims, which eventually led to the total Islamisation of the Mandinka.

The missionaries never had great hopes of converting the Mandinka to Christianity. The Methodist missionary Morgan wrote in 1821: 'Jaloofs might be obtained with greater facility than the Mandingoes.'²²⁰ His Gambian colleague Terry stated something similar, saying that the Jola might be more easily impressed with Christianity than the Mandinka.²²¹ The Methodist Fox wrote to his mission organisation that he was 'not very sanguine as to immediate success with the Mandingoes in connecting them to the faith of Jesus, they being completely wrapped up in the absurdities of the Mahomedanism.' He still had some hope because they 'appear willing to send their children to a Christian school (...); that will be laying the foundation-stone for the superstructure of our holy religion...'²²² But Anglican sources reported more than a century later that education was the only thing the Mandinka wanted. The *Newsletter* of the second quarter of 1958 states plainly: 'The Mandingoes want education, not the Christian faith!'²²³

Translation work in Mandinka started in the early 19th century. Hannah Kilham prepared reading sheets and a short vocabulary in Mandinka²²⁴ and the Methodist linguist Robert MacBrair compiled a grammar, a vocabulary and translated the

²¹⁶ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 33/34.

²¹⁷ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 42.

²¹⁸ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 42ff.

²¹⁹ For further details see paragraph 4.5.

²²⁰ Morgan to WMMS, Bethesda June 20 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

²²¹ Terry to WMMS, Cape St. Mary, May 6 1879, Box 296 H2709 mf. 916.

²²² Journal of William Fox, entry February 23 1936, Box 293 H2709 mf. 839.

²²³ Newsletter second quarter of 1958, Anglican Archives, Bishops Court Banjul, File Box no. 12 on Historical Documents.

²²⁴ M. Dickson *The powerful bond: Hannah Kilham*, 155.

gospels.²²⁵ Nowadays the World Evangelism for Christ (WEC)²²⁶ literacy unit has produced Mandinka materials, including a vocabulary, a Mandinka course and a translation of the Mandinka New Testament. The Old Testament is still being worked on.²²⁷ The vernacular work of WEC has attracted the interest of some Mandinka Muslims and some converted as a result. Two of the converts have entered the ministry: Pastor Modou Sanneh, presently pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church of The Gambia²²⁸ and Pastor Modou Camara, pastor of the Evangelical Church of The Gambia, Bundung parish.²²⁹ In recent years the Baptist Mission in Farafenni has started a special project of reaching out to the Mandinka but the effect of the programme has not yet been evaluated.

All in all, there are very few Mandinka Christians in The Gambia. A prominent exception to this rule is the Gambian Christian theologian and historian Dr. Lamin Sanneh. Sanneh converted from Islam to Christianity as a young man and now teaches 'World Christianity' at Yale University in New Haven, USA.²³⁰

Missionary perceptions

The classical prejudices of Europeans about Africans, based on the racist theories, seem not to have applied to the Mandinka. Though black Africans, the Mandinka were admired by the missionaries. The Methodist linguist Robert MacBrair wrote: 'They are noble, active in war and enterprising in commerce. Their disposition is naturally gentle and cheerful so that when they become Mahometans, they do not show that religious rancour and intolerance which the Moors and Felattas exhibit.'²³¹ And the Quaker educationist Hannah Kilham regarded them as the 'aristocracy of West Africa', 'gentlemen with regard to carriage and behaviour'²³² while Moister recorded: 'Their disposition is generally friendly and hospitable; and, when travelling alone and unprotected among them, we have always been treated with curtesy and respect, and never felt the slightest fear of molestation. Altogether we regard the Mandingoes the noblest species of the African race we have met.'²³³ The Roman Catholic Haas spoke of them as 'fierce warriors, fanatic Muslims and well versed in the Islamic tradition.'²³⁴ The Methodist Baker seems to have been an exception in this admiration of the Mandinka: 'As masters they are proud, insolent

²²⁵ R. MacBrair to WMMS, Georgetown February 15 1836, Box 294 H2709 mf. 844; W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan Missions*, 397/398.

²²⁶ Formerly the abbreviation WEC stood for World Evangelical Crusade.

²²⁷ *EFG Newslink*, Vol. 1, no. 2 1993.

²²⁸ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing February 1 1999.

²²⁹ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

²³⁰ The story of Sanneh's conversion is related in H. de Leede and J.J. Visser, 'Lamin Sanneh: alleen de waarheid maakt vrij', *Kontekstueel* 7/2 (November 1992), 24-26. See also: M Gaudoul, *Appelés par le Christ: ils viennent de l'Islam*, CERF, Paris 1991, 208-212, 302 and L. Sanneh, 'Muhammad, prophet of God, and Jesus Christ, image of God: a personal testimony', *International bulletin of missionary research*, 8/4 (1984) 169-174.

²³¹ R. MacBrair, *The Africans at home*, 15, 16.

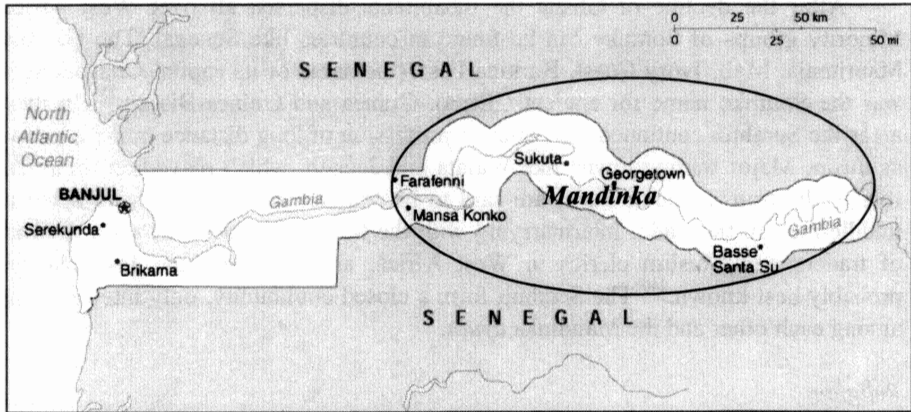
²³² S. Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 221.

²³³ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 23.

²³⁴ F. Haas, *Rapport sur la mission de St. Marie de Gambie, vicariate apostolique par le Rev. Père Haas*, Boîte 411.1B.

and cruel. As servants, they are fawning, hypocritical and extremely dishonest. It seems as though Mahomedanism has made them almost if not altogether the worst of men.²³⁵

This generally shared admiration for the Mandinka is all the more remarkable because all forms of evangelisation of the Mandinka failed. Neither the Soninke nor the Muslim Mandinka were interested in the Christian faith. Possibly the admiration of the missionaries for the Mandinka is linked with their celebrated heritage: they were the aristocrats, the descendants and heirs of the famous renown Mali Empire.



The concentration area of the Mandinka in The Gambia

2.8 The Serahuli

The history

The Serahuli form one of the larger minority groups in The Gambia, numbering 51,137 according to the 1983 census.²³⁶ They are also known under the name of Soninke, not to be confused with the Mandinka term 'Soninke', which is used to indicate 'a follower of the traditional religion'. Though there is some uncertainty with regards to the origin of the Serahuli, the most popular tradition traces them to the Ghana Empire. This tradition claims that the ancestors of the Serahuli were the founders and inhabitants of the Ghana Empire.

According to oral tradition the history of Ghana began with a Serahuli man called Dinga who was said to be the ancestor of the Serahuli. One of his sons is credited with having built the capital of the Ghana Empire, Kumbi Saleh. The legend states that he was helped by a huge serpent that promised to provide rain five times a year in exchange for a yearly sacrifice of a young virgin. The legend further recounts that, apart from water, it also rained gold at times, which gave the inhabitants of Ghana their wealth and fame. After some time –life being what it is -

²³⁵ Baker to WMMS, Mandanaree, May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

²³⁶ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001.

a young man who had fallen in love with the virgin about to be sacrificed, killed the snake. As a punishment it did not rain for seven years in Ghana. The head of the snake was buried in Bure which later became known for its gold mines. Although the story is legendary in character, it explains both the source of wealth of the Ghana Empire, being gold from the mines of Bure, and the reason for its decline: the incessant periods of draught.²³⁷ It is often said that the only reason why the Almoravids were successful in their battle against Ghana, was the fact that the Ghana Empire was weakened because of desiccation and its disastrous effects on agriculture.²³⁸

After the decline of Ghana the inhabitants dispersed all over West Africa. Minority groups of Soninke can be found in countries like Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso (the name of its capital Ouagadougou was the Soninke name for ancient Ghana), Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.²³⁹ In these areas the Serahuli continued their ancient profession of long distance traders, known as *dyula*. Major trading towns like Walata and Jenneh, which played an important role in the trans-Saharan trade, are said to be founded by Serahuli, who acted as middle-men in the trade. Intermarrying with the Mandinka, they formed a network of traders and Muslim clerics in West Africa, among whom the Jakhanke are probably best known.²⁴⁰ The Serahuli form a closed community, only intermarrying among each other and the Mandinka *dyula*.

Religion

Most Serahuli are Muslims and have been Muslim for a long time. They have acted as propagators of Islam, spreading the religion as they traded in West Africa. In The Gambia the Serahuli came into the spotlights during the 1880s when the Serahuli *marabout* Momodou Lamine Drammeh, whose official name was Ma Lamine Demba Debassi²⁴¹, waged a war north-east of the country and established a Islamic state which included parts of Mali, Senegal and The Gambia. Being a threat to the French imperialism, Momodou Lamine was killed by the French in 1887.²⁴² His *jihad* boosted Serahuli self-confidence and renewed their commitment to Islam.

²³⁷ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 32-33.

²³⁸ There is much discussion among scholars whether or not there was truly an attack by the Almoravids on Ghana and whether as a result the rulers of Ghana became Muslims. The interpretation of the texts that refer to this incident are subject of much dispute. For the discussion see P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 17ff. It seems to be beyond discussion that prolonged periods of draught contributed to the decline of Ghana. Not only did the draught affect the agriculture but also the trans-Saharan trade routes were re-routed because of it. P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 33.

²³⁹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 19.

²⁴⁰ For a history of the Jahanke see the dissertation of L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics: a religious and historical study of Islam in Senegambia*, Lanham, New York/London 1989.

²⁴¹ I.B. Kaké, *Mamadou Lamine: marabout et résistant soninké*, ABC publishers, Paris 1977, 17.

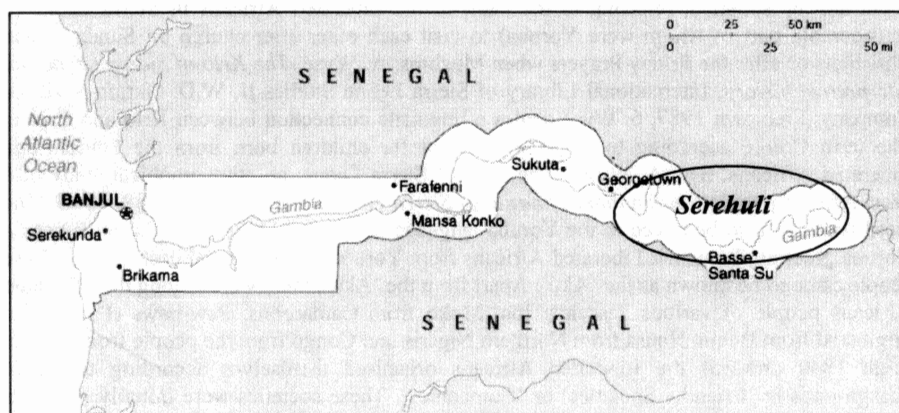
²⁴² P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region: reactions to European infiltration 19th and 20th century*, Sunrise Publishers Ltd. Kanifing 1995, 33-41. More information on Momodou Lamine Drammeh can be found in paragraph 4.5.

Due to the fact that the Gambian Serahuli have a reputation of being staunch Muslims and form a closed community, no missionary efforts have been undertaken to evangelise the Serahuli.²⁴³ Only recently has the Anglican Church in co-operation with the UNHCR begun refugee work among the Serahuli. Many Gambian Serahuli were involved in the Sierra Leone diamond trade and had families both in The Gambia and in Sierra Leone. Due to the civil war the Serahuli have tended to bring their Sierra Leonean families to The Gambia. These have been given a refugee-status.

Gailey mentions that most Serahuli are poor farmers²⁴⁴, but it is an established fact that much of the property in the urban areas is owned by Serahuli. Also their involvement in the diamond trade has given them the reputation of being comparatively rich.²⁴⁵

Missionary perceptions

Surprisingly, the Serahuli are not mentioned at all in the missionary archives. This might be caused by two different factors. First of all the Serahuli have always formed a closed community and resisted influence from outside. Secondly the Serahuli have always had a reputation of being staunch Muslims. With greener pastures around, these two factors possibly discouraged the missionaries from attempting to evangelise the Serahuli.



The concentration area of the Serahuli in The Gambia

²⁴³ The Christian Mission Fellowship started an attempt to evangelise the Serahuli in the mid 1990s but so far no Serahuli has responded to their outreach programmes.

²⁴⁴ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 16.

²⁴⁵ See also D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 19.

2.9 The Krio

The history

A most remarkable group of people is formed by the Krio, sometimes also called Aku or Creoles.²⁴⁶ They are not an ethnic group in the strict sense, because they originally come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Sonko-Godwin, in her book on *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia* does not mention the Krio.²⁴⁷ But the Macmillan Social Studies Atlas on The Gambia, which is used by all primary schools in The Gambia, categorises the Aku among the ethnic groups in The Gambia.²⁴⁸ Because the Krio form a distinct group in Gambian society and in their self-description see themselves as belonging to the Aku tribe²⁴⁹, this thesis treats the Krio as one of the ethnic groups. Besides, they do have some of the characteristics of an ethnic group. The Krio have a common history related to the slave trade, a common language sometimes called Krio or Aku²⁵⁰, shared moral and ethical standards and to some extent also a common religion. As a group the Krio have played and still play an important role in Gambian Protestantism: most Krio are members of either the Methodist- or the Anglican Church.

The history of the Krio goes back to the period of the slave trade when millions of Africans were taken into slavery to work in Europe, America and the West Indies.

²⁴⁶ According to Wyse the name Krio is derived from the Yoruba expression Kiriyo, to walk about and be satisfied, referring to the habit of the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone (a considerable part of whom were Yoruba) to visit each other after church on Sunday when Christians or after the Friday Prayers when Muslims. A. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: an interpretive history*, International Library of Sierra Leone Studies II, W.D. Okrafo-Smart & Company, Freetown 1987, 6. Wyse denies a linguistic connection between Krio and Creole. The term Creole according to Wyse was meant for children born from the Settlers and Liberated Africans. See: A. Wyse, 'The Krio of Sierra Leone: an ethnographical study of a West African people', *International journal of Sierra Leone studies*, Vol. 1 1988, 46-49. The word Aku can also be traced to the Yoruba language. The word 'Aku' seems to have been a Yoruba greeting, by which Liberated Africans from Yoruba origin greeted each other. These people came to be known as the 'Aku'. Apart from the 'Aku', there were among the Liberated Africans people of various descents: Ibo, Moko from Camaroons, Paw-paws (Popo) who originated from Benin, Hausa from Northern Nigeria and Congo from the people from Congo. From 1840 onwards the Liberated Africans organised themselves according to ethnic backgrounds in 'Friendly Societies' or 'Companies'. These societies were initially meant as self-help groups. Later, from the 1860s onward these companies also got a social-political dimension and functioned as a political lobby and an instrument to make critical remarks about the government. As time went by the original ethnic differences disappeared and all Liberated Africans came to known as 'Aku'. See: F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 68 and 87ff.

²⁴⁷ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia: a brief history*, BPMRU, Banjul 1985.

²⁴⁸ *The Gambia Social Studies Atlas*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., London (?) 1989, 14, 15.

²⁴⁹ H. Aspen, *Ghost Corporations*, 26. See also: A. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: an interpretive history*, 6ff.

²⁵⁰ Krio or Aku is sometimes derivatively called pidgin-English or broken English but nowadays recognised as a language. See: A. Wyse, 'The Krio of Sierra Leone: an ethnographical study', 47. The International Bible Society has published a New Testament in Krio.

From 1787 onwards groups of freed Africans started returning to Africa. The first to arrive 'back home' were people known as the Black Poor from England, followed by the Nova Scotians from Canada in 1792 and the Maroons from Jamaica in 1800. They settled in the colony of Freetown, Sierra Leone, which had been purchased as 'a province of freedom' by British philanthropists, belonging to the Abolitionist lobby. These returnees were known as the 'Settlers'. Initially encouraged to engage in farming, many of them soon turned to trading as a means of income, because the soil around Freetown proved poor. Gradually they spread along the West Coast of Africa to places such as Nigeria and The Gambia.

A few years later the Settlers in the colony were joined and outnumbered by what came to be known as 'Liberated Africans' or the 'Recaptives'. When in 1807 the British officially abolished the slave-trade and started hunting slave ships on coast of West Africa²⁵¹, the slaves on the captured ships were put ashore and declared free in Freetown: they were 'Recaptives' who had now become 'Liberated Africans'. Though the term Liberated Africans was used as common denominator, these people came from all sorts of ethnic backgrounds, sometimes as far away as Congo, sometimes as close by as Sierra Leone itself.²⁵² Once declared free and treated medically - many of them were near-dead after the traumatic experience - the Government endeavoured to assist the Liberated Africans in creating a future for themselves in Sierra Leone. A few, mainly Yoruba and people captured in Sierra Leone itself, were able to return to their native country. But most of them could not. Many of the Recaptives were young children who had no idea of their place of origin. Others could not return due to chances of renewed enslavement. Those who stayed were either provided with agricultural equipment and assigned to villages to earn a living as farmers or apprenticed to the merchants and the Settlers. Especially the name of Governor MacCarthy (1815-1824) is linked with the resettlement of Liberated Africans. With the help of the Church Missionary Society he designed the so-called 'Parish scheme'. In accordance with this plan Liberated Africans were settled in villages around Freetown, supervised educationally, spiritually and administratively by CMS missionaries.²⁵³ Thus the Liberated Africans were exposed to Western culture and education and many converted to Christianity as a result.²⁵⁴ When intermarriages between the Settlers and the Liberated Africans began to take place, the distinctions between the two groups disappeared. Their descendants became known as the Krio. Within less than two generations, due to their Western

²⁵¹ Bathurst came into being because of the abolition of the slave trade. The island of St. Mary on which Bathurst was built, was purchased in 1816 from the King of Combo in order to serve as a fort to prevent slave trading on The Gambia river.

²⁵² A. Wyse, 'The Krio of Sierra Leone: an ethnographical study', 36ff.

²⁵³ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the religious impact*, 62.

²⁵⁴ Most of the Settlers were already Christians (many of them Baptists) on arrival in Freetown and had brought their pastors along. L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 58. The Aku Mohammedans or Muslims Krio (in The Gambia known as Aku Marabouts) formed a distinct group within the Liberated Africans. They were Yoruba who had become Muslim during the Fulani *jihad* from 1804 and, despite efforts of the CMS to convert them to Christianity, remained Muslims when resettled in Sierra Leone. They formed a separate settlement in the east end of Freetown. See: A. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone*, 9.

orientation and emphasis on education, the Krio became the new elite of Sierra Leone.²⁵⁵

When the years passed by more and more Recaptives arrived in Sierra Leone and the government found it increasingly difficult to provide for them. As a result people were redirected to other places such as Fernando Po, Bathurst and Georgetown. As early as 1821 there were Liberated Africans in Bathurst. When the Methodist missionaries John Morgan and John Baker arrived in Bathurst in 1821 they met a group of Liberated Africans, who knew Baker from the time he had worked in Sierra Leone.²⁵⁶ Sr. Anne-Marie Javouhey, the foundress of the Cluny Sisters, who visited St. Mary's in 1822–1823 estimated the number of Liberated African children in town at about 500 girls and 1000 boys. Fifty of them, between the ages of 8 to 10 were entrusted to her for education.²⁵⁷ Hannah Kilham, the Quaker educationist who worked in the Gambia in 1824 mentions teaching 'the Kings Boys', young Liberated African men, sent down from Sierra Leone by the Government to serve as artisans in the building of Bathurst.²⁵⁸

The main influx of Liberated Africans into The Gambia came between 1831 and 1838²⁵⁹, following a decision of Gov. G. Rendall. J.M. Gray suggests in his *History of The Gambia* (1940) that Rendall's motives might not have been solely humanitarian. First of all, The Gambia was in dire need of artisans to help build the city. Rendall hoped that by apprenticing Liberated Africans to craftsmen, the number of capable artisans in the colony would increase. Secondly, there were problems with the food supplies for St. Mary's. The soil of the island was poor and the delivery from the mainland not reliable. Rendall, according to Gray, envisaged farming colonies run by Liberated Africans, close to St. Mary's, which could provide the island with the necessary foodstuff. Thirdly, Rendall hoped that some of the able-bodied males could be trained as soldiers to supplement the Gambia militia in times of need. Lastly, Gray implies that Rendall, who had a very small budget at his disposal, might have seen some financial advances to the arrival of the Liberated Africans. No doubt the Home Government would financially assist in the maintenance of the newly arrived for some time, thus increasing the cash flow of the colony.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ For an elaborate discussion of the blessings and curses of this unique 'elite' position of the Krio in Sierra Leone, see the book of A. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: an interpretive history*.

²⁵⁶ Morgan to WMMS, St. Mary's April 1821 Box 293 H2709 mf. 823. Baker was a WMMS missionary to Sierra Leone before his appointment to The Gambia.

²⁵⁷ J. Hébert; M.G. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, Editions du CERF, Paris 1994, 144.

²⁵⁸ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 169/170.

²⁵⁹ According to Gray, Lieutenant-Governor William Mackie who assumed office in 1838, condemned this system of indiscriminate immigration and refused to take any more liberated Africans from Sierra Leone. Except for a party of 200 who arrived from Sierra Leone in 1861 and were settled at Kotu in Combo, there were no further shipments to the Gambia. See: J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1940, 363/64.

²⁶⁰ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 357.

As a result of Rendall's decision large shipments of Liberated Africans arrived in The Gambia in the 1830s²⁶¹, many of them more dead than alive.²⁶² Some of them were settled in Bathurst itself. Goderich village, near Oyster Creek, is mentioned by the Methodist missionaries as one of the places where many Liberated Africans lived. Later they moved to Melville Town, and renamed it New Town.²⁶³ Others were brought to Lamin where a brick-making and farming colony was started. When this failed they moved to Jeswang. Also Berwick Town was a place of residence for Liberated Africans. Most of them however went up river, to MacCarthy Island, where the Department for Liberated Africans was located.²⁶⁴ It was there that the Methodists, who already had a special affinity with Liberated Africans from the start, became deeply involved with the fate of these people.

Krio religion

Most of the Gambian Krio are Methodists or Anglicans. A Roman Catholic missionary commented in 1881 that 'if you leave them (the Krio), they will dominate the country and turn it into a centre of Protestantism.'²⁶⁵ The historic ties between the Krio and the Methodist and Anglican Church can explain the Krio affinity with Protestantism. Both the Methodist Church and the Anglican chaplain felt responsible for the fate of the many Liberated Africans who were transported to The Gambia.

The Anglican chaplain as government officer was responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Liberated Africans, though some of them, according to the Methodist John Baker, preferred to neglect that duty.²⁶⁶ Possibly this chaplaincy resulted in the fact that some Liberated Africans became Anglicans. The majority of the Anglican Krio however are said to have come from Sierra Leone. Possibly the group of 200 Liberated Africans who in 1861 were shipped to The Gambia and settled at Kotu in Combo, had a considerable number of Anglicans among them.²⁶⁷ Many of the Sierra Leone Krio were Anglicans, because the Church Missionary Society was active among the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. Also among the many migrants who throughout the 19th century moved from Sierra Leone to The Gambia there must

²⁶¹ To give an idea of the numbers involved, Mahoney mentions that the well-known merchant Thomas Joiner alone, in a period of five years, had more than a hundred apprentices in his care. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 70.

²⁶² The WMMS archives mention the case of the 'Governor Campbell', which arrived in Bathurst in 1836. Due to small pox on board more than half of the 300 people on board died. The trauma the Liberated Africans had gone through, the poor diet, the infections and the exposure to heat c.q. cold caused many to die. Equator to Editor, May 24th 1835, Box 294 H2709 mf. 845.

²⁶³ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan Mission*, 358.

²⁶⁴ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 68ff.

²⁶⁵ Entry February 5 1881, *Journal de Communauté de St. Marie de Gambie II*.

²⁶⁶ Baker to WMMS, May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

²⁶⁷ J. M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 364. Many of the present Krio Anglicans came to The Gambia from Sierra Leone somewhere in the 19th century, but did not belong to the original Krio community that was transported by the government to The Gambia in the first half of the 19th century.

have been Anglicans. These people together formed the constitutive element of the Anglican Church in The Gambia.

The history of the Krio with the Methodist Church is somewhat different. From 1832 onwards the Methodists had a resident (assistant) minister at MacCarthy. Their initial aim was to set up a mission station with the purpose of settling and converting the Fula. When that plan failed, they turned their full attention to the Liberated Africans. Liberated African children were invited to attend the day school and a special Sunday School was organised, to provide literacy classes for adults and children who could not attend during the week. Liberated Africans were employed to build the mission premises and to clear the 600 acres the Mission had purchased for a model-farm, thus giving some of them a means of income and instructions from an agriculturist.²⁶⁸ When it became clear that the Fula would not settle at MacCarthy permanently, the Lindoe cottages that had been built for the Fula, were rented out to Liberated Africans. Medical assistance was given when needed and both the English missionaries Thomas Dove and William Fox, who worked at MacCarthy's in the 1830s proved vocal spokesmen for the rights of the Liberated Africans. Also the names of the two native ministers, John Cupidon and Pierre Salleh, both of them redeemed slaves themselves, need to be mentioned in connection with the work among Liberated Africans at MacCarthy's. All this helped the Liberated Africans to regain their self-confidence and make a start with a future in an alien land.

Thus, by providing education, fellowship and income, the foundation was laid for the intimate ties that exist between the Krio community and the Methodist Church up to the present day²⁶⁹. Because of their experiences with Methodism, many Liberated Africans converted to Christianity. It is hard to say whether they first accepted Christianity and consequently the Western way of life, or whether they saw the benefits of Western civilisation and education first and took Christianity as cream on the bun. The latter is what L. Spitzer suggests for the Sierra Leone setting: 'having been taught to identify Christianity with European civilization, they believed that an acceptance of that religion would reflect their own mastery of a way of life, presented to them as better than any they had known before.'²⁷⁰ It is impossible to retrieve what motives the Krio had for becoming Christians. But it seems fair to say with Aspen that nowadays 'Akus do not actually *choose* to be Christians, they *are* Christians'²⁷¹ because the Christian religion has become part of the Krio identity. And the elaborately celebrated Christian rituals of confirmation,

²⁶⁸ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan Mission on the Western Coast of Africa*, 444.

²⁶⁹ Nowadays a considerable number of the Krio are Anglican, but in the first decades of the nineteenth century there was no 'Anglican Church' as such. Colonial chaplains were sent out regularly to look after the British regiment stationed at the Gambia, but many of them died. Things changed with the appointment of the first African (Krio) Colonial chaplain, the Rev. George Nicol, who together with his daughter Ms. Sarah Nicol and a Krio schoolmaster from Sierra Leone, started an Anglican school for boys and one for girls. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 79.

²⁷⁰ L. Spitzer, 'The Sierra Leone Creoles 1870-1900' in P.D. Curtin, *Africa and the West: intellectual responses to European culture*, University of Wisconsin Press, London 1972, 126.

²⁷¹ H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations*, 161. Italics mine MTF.

marriages and funerals, at which occasions the whole Krio community is mobilised, serve to strengthen the ties within the group.

Historically, it seems correct to state that by orientating themselves towards and identifying themselves with the Western life-style, with the Victorian values of thrift, industry, self reliance and piety and by accepting Christianity as part of that life, the Krio built for themselves a new future and a new identity. They went quite far in their adoption of European habits: clothing, names, house-decoration and style of worship were all part of the package deal. Up to the present day it is not uncommon to see Krio women wear hats, European dresses, stockings and a western style hairdo or wig. They still organise 'tea-parties', some play lawn tennis or are members of the Soroptomists. Most Krio men wear a suit and a tie on formal occasions - the elderly until recently had a top hat to complete the outfit -, attend the Masonic Lodge and are members of a club, playing cricket or golf or tennis. This behaviour caused them the nickname 'Black Englishmen.' Be it what it may, it is a fact that because of their identification with western civilisation the Krio were, with a short time, able to 're-group' themselves and form a coherent cluster of people. Aspen remarks that due to the fact that the Krio were the first to realise the importance of (western) education, they were able to monopolise positions within the civil service during the colonial time.²⁷² The Krio also successfully engaged in teaching and trade.²⁷³ This changed their position in society within two generations: from the poorest and most despised of society which Gov. R.G. MacDonnell described as 'so very inferior in appearance and civilization to many of the surrounding natives'²⁷⁴, they became the national 'elite', serving in high positions in the civil service during the colonial heydays.²⁷⁵ It must be added that the same zeal, with which the Krio pursued education for their children, also drove them to educate the larger Gambian public. This in the end undermined their own unique position in

²⁷² H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations*, 137.

²⁷³ I was told that many a Krio mother of the olden days earned the school-fees for her children by up-country trade and trade along the West Coast, some as far away as Nigeria. The Krio involvement in trade lasted for many years. Quite a few Methodist missionaries complained that during the dry season half of the Bathurst congregation was up-country for trade. Even today some of the Krio own large firms.

²⁷⁴ Cited as in F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 74.

²⁷⁵ Aspen describes their development as follows: 'From being humiliated and dispossessed trade items, they managed to rise up and exploit the possibilities that were present in their new British (...) administered home countries. They were not classified as 'natives', nor as 'Europeans' but assisted by the Missions and the Administrations they found themselves a niche in-between. Economic thrift and self-reliance, combined with administrative and religious training and education, made the group natural working forces in the formal occupational fields of education and administration. The need for clerks in the British colonies Freetown and Bathurst and the attached protectorates rose simultaneously with the expanding abilities of the Creoles/Akus. Compared to the native population of the colonies, the Creoles/Akus were in an advantageous situation. They became the natural administrators of their countries; they were in fact 'next to the white man', meaning that they were in a position closely related to that of the colonial rulers and administrators.' H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations*, 2-3.

the civil service because representatives of other ethnic groups have assumed their rightly places in the government service.²⁷⁶

Not all things in Krio culture are European. Both H. Aspen and C.M. Fyle and I. Heroe point to certain rites and beliefs within Krio culture that are typically African²⁷⁷. They mention the reverence for ancestors and the participation in 'secret societies' such as *Egugu* and the Hunting Society²⁷⁸ and the life-cycle rites of passages around birth, marriage and death. The naming ceremony (*komojade* or *pul na do*), on the seventh or ninth day after birth for a girl or boy respectively, which introduces the new-born child to its surroundings, is an important event in Krio society. Relatives, neighbours and often a minister participate in the ceremony and refreshments are served afterwards.

Another typical Krio ceremony is the '*pul na stop*' or 'put stop' (putting a stop to all possible suitors), a ceremony during which the relatives of the bridegroom come to the house of the bride to ask the permission of the bride's family for the hand of the bride.²⁷⁹ During the ceremony an argument is staged in which the family of the bride teasingly accuses the visiting family that they are not worthy of the bride, proposing other girls, while the visiting family continues to beg for the bride's hand. When the families have reached an agreement, gifts for the bride and her family are presented, among which the engagement ring and kola nuts²⁸⁰ are passed around and the date for the marriage is set. In some families libation is poured to request the sanction from the ancestors. As on all major occasions, food is served. Also typical African among the Krio rites are the funeral rituals, such as the traditional wake-keeping and the charities (*awujoh*) at the seventh day, the fortieth day and the one year anniversary. Many of them have been 'christened' by the involvement of a minister, by prayers at the house, or by special services, offerings and prayers on the fortieth day and the one-year anniversary. Yet also the traditional rituals of pouring libation and the offering of the deceased's favourite dishes in a hole next to the gate or at the graveyard continue on the mentioned days.

It would be an interesting field of research to study these and other Krio rites that so clearly have a traditional African religious background. Attention could be given to the traditional religious background of certain rituals and beliefs, their present 'christianised' shape in order to see in which way Krio Christianity, which is

²⁷⁶ H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations*, 137 and 159.

²⁷⁷ C.M. Fyle and I. Heroe, 'Krio traditional beliefs', *Africana Research Bulletin*, VII/3 (1977), 3-26; H. Aspen, *Ghost corporations*, 99ff.; J. Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A history of Sierra Leone 1787-1870*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1969, 230ff.

²⁷⁸ It is often suggested that the popularity of the Freemasonry among the Krio has something to do with the similarities between the Lodge and the traditional secret societies. Lately many Sierra Leoneans have come to The Gambia as refugees due to the civil war in Sierra Leone. It might be safely assumed that this has increased the membership of the Hunting society and the Poro society in The Gambia.

²⁷⁹ The Krio rites around engagement and marriage were staged in a play by the Methodist Women's Auxiliaries in 1997.

²⁸⁰ The combination of an engagement ring and kola nuts is typical for the combination of European and African elements in Krio culture.

so often derivatively called a Western copy of Christianity is in reality a truly contextualised form of Christianity.

Missionary perceptions

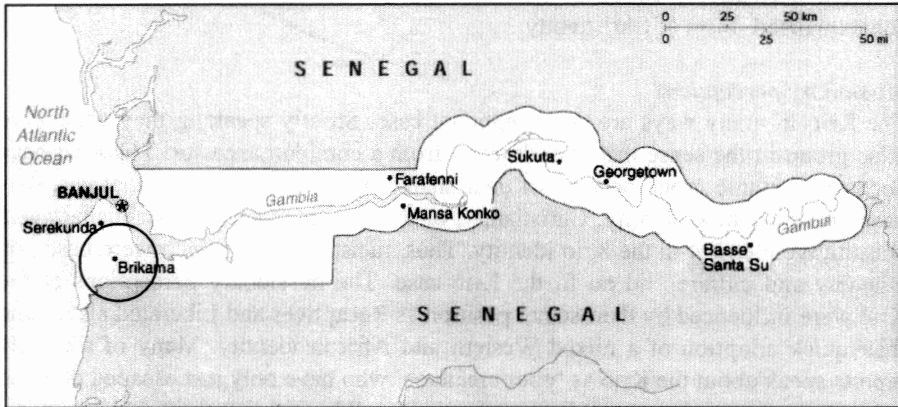
The Krio in many ways are an exceptional case. Strictly speaking they are not an ethnic group in the sense that they descend from a common ancestor. The Krio have become an ethnic group because of their shared past. On the basis of that past they have created a new identity. Christianity, or to be more exact Protestantism, was a constitutive element in the Krio identity. Thus, racist theories, which were based on ethnicity and culture, did not fit the Krio case. The missionary perceptions of the Krio were influenced by their social position as Recaptives and Liberated slaves and their quick adoption of a mixed Western and African identity. Many of the early reports speak about the Krio as 'poor creatures' who have only just escaped death or a fate even worse: slavery.²⁸¹ Fox wrote: 'It is well known that these poor creatures when in distress, have frequently committed suicide by hanging themselves on a tree in the bush or by throwing themselves in the river.'²⁸² The vulnerability and the miserable state of the Liberated Africans appealed to the missionary sense of compassion and neighbourly love. They saw in the Krio a grateful object of their missionary love. Thus they set themselves to the task of ameliorating the fate of the Liberated Africans with great zeal. However, when they succeeded in their task, their perception of the Liberated Africans changed. The Krio were no longer considered 'poor creatures' but 'haughty and proud', not at all grateful to their 'white saviours' and most of them 'bad missionaries'.²⁸³ Tudno Davies wrote in 1910: 'These Akoos (English speaking natives) do not make good missionaries. There is too much dignity about them and they think themselves very superior to other tribes and approach them as such.'²⁸⁴ The missionaries had succeeded so well in their task of educating and emancipating the Liberated Africans and giving them back their self-dignity that they experienced their achievement as a boomerang and a threat rather than as an achievement.

²⁸¹ Dove to WMMS, March 30 1835, Box 293 H2709 mf. 836.

²⁸² Report of Fox to the Southampton Committee, London Dec. 10 1839, Box 294 H2709 mf. 855.

²⁸³ Maude to WMMS, Jan. 24 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1023.

²⁸⁴ Davis to WMMS, Oct. 28 1910, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1032.



The concentration area of the Krio community in The Gambia

2.10 Other ethnic groups

General

Apart from the ethnic groups mentioned above, there are also smaller ethnic groups represented in The Gambia such as the Bambara²⁸⁵, the Mankaing, the Basari, the Balanta²⁸⁶, the Mansuanka (Kunante), the Conjagis and the Manjago. Several of them, such as the Mankaing, the Balanta, the Mansuanka and the Manjago originate from Guinea-Bissau. These groups left their homeland in the 1960s when a bloody guerrilla war was fought against the Portuguese colonialists in order to gain independence.²⁸⁷ When Guinea-Bissau gained independence in 1974 these people did not return to their country of origin but remained in The Gambia. Over the years the migration to The Gambia has continued and the numbers of the Balanta, Mankaing, Mansuanka and Manjago continue to grow. Because they are recent immigrants in The Gambia they are usually not mentioned among the people groups

²⁸⁵ The Bambara originate from Mali and number about 4.200 according to the 1993 census. They are mostly employed as watchmen because they have a reputation of loyalty and reliability.

URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001.

²⁸⁶ Some research has been done into the culture and religion of the Balanta. Examples of anthropological studies on the Balanta are: P. Akkerman and J. Roosenschoon, *Op zoek naar anderen: tegenwoordigheid van geest bij de Balanta in Guinee-Bissau*, Akkerman, Holten 1994; R. van der Drift, *Arbeid en alcohol: de dynamiek van de rijstteelt en het gezag van de oudste bij de Balanta Brassa in Guinee Bissau*, Centrum voor niet-Westerse studies, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, Leiden 1992; G. Muris, *Dodelijk geloof of sociaal protest?: een case-study van een anti-hekserijbeweging bij de Balante (Senegal) in 1911-1912*, M.A. thesis Rotterdam University, Rotterdam 1988 (unpublished).

²⁸⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 16/6 (1992), 16.

of the Senegambia.²⁸⁸ The fact that these groups fairly easily move elsewhere when the conditions of living deteriorate, might contribute to this.²⁸⁹

There are few Muslims among the migrant groups from Guinea-Bissau. All four ethnic groups farm pigs and tap palmwine, which has proven to be a barrier to conversion to Islam. Most of them therefore have continued to practice their traditional religion but have been exposed to Christianity, because the Roman Catholic Church has a long history in Guinea-Bissau.²⁹⁰ Their transition to Christianity is more recent, but seems to predate their arrival in the Casamance and The Gambia.²⁹¹ The majority of them are Roman Catholics, but many of them are catechumens rather than full members, due to their polygamous way of life.²⁹²

The Manjago

In The Gambia the Manjago form the largest group, numbering about 14.100 according to the 1983 census.²⁹³ The majority of them lives in villages in Combo, often in satellite settlements near the main village because they keep pigs. The main sources of income for the Manjago are rice cultivation and pig rearing.

Some research has been done into the traditional religion of the Manjago, where the veneration of ancestors plays an important role.²⁹⁴ Different from the role of ancestors in many other ethnic groups, the Manjago ancestor (*balugum*) is not a benevolent spirit who looks after the well being of the group, but rather is a spirit

²⁸⁸ Someone like P. Sonko-Godwin in her *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia* makes no mention of these groups.

²⁸⁹ As an example: in 1998 a number of Mansuanka left The Gambia and moved to Guinea Conakry. The reason for their migration was that their crops of groundnuts had failed for the third year in a row because of lack of rain.

²⁹⁰ From the 16th century onwards Cacheu was the seat of the archdeaconry of the Diocese of the Upper Guinea Coast, which had its headquarters in Santiago at Cape Verde.

²⁹¹ *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 16/5 (1992), 9.

²⁹² There have been two instances in which Balanta have joined an existing congregation of ex-Muslim Mandinka and where the Mandinka have left the congregation as a result of that. The Muslim community, including former Muslim, looks down the Balanta, who – like other ethnic groups from Guinea-Bissau - drink palm wine and rear pigs. Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing, January 27 1999, Interview with Fr. Michael Casey, Darsalami January 19 1999.

²⁹³ URL <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html>. Date: 9 Aug. 2001. Note: This means for example that the Manjago community is about twice as large as the Krio community, which according to the same statistics numbers around 6.800. The political, social and ecclesiastical influence of the Krio far exceeds their numbers while that of the Manjago community is negligible, probably due to their comparatively low standard of education.

²⁹⁴ W.M.J. van Binsbergen, 'Socio-ritual structures and modern migration among the Manjak of Guinea-Bissau, ideological reproduction in a context of peripheral capitalism', *Antropologische Verkenningen*, Vol. 3/2 (1984), 11-43; A. Bouttiaux-Ndiaye, 'Les larmes de la calabasse' in P. Wymeersch, *Liber amicorum Marcel d'Hertefeldt: antropologische opstellen*, Institut africain (CEDAF), Brussels 1993, 21-46; A.M. Diop, 'Rites de passage et système religieux chez les Manjak', *Notes Africaines*, 181 (1984), 9-16; E. Gable, 'Women, ancestors and alterity among the Manjaco of Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of religion in Africa*, XXVI, 2 (1996), 104-121.

which has to be appeased at regular times in order to prevent crises.²⁹⁵ Also unusual is the Manjago perception that within its life as an ancestor, the spirit goes through various phases: from a child-like ghost the ancestor becomes a young man or warrior (*nanjafu*) to finally achieve the ultimate state of being an elderly man on the mat.²⁹⁶ The transition of the stages is enhanced by the sacrifices of the living. Women cannot become ancestors because women 'wander', leaving their natal kinship to live in the house of the husband.²⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the Manjago have a longstanding reputation of migration, the spirits of the dead all return to their 'homeland' and sacrifices can only be made in the villages of origin in Guinea-Bissau where sticks (*icop*), representing the ancestors are placed behind the houses.²⁹⁸ All Manjago therefore return at regular times to their homeland to pay homage to their ancestors. As might be expected amongst a people where ancestor veneration plays a crucial role in life, rites around the burial of the dead are of utmost importance. Suspected deaths are investigated and the deceased is questioned about the cause of his demise. Sometimes the departed takes possession of a person to indicate the person who caused his death. The culpable is punished accordingly.²⁹⁹

The Manjago believe in a supreme God, *Nasin Batsi* – a name still used within the Christian community to refer to God – who is the king of heaven and the king of the deities. *Nasin Batsi* interacts with the world through his messenger *Ka-sara* who endeavours to bring order and well being to the world. *Ka-sara* fights epidemics, draught and witches (*ba-kalam*). Oral tradition states that when *Ka-sara* presents him (or her?)self, it is in the form of a veiled woman, who is looking downwards to hide the radiance of her face. Though *Ka-sara* is the messenger of *Nasim Batsi*, the Manjago can not call upon him/her to intervene or intercede with *Nasim Batsi*. Intercession is done through the help of the *ge-caay* (sing. *u-caay*), spirits who can be both benevolent and malevolent, according to the demands made upon them. The *ge-caay* usually reside with a family, in a tree or in a stone near the house and are object of veneration. Sacrifices and libation are made to them. Some *ge-caay* function on the private level, others have a communal function.³⁰⁰

Most Manjago had been exposed to Christianity before their arrival in The Gambia and many of them were catechumens of the Roman Catholic Church. There is a saying that to be a Manjago means to be a Roman Catholic.³⁰¹ Already in the mid 19th century the Manjago formed a considerable part of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. The first Manjago came to Bathurst as sailors to seek

²⁹⁵ E. Gable, 'Women, ancestors and alterity', 111 ff.

²⁹⁶ E. Gable, 'Women, ancestors and alterity', 114 ff.

²⁹⁷ E. Gable, 'Women, ancestors and alterity', 104.

²⁹⁸ A. Bouttiaux-Ndiaye, 'Les larmes de calebasse', 21.

²⁹⁹ A. Bouttiaux-Ndiaye, 'Les larmes de calebasse', 26 ff.

³⁰⁰ A.M. Diop, 'Rites de passages', 14 ff.

³⁰¹ Already around the turn of 1900 the Journal de Communauté recorded that the Manjago liked neither Islam nor Protestantism. Entry April 25 1899, Journal de Communauté de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

employment and many were baptised.³⁰² The Roman Catholic Church has also had contacts with the Manjago community since the influx of Manjago in The Gambia in the 1960s. Through the work of catechists many have now been baptised, though confirmation remains a problem because the older generation is polygamously married.³⁰³ The Manjago are represented in most of the Roman Catholic parishes in Combo.

Special mention needs to be made of the Kunkujang project of the Roman Catholic Church. In the late 1960s Fr. Jack Sharpe developed a plan to establish the Christian village of Kunkujang, whose inhabitants would be Manjago. A mission house was built, followed by a school and a clinic in the seventies and by houses in the 1980s and 1990s. The funds were for a large part supplied by the Swedish Margareta Edenius Fund.³⁰⁴ Kunkujang is also the seat of the Manjago Pastoral Institute, which produces materials in Manjago, such as hymns, translation of Bible portions and of the Catechism. On the 5th of December 1987 a shrine dedicated to Mary Our Lady, Queen of Peace was inaugurated in Kunkujang (locally known as Mariama Kunkujang) and the yearly pilgrimage to Kunkujang attracts thousands of people.³⁰⁵ Kunkujang is the *only* pre-dominantly Christian village in The Gambia.

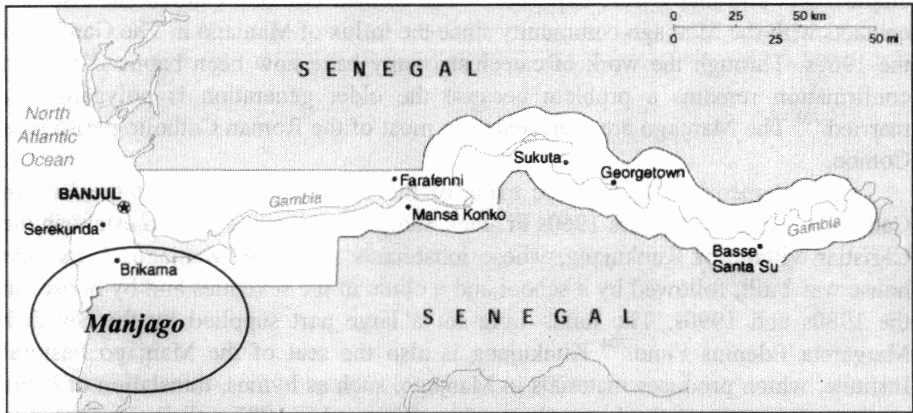
The contacts of the Methodist Church with the Manjago community date back to the sixties when the Methodist Church started a clinic in the village of Marakissa, a village that is comprised of Manjago and Karoninka. In the 1970s a church and a school were built in Marakissa and a member of the Manjago community was sent for ministerial training in the person of Joseph Gomez. From Marakissa contacts with the Manjago community spread. Especially Manjago evangelists such as the late Paul Gomez and François Mendy (now ordained) contributed to it. There are now Methodist churches in the villages of Sifoe, Kassakunda, Nyofelleh and Bajongkoto. Recently contacts with the Manjago community in Makumbaya have been renewed and the Sunday worship is conducted in the house of one of the members.

³⁰² Report on the work in 1899 entitled *Mission Catholique de Sainte Marie de Gambie, le 25 avril 1899, à Monsigneur*, attachment in *Journal de Bathurst 1924-1958*, Boite 4i2.4, (pages 275-292), 277ff.

³⁰³ Interview with Fr. M. Casey, Darsalami January 19 1999.

³⁰⁴ Pamphlet *Margareta Edenius Gambia: the years from 1970-1990 and 1990-1996*. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 83.

³⁰⁵ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 78/79. Nevertheless many Catholics continue their pilgrimage to the shrine at Poppinguine in Senegal, the site to which Gambian Catholics were used to go on pilgrimage before the shrine of Mariama Kunkujang was dedicated.



The concentration of the Manjago in The Gambia

2.11 Conclusions

Ethnically, the population of The Gambia is quite diverse. There are more than 10 ethnic groups living in a relatively small country. Some of the ethnic groups, like the Jola, the Fula, the Wolof, the Serer, the Mandinka and the Serahuli have lived in the Senegambia valley for many centuries. Others, like the Krio and the ethnic groups from Guinea-Bissau, are more recent settlers on the riverbanks. Though in some areas of the country a certain ethnic group is predominant, The Gambia is known for its ethnic intermingling. Most villages consist of members of different ethnic groups and intermarriage between the various ethnic groups is common. This cohabitation and intermingling had led to a continuous cultural interaction and has had its effect on the ethnic identity of the groups. Their cultures have mutually influenced each other and one of the results of this phenomenon is the fact that there are no sharp ethnic divisions in the country. It seems therefore unlikely that there will be inter-ethnic clashes in The Gambia.³⁰⁶

Nowadays most of Gambians are either Muslim or Christian, though all of them continue the practice the traditional religion to some extent. The Mandinka, the Serahuli and the majority of the Fula are known for their attachment to Islam, which arrived in the region before Christianity. The Baddibu Wolof are also Muslims. Many of them converted to Islam through the *jihad* of Ma Ba Diakhou in the mid 19th century. The Banjul Wolof belong to a different clan of the Wolof and migrated to The Gambia from St. Louis and Gorée in the early 19th century. Many of these Wolof came in contact with Christianity as early as the time of the Portuguese and are Christians now. The Jola, the Serer and a small group of Fula were traditional

³⁰⁶ In the 1960s there was an attempt to boast the Mandinka identity by the means of a political party, the People's Progressive Party, but this attempt failed and the PPP soon moved from being a one-ethnic party to a multi-ethnic party. For more information on the PPP see paragraph 3.6.

believers until the beginning of the 20th century. They resisted Islamisation throughout the 19th century but gradually most of them have now converted to Islam. Only few Jola, Serer and Fula have become Christian, despite extensive missionary efforts. Especially the Fula have received much missionary attention. No doubt the Hamitic hypothesis played a role in this. The mass conversion of Jola in the Casamance raised high hopes that a similar development would take place in The Gambia. But this has proven not to be the case. Of the few Serer, Jola and Fula who became Christian due to missionary labour and Christian education most have now reverted to Islam.

There are only two ethnic groups in The Gambia of whom the majority is Christian. The Krio, though not an ethnic group in the strict sense, adopted Christianity as their religion when settling in The Gambia and Sierra Leone in the early 19th century. Christianity became part of their cultural identity. The Manjago are for the most part Christians as well. They belong to groups of refugees from Guinea-Bissau who settled in The Gambia from the 1960s onwards. The Manjago were exposed to Christianity from the 15th century onwards, when Portuguese and Mulatto Christians settled along the Guinea rivers. Most of them however remained traditional believers until the 20th century. Their means of living – pig rearing and palmwine tapping – has prevented them from becoming Muslims. Also among refugees from other ethnic groups of Guinea-Bissau, such as the Mankaing, the Balanta and the Mansuanka, there are Christians. The majority of these however are traditional believers.

Records show that the missionaries, especially in the 19th century, were influenced and guided by ideas and principles of the racist theories about Africans. These racist preconceptions are reflected in their descriptions of the various ethnic groups and in their mission strategies. Most missionaries saw the civilisation of Africans through the Christian faith and through Western education as their primary goal. The Methodist missionary George Parsonson, who worked in The Gambia in the 1840s, summarises this missionary ideal with a quotation of a Muslim convert who stated: 'I am no longer a black man now, I have become a white man', meaning he had become a Christian.³⁰⁷ Though the missionaries succeeded in deeply influencing the Gambian society through the provision of Western (and Christian) education, the civilization process through Christianisation was less of a success. Only few of the Gambians became Christians. Only those people groups, who have settled in The Gambia during the last two centuries, have an affinity with Christianity.³⁰⁸ All others are Muslims.

³⁰⁷ Parsonson to WMMS, MacCarthy August 10 1843, Box 295 H2709 mf. 874.

³⁰⁸ The Mulattos, offsprings of Portuguese traders and Africans, form an exception to this rule. The Mulattos have identified with Christianity from the 16th century onwards, but it is difficult to categorise the Mulattos as an ethnic group, though they have formed a distinct group in the Gambian society for many centuries. From the 19th century onwards the Mulattos as a group have gradually disappeared from the Gambian scene. For a discussion on Mulatto Christianity see paragraph 5.3.

3. A GENERAL HISTORY OF THE GAMBIA

3.1 Introduction

The Gambia is a colonial fabrication. The country consists of two riverbanks of about 10-kilometre width on each side of the river Gambia, following the course of the river for 487 kilometres. Only near the mouth of the river, the country is slightly wider.¹ As a country, The Gambia did not exist before the demarcation of the border, started in 1889 by French and British colonial officers. The activities of the Anglo-French Demarcation Commission lasted until 1900² and resulted in what the historian H.A. Gailey has described as 'the establishment of perhaps the most ridiculous boundary ever drawn.'³ It is therefore an anachronism to use the term 'The Gambia' before the demarcation of the border. Nevertheless, to accommodate the reader, this thesis uses 'The Gambia' to refer to the banks of the river Gambia even before the demarcation of the border.

History is always written from a certain perspective. In that sense there is not one history of a country to write, but there are different histories, depending on the point of view, the cultural background and the interest of the historian. Western authors have written the best-known histories of The Gambia. Some are outspokenly colonial in their approach. F.B. Archer's *The Gambia colony and protectorate: an official handbook* (1906)⁴, H.F. Reeve's *The Gambia* (1912)⁵ and B. Southorn's *The Gambia: the story of a groundnut colony* (1952)⁶ might serve as examples of this genre. Slightly less prejudiced are the two most commonly read general histories: J.M. Gray's *A history of The Gambia* (1940)⁷ and H.A. Gailey's *A history of The Gambia* (1964).⁸ Nevertheless, they both have written the Gambian history from the perspective of its encounters with the West. Much attention is paid to the trading companies, the Portuguese and the colonial period, whereas the empires of Kaabu,

¹ D. Gamble, *The Gambia*, World Bibliographic Series 91, Clio Press, Oxford 1988, xi.

² H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 106. For an overview of the demarcation of the borders see H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 96-110.

³ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, x.

⁴ F.B. Archer, *The Gambia colony and protectorate: an official handbook*, Cass, London 1967 (1906).

⁵ H.F. Reeve, *The Gambia: its history ancient, mediaeval and modern: together with its geographical and ethnographical conditions and a description of the birds, beasts and fishes found therein*, Smith, Elder & Co, London 1912.

⁶ B. Southorn, *The Gambia: the story of the groundnut colony*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London 1952.

⁷ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1940.

⁸ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1964. F. Renner, in her thesis *Inter-group relations and British imperialism in Combo* comments that Gray and Gailey have tended to depict Britain as the reluctant colonial administrator. Her scrutiny of the British Colonial Archives on The Gambia has made clear that this picture is not correct and that Britain had imperialistic objectives in The Gambia. F. Renner, *Inter-group relations and British imperialism in Combo*, xxii, xxiii.

Wolof and Bondu are hardly mentioned. Others take the opposite approach. Dawdu Faal's *A history of The Gambia: AD 1000-1965* (1997)⁹ focuses mainly on the African side of the story. Examples of an integrated approach are Florence Mahoney's *Stories of Senegambia* (1995/1982)¹⁰ and Donald Wright's book *The world and a very small place in Africa* (1982)¹¹. The latter tries to combine material from the archives with oral history and describes the impact of the 'world events' on the life of people in Niimi. Though all these books endeavour to give an overview of the Gambian history, they pay very little attention to the history of Christianity in The Gambia.

This chapter does not aim to write a new history of The Gambia. All it wants to do is to give the reader a sketchy background of the general history of the country before embarking on the main perspective of the book: a history of Christianity. It is hoped that this will enable the reader to situate certain events in the history of Christianity in the larger context of the country, thus being able to see 'the wider picture.' The chapter begins with a paragraph on the name of The Gambia (paragraph 3.2) and continues with a description of The Gambia's earliest history until the fifteenth century (paragraph 3.3). Then follows a short overview of The Gambia's contacts with Europe (paragraph 3.4). In this paragraph special attention is given to the impact of the slave trade on The Gambia. Paragraph 3.5 discusses the position of The Gambia as Colony and Protectorate during the British colonial government and describes the Soninke-Marabout wars, which unsettled the banks of the river Gambia during the 19th century. Paragraph 3.6 discusses The Gambia's journey towards Independence while paragraph 3.7 describes the political history of The Gambia after Independence. A conclusion (paragraph 3.8) brings this chapter to a close.

3.2 The name

The country The Gambia, in all its oddity, is a fabrication of the Anglo-French Demarcation Commission, following the 1889 Border Convention. But the name 'Gambia' for the river and the territory surrounding it is much older. Written sources take us back as far back as the 15th century when Alviso Cadamosto referred to the river and the country as 'Gambra'. Other names for the area were 'Gambu', 'Gambea', 'Cambra', 'Guabuu' and 'Guambea'.

The booklet *Historic sites of The Gambia* (1998)¹² gives two possible explanations for the origin of the name. The first suggestion is based on linguistics. It proposes a linguistic link with the word 'Kaabu', the famous Mandinka Empire

⁹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia: AD 1000-1965*, Print Promotion Ltd, Latrikunda Sabiji 1997.

¹⁰ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, Book Production and Material Resources Unit, Ministry of Education, Kanifing 1995, second enlarged edition (first published in 1982).

¹¹ D.R Wright, *The world and a very small place in Africa*, Sharpe, Armonk 1997.

¹² A. Meagher (ed.), *Historic sites of The Gambia: an official guide to the monuments and sites of The Gambia*, co-published by National Council for Arts and Culture, Banjul and ROC International Co. Ltd. Kanifing, Banjul 1998.

and with the Wolof word 'bur', meaning king or chief. A combination of these words would imply that Gambia, originating from 'Gambura', means: place of the king.¹³ The second explanation of the name Gambia is based on oral traditions. The *griot* Alhaji Fabala Kanuteh links the name Gambia with Gambia's first contacts with the Portuguese. According to his narrative the Portuguese explorers met a man near the mouth of the river called Kambi Manneh, who was the messenger of the king of Niimi, a kingdom near the mouth of the river. When the Portuguese asked Manneh 'What is the name of this place?' he presumed that they had asked for his name and answered: 'My name is Kamba.'¹⁴ Thus the Portuguese henceforth knew the area as 'Gambu'. The historian David Gamble has a third suggestion regarding the origin of the name. Gamble's suggestion is based on the same source Alhaji Fabala Kanuteh, but Gamble's record of the oral tradition is slightly different. According to the Gamble version, the response to the Portuguese question 'what is the name of this place' was 'Kambi-yaa', meaning 'at Kambi's place'.¹⁵

The exact origin of the name remains obscure, but it is clear that from the Portuguese time onwards both the river and the area surrounding it became known as 'Gambia'. It seems that the Gambians themselves had no specific name for the river for a long time. They rather used the general word for river in their respective vernaculars, such as *mayoo* in Fula, *baa* in Mandinka or *dex* in Wolof.¹⁶

Seventeenth and eighteenth century writers have made reference to the area as 'the river of Gambia' or 'settlements on the River Gambia'. In 1816 the first steps towards the Colony of The Gambia were made. The Colony consisted of the island of St. Mary, extended in 1823 by MacCarthy Island, in 1827 by some settlements on the mainland south of St. Mary, known as Cape St. Mary¹⁷ and in 1831 by Ceded Mile on the North Bank.¹⁸ During the 19th century the British controlled territory on the mainland south of the river gradually increased and became known as Tubabo Banko.¹⁹ Following the 'pacification' of the hinterland 'the Protectorate of the Gambia' came into the being in 1902. The definite article before Gambia was introduced in the 20th century to avoid confusion with other countries. Following the Independence in 1965, the definite article 'The' became officially part of the name, due to recurrent problems with mails for 'Gambia' being delivered in 'Zambia' or 'Kambia' (Sierra Leone).²⁰

¹³ A. Meagher (ed.), *Historical sites of The Gambia*, 1.

¹⁴ A. Meagher (ed.), *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 1, 2. This theory is confirmed by the reports of another *griot* Fode Musa Suso, who relates that the name of the messenger was Kambi Sonko. In Alex Hailey's book *Roots* there are references to a place called Kambi Bolongo (the river of Kambi).

¹⁵ D. Gamble, *The Gambia*, xi.

¹⁶ D. Gamble, *The Gambia*, xii.

¹⁷ There is some discussion about the exact date. Some sources say 1827, others such as F. Mahoney, maintain that the date was 1826.

¹⁸ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 67, 83.

¹⁹ Tubabobanko means place of the white people. F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and the British imperialism in Combo*, 78, 233.

²⁰ For a more complete overview on the origin of the name Gambia, see: A. Meagher (ed.), *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 1-3.

3.3 The Gambia's earliest history: The Gambia before the 15th century

Sources

The historian of Africa is confronted with the fact that written sources about Africa before the 15th century are limited. They consist mainly of accounts written by Arab explorers, geographers and Islamic scholars, who travelled in the Western Sudan from the 11th century onwards. Especially Ibn Batutta's account of the Mali Empire has become famous. But also other people like Ibn Khaldun and Leo Africanus have left their travel reports.²¹ From the 15th century onwards the number of documents on West Africa increased. There were two main reasons for this. First of all, the rise of Timbuktu as a centre of Islamic learning attracted scholars from all over the world. These scholars documented their journey and stay in West Africa and wrote chronicles on the Western Sudan and books on the practice of Islamic law in the Western Sudan. None of these however, explicitly mention the Gambia river or the Gambia valley.²² Secondly, European explorers began to travel to West Africa and to document the land and the peoples of West Africa. Their journals form a rich source of information, though not always reliable, on the coastal area of West Africa. There is only one old non-Arabic written source, which mentions the Gambia river. It is the report of the Carthaginian soldier Hanno who around 500 BC was commissioned to explore the West Coast of Africa. The report was found on a stone column at the temple of Baal in Carthago. In his travel report Hanno mentioned a large and broad river full of crocodiles and hippopotami, which scholars have identified as the Gambia river. But there is no indication that Hanno went ashore in The Gambia.²³

Oral traditions form another source of information for the historian. The migration stories of many of the ethnic groups have been preserved and give an idea of the earliest history of the Senegambia.²⁴ When the Portuguese arrived in The Gambia by the 15th century most of the current ethnic groups in The Gambia had settled on the riverbanks, though migrations continue to the present day. Sacred sites and archaeological findings form a third source of information about the early history of The Gambia. Findings in Senegal have pointed to settlers from about 2000 BC onwards and it is guessed that there were people in the coastal zone of The Gambia from the same time onwards. But no archaeological findings dating back to the second millennium BC have been found in The Gambia itself.²⁵ The archaeological findings in The Gambia come from the first millennium AD.

Archaeological findings

The most famous and remarkable among the archaeological spots in The Gambia are the stone circles, which can be found in large numbers in the Upper River Division.

²¹ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, xi.

²² Parallel to these books are the travel reports of the Portuguese explorers from the 15th century onwards.

²³ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 89.

²⁴ Some of these stories were mentioned in chapter 2.

²⁵ D.P. Gamble, *The Gambia*, xiv.

They are part of the larger Senegambian stone circle complex and are distributed over a large territory in Senegal and The Gambia. The stone circles are made up of circles of 10 – 24 standing laterite, often pillar-shaped stones. Speculations have been made about their origin and function, but little facts are known. Archaeologists believe that the circles had a funerary function, because bones have been found within the circles; possibly they were the graves of chiefs and kings. Oral tradition relates that from the 11th century onwards also devout Muslims (*marabouts*) were buried within the circles. Up till the present day small sacrifices like vegetables are left on the stones.²⁶ Others, making references to the European stone circles, have suggested that the stone circles are signs that there was a form of sun worship in The Gambia and that the circles might have functioned as an agricultural calendar.

Little is known about the people who created the stone circles. Some suggest Wolof or Serer origins, others see parallels between the stones and certain rituals in Jola culture. The megaliths are dated somewhere between 400 AD – 1000 AD, making them considerable younger than their European counterparts. A sample analysed at the University of Dakar was dated around 750 AD. The stone circles and their function continue to intrigue people. All that is certain is that the stone circles indicate is that there were people, probably agriculturists, living on the North Bank of the river Gambia in the first millennium AD. To cite the guide *Historic sites of The Gambia*: 'Unfortunately supposition is all there is to put an interpretation on any Stone Circle. Are we looking at a cemetery or a calendar? Who knows? Archaeologists have an expression for things that are beyond explanation, saying that it is a site of 'ritual significance', this can be translated as 'We don't have a clue.'²⁷

The shell mounds form another indication that from the first millenium AD onwards, there were people living on the banks of the river Gambia. The shell mounds are little more than rubbish heaps left by people in the past. The dates of the shell mounds vary from about 200 – 1500 AD. New mounds are still created. The suggestion that the Serer might have been responsible for the shell mounds, is said to be contradicted by the fact that the Serer moved relatively late into the area where the shell mounds are found. Besides, most of the shell mounds consist of empty shells, interspersed with broken pottery and other items thrown out by people, but give no indication of fishing, whereas the fishing was common among the Serer.²⁸

3.4 The encounter with Europe: 1455-1816

The Portuguese and the West African Empires along the Gambia river

When the first Portuguese ships led by Alviso Cadamosto entered the Gambia estuary in 1455, they met the Wolof Empire firmly established in the north. The

²⁶ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 8.

²⁷ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 10. More information on the stone circles can be found in the same booklet pages 9-22; F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 5-9 and B. Southern, *The Gambia*, 16-18.

²⁸ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 23-25.

Wolof-Serer state of Saloum bordered The Gambia territory and exercised influence there.²⁹ In the powerful kingdom of Baddibu on the North Bank many of the inhabitants were Wolof. Sources indicate that by the time the Portuguese came to West Africa, Islam had begun to spread among the Wolof.³⁰

Along the river Gambia, the Portuguese met the various Mandinka states, which paid tribute to the Kaabu Empire. The Kaabu Empire was a satellite state of the Mali Empire to whom the *Faren* (chief) of Kaabu paid tribute. By the end of the 15th century the power of the Mali Empire had declined and Kaabu became independent.³¹ There were thirteen Mandinka kingdoms along the river. On the North Bank there were Niumi, Baddibu, Niani, Sandu and Wuli. On the South Bank were located Combo, Foni, Kiang, Jarra, Nyamina, Wuropana, Tumanna and Kantora.³² Though the kingdoms were ruled by a Mandinka lineage, the inhabitants came from different ethnic groups. Besides Mandinka, there were Jola, Serer, Fula, Serahuli and Wolof living in the Mandinka kingdoms.

The Portuguese explorations of West Africa have been characterised as 'the quest for god and gold.'³³ A combination of geographical curiosity, eagerness to trade and rumours of the Ghana goldmines led to an exploration of the area south of the Canary Islands, an area which they called 'the Guinea Coast'. Arguin Island was the first West African location that was 'discovered' by the Portuguese. They arrived there in 1444/45. After that the Portuguese travelled further south, to the Cape Verde Islands, which later became the basis for most of the Portuguese activities on the Guinea Coast, to Senegal, to The Gambia and to Isle de Los. Also the main West African rivers like the Senegal, the Gambia, the San Domingo, the Rio Grande and the Rio Nuno were explored and mapped.³⁴

Prime instigator and financier for these initial expeditions in the years 1415 to 1460 was Prince Henry the Navigator, the fourth son of King Joao I of Portugal. Prince Henry had fought against the Muslim armies in Morocco and acted as Governor of Ceuta. During his stay there he heard stories of the West African gold mines and decided to investigate the tales via the exploration of the maritime route to West Africa. He personally funded most of the voyages. Initial progress was slow due to the quality of the ships and the imaginary fears and superstitions about the tropical sea and peoples of West Africa. But when Gil Eannes passed the Cape of Bojador in 1434, many of these tales were proven pure fantasy and the explorations progressed more quickly. Men like Alviso Cadamosta, Antoniotto Usodimare and Diogo Gomes visited The Gambia in the late 1450s.³⁵

Henry was not just a curious but also a pious man. Both he and his father were Grand Master of the Order of Christ,³⁶ an order that was established in 1319 to replace

²⁹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 66-69.

³⁰ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 19.

³¹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 69.

³² P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 6.

³³ J. Blake, *West Africa: the quest for god and gold*, Curzon Press, London 1977.

³⁴ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 14.

³⁵ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 18, 19.

³⁶ B. Sundkler; C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 44.

the suppressed order of the Templars.³⁷ Religious motives therefore also played a role in the exploration of West Africa and religious of the Order of Christ and other orders accompanied the explorers on their journeys. A series of papal bulls issued between 1442 and 1514 divided the 'new world' between Spain and Portugal³⁸ and granted Portugal the monopoly on the Guinea Coast in trade as well as religious matters.³⁹ This so-called *Padroado*, by J. Kenny called one of the biggest mistakes in church history⁴⁰, granted the Portuguese kings the right of patronage over the churches in the lands they were to discover. The *Padroado* included the right to appoint bishops and made the crown responsible for missionary activities in the new world.

Prince Henry had personally been involved in missionary activities. When in 1441 the first ten African slaves were brought to Portugal by Gonzales, Henry tried to persuade them to convert to Christianity so that they could be sent back to their respective countries and serve as missionaries. Also in later years Africans were trained Portugal for the ministry and mission work. A German visitor to Portugal in 1494 observed that many young black Africans were training in theology and Latin to prepare them for mission work in Africa.⁴¹ But there is no record that these Africans ever returned to Africa.⁴²

In 1460 Henry was instrumental in dispatching the abbot of Soto de Cassa and a young man named John Delgado to Niumi in The Gambia. The two men were to do mission work among the Mandinka of Niumi.⁴³ No information about these early missionary activities has survived but it seems that the attempts had little impact on the religious life in The Gambia.

Prince Henry had an additional reason for wanting to explore Africa. In the aftermath of the Reconquista Prince Henry as a young man had fought the Muslim armies in Ceuta, Morocco in 1415 and had become convinced that Islam formed a threat to Europe both politically and religiously. While in Morocco he had heard rumours of a Christian king behind the Muslim lines of defence. It is said that the voyages to West Africa were co-motivated by the search for this Christian king, Prester John, who could serve as an ally to Portugal in defeating the Muslim armies.⁴⁴

³⁷ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa: 1445-1850*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan 1983, 1.

³⁸ The line of demarcation was 45°-west longitude through the Ocean and Brazil. Everything west, including most of the Americas belonged to Spain, while everything east belonged to Portugal. J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 2.

³⁹ Authors vary about the dates, which created the *Padroado*. Isichei gives dates from 1452-1514. E. Isichei, *A history of Christianity in Africa*, 54. Sundkler and Steed date the *Padroado* at 1493. B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *A history of the church in Africa*, 44. Kenny indicates that the first grants towards the *Padroado* were made in 1442, a decision which was confirmed by papal bulls for the next 60 years. See J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 2, 3.

⁴⁰ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 2.

⁴¹ E. Isichei, *A history of Christianity in Africa*, 55.

⁴² D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 110.

⁴³ The exact date of this venture is disputed. See chapter 5.2.

⁴⁴ In the 15th century there had been explicit statements of the Vatican to combat Islam in Africa. In a document of April 14 1419 Pope Martin V stated: 'All the faithful are called to aid the king of Portugal during the war against the Saracens in Africa, in favor of the growth of the faith'. And On June 18 1452 Pope Nicholas V granted the king of Portugal 'the right to

Prester John was never found.⁴⁵ The people living in West Africa in the 15th century were either Muslims or adherents of the African traditional religions. But the efforts of the Portuguese to convert Africans to Christianity should also be interpreted in the light of the Portuguese desire to combat Islam.

The Portuguese activities in West Africa have left their indelible traces in The Gambia. First of all, several places received their names during the Portuguese period. The coining of the name 'Gambia' for the river is connected with the Portuguese. The two islands in the mouth of the river that were later to play a strategic role in the European trade, St. Mary's and Andrew's later renamed James Island,⁴⁶ were named by the Portuguese.⁴⁷

Secondly, the introduction of Christianity in The Gambia is connected to the Portuguese presence in West Africa. The Portuguese organised explicit missionary expeditions in the 15th and 16th century. Around 1460 there was the missionary expedition of the abbot of Sotta Cassa and John Delgado to Niimi. Others followed. But more important for the history of Christianity in The Gambia than the missionary activities was the settlement of Portuguese traders. As early as the second half of the 15th century Portuguese traders, the so-called *lançados*,⁴⁸ began to settle and established towns like San Domingo, Saeca, Geregia, Bintang and Tankular. These towns became the first centres of Christianity in The Gambia. Many of these traders married local women. Their descendants, the Mulattos, who specialised themselves as middlemen in the trade between Europeans and Africans in West Africa, carefully guarded their Portuguese heritage. Though they intermarried with indigenous Africans, they lived together in separate communities. The famous town and trade centre Cacheu in present day Guinea-Bissau was founded by Mulattos and for many centuries remained one of the most important Mulatto settlements in the region. When the years passed by most of these Mulattos outwardly again resembled their African neighbours. Nevertheless they continued to associate themselves with Portugal, calling themselves *Portingalls*.⁴⁹ And more importantly, they also adhered to the Portuguese religion, Christianity.

conquer the Mohammedan kingdoms and territories for the triumph of the faith'. Cited as in H. Teissier, 'Christians and Moslems in Africa: challenges and chances for a genuine relationship' in M. Browne (ed.), *The African Synod: documents, reflections, perspectives*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll 1996, 153.

⁴⁵ There are various traditions regarding Prester John. Some traditions locate him in West Africa, others in Ethiopia and again others in India. See L.N. Gumilev, *Searches for an imaginary kingdom: the legend of the kingdom of Prester John*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987.

⁴⁶ The island was captured by the British from the Courlanders and renamed James Island, after James, Duke of York, who had patronised the expedition. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 39.

⁴⁷ C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 133.

⁴⁸ The term *lançados* comes from the verb *lançar* meaning 'to throw'. The *lançados* were people who had 'thrown' themselves among the Africans on the mainland. W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1970, 74.

⁴⁹ D.P. Gamble and P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia*, Hakluyt Society, London 1999, 97ff.

A third important result of the Portuguese activities was a shift of focus in the trade with sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁰ Up till the 15th century the trade with sub-Saharan Africa was done via the trans-Saharan routes. With the Portuguese discovery of navigable sea routes to West Africa, the trans-Atlantic trade was introduced. Gradually the maritime routes began to replace the old caravan routes through the Sahara and the coastal areas, rather than the caravan towns became the centres of commercial activities. The Portuguese trade in Africa is usually associated with the slave trade. Initially, however, slaves were not the main commodities. The most important trade articles consisted of ivory, gold, bees wax, pepper and hides.

Trading companies and Anglo-French rivalry

During most of the 15th and 16th centuries the Portuguese had a monopoly on the trade of the Guinea Coast. The position of Portugal, both in Europe and outside, radically altered after 1580 when the Portuguese throne fell to Phillip II of Spain. With the Portuguese throne, Phillip II gained access to the trade routes to Africa, which until then had been controlled by the Portuguese. Gradually the influence of the Portuguese in West Africa waned and other nations began to explore the commercial possibilities of West Africa.⁵¹ Alongside commercial interests, there were also political motives for exploring West Africa. Attempts of British, French, Dutch and Courland trading companies in the late 16th and early 17th centuries to gain foothold on the Guinea Coast, should also be interpreted as efforts to curb the Spanish hegemony. The war between Spain and some Western European countries such as The Netherlands, was fought within Europe as well as outside.⁵²

The first contestant arrived in West Africa even before 1580. In the second half of the 16th century the French merchants of Dieppe began to explore the possibilities of trade with Cape Verde and Senegal. A disastrous expedition on the Gambia river in 1612 convinced the French that for the time being their interests were further north, at the mouth of the Senegal river.⁵³ They eventually established themselves on the island of N'Dar in the Senegal river and built the fort 'Saint Louis'.⁵⁴

The interests of the British in West Africa were raised when one of the disposed claimants to the Portuguese throne Antonio, Prior of Crato granted the trading concessions for the Guinea Coast to British merchants. Considering himself to be rightful king of Portugal, Antonio was of the opinion that, on the grounds of

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the Senegambian trade see the booklet of P. Sonko-Godwin, *Trade in the Senegambian region: precolonial period*, Shell Printing, Banjul 1988.

⁵¹ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 20.

⁵² The famous battle of the Dutch admiral Piet Hein in bay of Cuba in 1628 in which he conquered a fleet of Spanish ship transporting silver, the so-called 'Zilvervloot', is an example of this.

⁵³ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 21.

⁵⁴ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 38. In 1617 the Dutch bought the island La Palma, off the coast of Senegal and renamed it Goede Reede. The island became eventually known as Gorée. In 1677 the French captured Gorée from the Dutch and acquired Rufisque, Joal and Portudal on the Senegalese Coast from the local chiefs. Mahoney abusively has translated *Goede Reede* as 'Good Roads'. The official translation would mean something like 'safe haven'.

the *Padroado* he had the right to do this. Queen Elizabeth intervened in the somewhat confusing situation. She vested the trading concessions for the Portuguese territories in the British throne and merchants from Exeter and London were granted the right to trade on the Guinea Coast for periods of ten year.⁵⁵ When a ten-year term had expired, the contract was either renewed or the right to trade with West Africa was granted to another trading company. The initial British expeditions to West Africa were not very profitable and interest declined. This changed when in 1594, after the fall of the Songhay Empire, a letter concerning the goldmines of old Ghana began to circulate. Wrongly presuming that the goldmines of Timbuktu and Gao could be reached by the Gambia river, explorations on river started. The gold of Ghana was never found, but one of the expedition reports became famous. It was Richard Jobson's *The golden trade*.⁵⁶ Jobson explored the Gambia river in 1620. During his journey he kept a diary, in which he did not just describe the trade possibilities in The Gambia, but also gave an account of the people living along the river.

The first non-Portuguese commercial settlements in The Gambia were not British. In 1651 James, Duke of Courland, a small Baltic state, acquired two islands in the Gambia river from the King of Barra to start a colony: Andrew's Island and Banjol, named the island of St. Mary by the Portuguese. The Courland experiment was short-lived. In 1661 the Dutch expelled the Courlanders from Andrew's Island. But before the Dutch could settle, the British conquered Andrew's Island. The island was renamed 'James Island' and served as a British base of operation until its destruction in 1779.⁵⁷

French merchants had also gained foothold on the river Gambia. In 1679 the French Senegal Company obtained the right to trade in Albreda, a river port opposite James Island on the North Bank. The intensity with which the French were active in Albreda varied considerably over the centuries, but they kept their right to trade in Albreda until 1857 when they exchanged the trading rights in Albreda for those at Portendic, where the British had been granted similar privileges.⁵⁸

The Anglo-French rivalry in the Senegambia continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The trading companies continuously competed with each other and were not averse to capturing each other's buildings and forts or outbidding and outsmarting each other in contacts with the local chiefs. During the Seven Years War between Britain and France (1756-1763), Britain captured all the French possessions in Senegal and all other places on the Guinea Coast. Gorée was returned to France in 1763. Saint Louis together with James Island were united in the

⁵⁵ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 35; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 20.

⁵⁶ D.P. Gamble and P.E.H. Hair (eds.), *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, Hakluyt Society, London 1999. The book *The golden trade* form the pages 75-184.

⁵⁷ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 39, 52; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 23. James Island was attacked and captured by the French many times, but was always restored to the British. For a detailed study of James Island see W.F. Galloway, *James Island: a background with notes on Juffure, Albreda, San Domingo, Dog Island*, Oral History and Antiquities Division for The Gambia National Monuments and Relics Commission, Banjul 1978.

⁵⁸ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 27.

Province of Senegambia. From 1765 to 1783 a governor resident in St. Louis presided over the Senegambia Crown colony and the trade flourished. Many British merchants and their Mulatto wives (the *signares*) settled in St. Louis and Portendic.⁵⁹ In 1778 the French began to recapture their possessions. A successful attack on James Island in 1779 completely destroyed the fort. It was never rebuilt. The Treaty of Versailles in 1783 restored the French properties to France and the possession of James Island and the control of the Gambia river to England. The British were granted trading rights in Portendic and many of the British merchants who had settled in the Senegalese trading towns, moved there.

The Napoleonic Wars gave the British a renewed opportunity to extend their commercial influence in the Senegambia. Gorée was recaptured in 1800 and St. Louis in 1809. When the Treaty of Paris in 1814 arranged that Gorée and St. Louis were returned to France, it stipulated the British right to trade in the French settlements. But the high taxes soon compelled the traders to look elsewhere. When in 1816 a British garrison was settled at St. Mary's, many merchants and their families moved to The Gambia.⁶⁰

Slavery and slave trade

The history of The Gambia is closely linked with slavery and the slave trade. The estimates of how many Africans were captured, sold and shipped to 'the New World' vary and the exact number will never be known. Some sources say that slavery became the fate of 10 to 15 million Africans;⁶¹ others talk about 25 million people being taken away in slavery before 1800.⁶² All estimates agree in saying that the numbers were gigantic and that the impact of the loss of people on the African continent and its development has been immense.

The Senegambia was one of the four major slave-trading centres. It is estimated that in 16th century slaves from the Senegambia region accounted for 25 percent of the total slaves exported. In the 18th century this had declined to 15 percent; the main slave trading centres had moved further south, to 'the Slave Coast'. The proportional decline did not imply a decrease in the actual numbers of people captured. On the contrary, guesses are that during the 18th century about 3000 people were annually taken from The Gambia region into slavery.⁶³

The Portuguese activity in West Africa was closely linked with the slave trade. As early as the 15th century they were heavily engaged in the slave trade and in the 16th century slaves had become their most important trade items.⁶⁴ But neither slavery nor slave trade was introduced to Africa by the Portuguese. Slavery had been

⁵⁹ See G.E. Brooks, 'The *Signares* of St. Louis and Gorée: women entrepreneurs in eighteenth-century Senegal' in N.J. Hafkin; E.G. Bay, *Women in Africa: studies in social and economic change*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1976, 19-44.

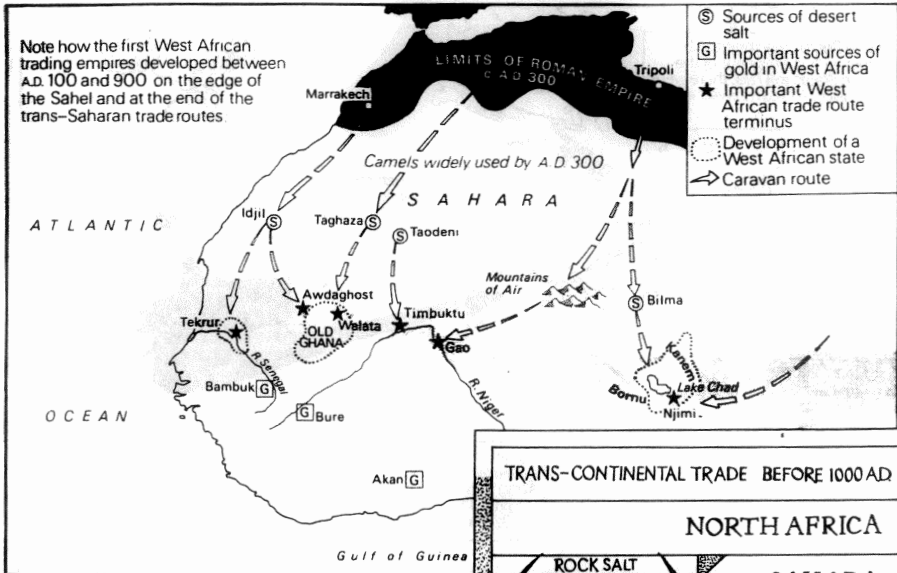
⁶⁰ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 50-53 and 59-65.

⁶¹ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 45.

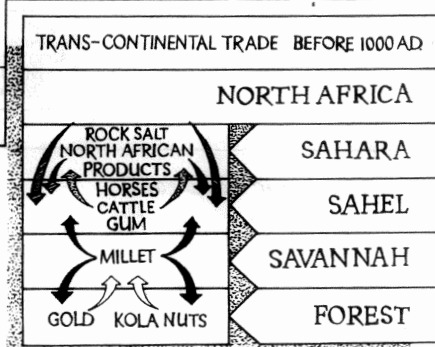
⁶² B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjobin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, 42.

⁶³ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 47.

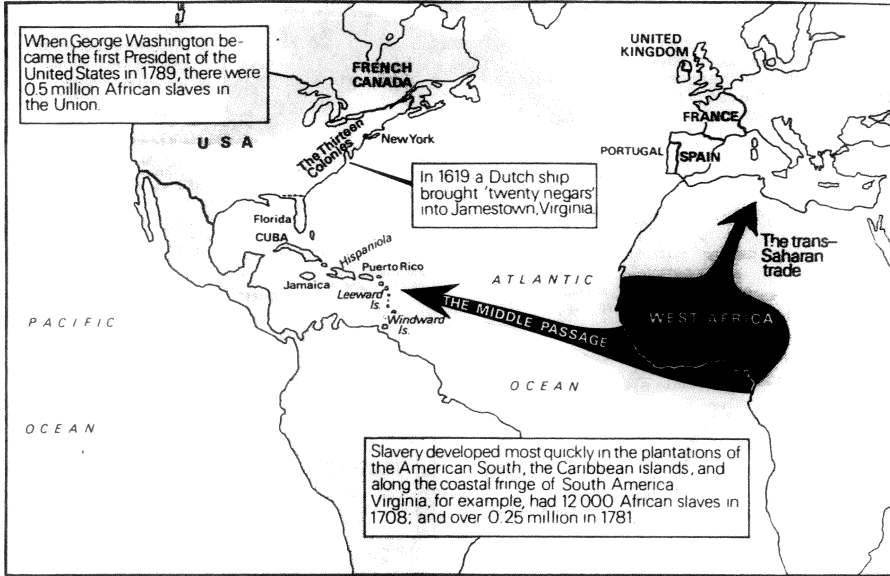
⁶⁴ Mahoney states that by 1500 the slave trade was firmly established in West Africa and the Senegal river was a renown place where horses were traded for slaves. See F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 14.



The Trans-Saharan trade*



* Reproduced from B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjogbin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, 3.



*The transatlantic slave trade**

* Reproduced from B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjogbin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, 44.

a part of African society since time immemorial. Renner in her thesis *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo* distinguished between two types of slaves in the traditional African society:

At the bottom rung of the societal pyramid were the *jongolu*. They were of two kinds - household slaves and 'economic' slaves. The household slaves usually bore their masters' name and were integrated into the families in which they had been introduced. They were usually those who had been born of slave parents. They were reputedly loyal and rose to important positions. Those attached to the homes of the nobility also acquired political influence. (...) The economic slaves were those who had been bought, war captives and pawns for debts owned to their masters. They worked in the fields or were employed as herdsmen. Their reliability appears to have been relatively less than that of the household slaves. Reported cases of runaways among their numbers confirm this.⁶⁵

Though slavery was an accepted institution in African society, slave trade was traditionally confined to the special category of the economic slaves: the criminals, the war captives and people in debt. These slaves were sold to slave traders and taken to a place far from their home country. The transport of slaves to distant areas diminished the chance that slaves could run away.

The first long distance slave trade took place across the Sahara. When the Berbers, who for centuries had been victims of slavery in North Africa, began to convert to Islam from the eighth century onwards the supply of native slaves in North Africa dried up. For though Islam did not forbid slavery, it forbade enslaving Muslims. Thus slaves from sub-Saharan Africa were exported to North Africa and Arabia to meet the demands of the North African market.⁶⁶ It seems that the first black African slaves, who arrived in Portugal in 1441, had been transported via the trans-Saharan route.⁶⁷

Slave trade via the maritime route started as early as 1456 when African chiefs handed a few slaves as a gift to the Portuguese who took them to Portugal.⁶⁸ Had the slave trade limited itself to occasional shiploads of slaves being taken to Portugal, then the effects might have not been so catastrophic. But the Spanish 'discovery' of the New world in America and the Caribbean towards the close of the 15th century, changed the small scale slave trade into an immense and inhuman enterprise in which ten thousands of peoples were shipped annually from Africa across the Atlantic to work on the sugar, cotton and tobacco plantations.⁶⁹ Initially, Europeans and native Indians worked as labourers at the plantations. But the tropical climate and the harsh conditions demanded their toll. Thus in the latter half of the 16th century the conviction grew that African slave workers would offer the best prospects for profitable plantations and mass slave trade started.⁷⁰ The first group of Africans was exported to the West Indies as early as 1501. They had still started

⁶⁵ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 18, 19.

⁶⁶ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 40.

⁶⁷ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 110.

⁶⁸ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 45.

⁶⁹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 110. A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 40.

⁷⁰ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 111.

their journey in Portugal. But less than twenty years later slave labour was shipped directly from West Africa to America.⁷¹ The so-called 'triangle trade', which developed, lasted for more than 300 years. The triangle trade peaked in the 17th and 18th century, when the Southern American sugar, rice and tobacco plantations were brought into cultivation. Towards the end of the 18th century the protests against the slave trade, spearheaded by the Quakers, increased and eventually led to the European abolition of slave trade and slavery.

The West African trade and especially slave trade was lucrative business. Thus the Portuguese had to face rivalry from the 17th century onwards. Initially mainly Spanish and French but later also Dutch, English, Courland and American trading companies competed with the Portuguese traders for the best bargains and established forts on the coast of West Africa. While in the 15th and 16th centuries slaves were one of the 'trade commodities', in the 17th and 18th century slaves had become the main trade item from the West Coast. Moral objections against the dealing in slaves had been silenced. In 1620 the British captain and trader Richard Jobson in 1620 still refused the offer of slaves for trade. When offered slaves, he said: 'But I made answer; We were a people who did not deale in any such commodities, neither did wee buy or sell one another, or any that had our owne shapes.'⁷² Less than a hundred years later the British no longer had any scruples to deal in slaves, convinced as they were that Africans were of an inferior race. Francis Moore, a young British commercial officer who worked at James Island from 1730-1734 estimated that about 2000 slaves were brought down the river Gambia yearly. And the British were heavily involved in the trade.

In the 17th and 18th centuries British and French traders prevailed in The Gambia. The British had a foothold in the fort at James Island in the river and some small villages up the river, while the French were established in Albreda. The rivalry between the two led to continued clashes and destruction of properties. In 1807 the British Parliament, under pressure of the Abolitionist lobby, abolished the slave trade. The bill was followed by the decision to actively combat the slave trade in West Africa. In 1816 a treaty was signed with the *Mansa* of Combo, Tomany Bojang, which gave the British permission to station a garrison on the island of St. Mary in the mouth of the river Gambia. On the island, which was little more than a sandbank, the town of Bathurst was built. From Bathurst the British garrison tried to intercept slavers on the river Gambia and slaves ships passing by the coast. Recaptured slaves were declared free in Freetown.⁷³ Depending on their local

⁷¹ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 111.

⁷² D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of the River Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 140.

⁷³ Some sources say that already in 1807 as many as fifty thousands slaves were recaptured and declared free in Freetown. M.B. Kanu, *The encounter of Islam and Christianity in Sierra Leone: a case study*, a thesis submitted for the diploma of the Missionsakademie at the University of Hamburg, Germany, 2001, 11.

situation, the liberated slaves were either returned to their countries of origin, or, in cases where this was not possible⁷⁴, resettled in Sierra Leone or The Gambia.

The British abolition of the slave trade in 1807 did not cause other European countries like France to abandon the slave trade. France and The Netherlands condoned it for several more decades. Also local African chiefs continued to supply people for the slave trade. This complicated the situation and settlement of the liberated slaves. Their freedom could only be guaranteed within the British colonies. Outside these areas they were prone to be recaptured. Thus settlements for liberated slaves were established within British territory. In The Gambia liberated slaves were stationed in Goderich village, just outside Bathurst, in Berwick Town and at MacCarthy Island.

In 1833, the British Parliament passed a bill, forbidding the possession of slaves within British territory. But since they had no means of enforcing the new law, it was understood that in British colonies a slave would either be declared free by his/her master voluntarily or automatically become free after the death of his/her master. Thus gradually slavery died out. Outside the British Colony, in the Gambian hinterland, slavery and slave trade continued until the first decade of the 20th century. An ordinance in 1894 to abolish the slavery in the hinterland, was mainly a paperwork decision.⁷⁵ The British had no way to enforce the law. Only after the hinterland became Protectorate, slavery could be combated effectively.⁷⁶

3.5 Colony and Protectorate: 1816-1965

The Colony of The Gambia

The decision of the British parliament in 1807 to abolish the slave trade did not immediately curb all slave trade in the British territories of West Africa. There is considerable evidence that British and other slavers still continued their business. The river Gambia was one of the places where the slavers were active. Thus the decision was taken to establish a regiment of the Royal African Corps in The Gambia to implement the abolition of the slave trade. An initial plan to reoccupy James Island was rejected. In April 1816 Captain Alexander Grant approached the *Mansa* of Combo, Tomany Bojang with a request for permission to station a garrison at the island Banjulo. The time proved favourable, because the *Mansa* had just a few weeks before lost several relatives in a slave raid by a Spanish slaver.⁷⁷ On April 23 1816 Grant signed a treaty with the *Mansa*, which gave the Royal

⁷⁴ In some cases return to the home country would mean exposing people again to the chance of slavery, in other cases the liberated slaves were so young that they did not know where they came from.

⁷⁵ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 114.

⁷⁶ Meagher mentions that there were still reports of slave trade in The Gambia until 1911. A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 55. See website on slavery in The Gambia www.slavernij.kennisnet.nl/Gambia Date: 3-4-2003.

⁷⁷ A. Meagher, *Historic sites of The Gambia*, 92.

African Corps the right to station a garrison on the island, now officially renamed St. Mary, in exchange for an annual fee of 100 Spanish dollars.⁷⁸

Grant immediately started work at St. Mary's Island. With about 50 soldiers and a group of masons, carpenters and labourers from Gorée (most of whom were Wolof and some of whom were Christian) Grant started clearing the bush on the North West side of the island, called Banyon Point. Before the rainy season⁷⁹ of that year, the barracks for the soldiers were ready. The activities of the British garrison attracted the attention of British merchants in Gorée and St. Louis. The French levied heavy taxes on British trade, which made the two towns less interesting for the British merchants. When free plots of land were offered at Banyon Point within the secure presence of a British garrison, many of them decide to move. Together with their Mulatto wives and mistresses, their slaves and possessions they settled at St. Mary's.⁸⁰ Many of these traders and their Mulatto wives were Christians. Together with the Christian artisans, the Mulatto families from up-river who moved to Banjul and the British regiment they formed the nucleus of the Christian community on the island.

Soon civilian houses were erected and the settlement received the name Bathurst, after Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies. After Independence in 1965 Bathurst was renamed Banjul, the original name of the island. Apart from merchants and their households, the soldiers and the Wolof artisans, there was also a group of Liberated Africans among the first settlers in Bathurst. The first Liberated Africans were brought to The Gambia in the early 1820s to assist in the building of the town.⁸¹

Grant can be seen as the architect who designed Bathurst. He planned the main roads, naming them after the generals who had fought at Waterloo. He also divided the island into districts for the various groups, separated by pieces of land for cultivation. Mulattos settled in Portuguese Town, the Wolof artisan and slave

⁷⁸ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 66.

⁷⁹ The rainy season in The Gambia starts around June/July.

⁸⁰ F. Mahoney in her book *Stories of Senegambia* names many of these merchants and their Mulatto wives and describes the role they played in the first half of the 19th century in The Gambia. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 64-65, 69-70, 85-86 and. F. Mahoney, 'Notes on Mulattoes of The Gambia before the mid-nineteenth century', 120-129. The influx of merchants from Gorée with their domestic slaves posed a delicate problem to the British government. On the one hand the British were anxious to encourage civilians to settle in Bathurst, on the other hand they felt embarrassed by number of slaves held by these civilian merchants, whereas Bathurst was built to discourage slavery. It seems that Governor Charles MacCarthy made a temporary provision for the situation, at the expiry of which both the servant and his/her children were to become free. J.M.Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 317.

⁸¹ J.M.Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 315, 316. Gray seems to imply that in the 1820s Bathurst was seen as a sort of penal colony for Sierra Leone: 'In 1827 Major Rowan reported that the Sierra Leone Government took advantage of a request for a supply of this class of labour to rid itself of a number of undesirables by sending "a few persons said to have been convicted of offences at that settlement, and removed to The Gambia; a measure, which considering the circumstances of the Island of St. Mary, appears to have been anything but judicious. They have given much trouble, and in fact the only persons tried at the sessions held in June, 1826, were of this class."'

community in Jolof Town, retired soldiers in Soldier Town, Jola in Jola Town and labourers from Combo and from along the river lived in the poorest part Mokam Town.⁸² By early 1819 there were already 700 civilians in town, whereas a decade later this number had increased to 1800.⁸³ At the invitation of the Governor of Sierra Leone and supervisor of the new Colony, Sir Charles MacCarthy, missionaries settled in Bathurst from 1821 onwards and gradually the Christian community began to multiply.

The British sphere of influence in The Gambia gradually increased. On the 14th of April 1823 Lemain Island, also known as Janjanbureh, was ceded to the British. Grant signed a treaty with the Soninke chief Kolli, who was a rival to the throne of Niani to confirm this. The island, renamed MacCarthy Island, gave the British a strategic foothold in the upper river territory.⁸⁴ The Wesleyan missionaries started work at MacCarthy Island around 1830. In 1826, an agreement with the king of Barra was signed in which the *Mansa* ceded to Great Britain the 'full free and unlimited right, title, sovereignty and possession of the river Gambia with all its branches, creeks, inlets and water of the same as they had been held from time immemorial.'⁸⁵ Thus a small piece of land directly opposite St. Mary became British. Attempts to build a fort on this land were not appreciated by the *Mansa* and led to the Barra War of 1831. Only military aid from the French in Senegal and the British troops in Sierra Leone prevented an attack on Bathurst.⁸⁶ In January 1832 the treaty was renegotiated and the portion of land became known as 'Ceded Mile'. The British turned their attention to the south bank of the river as well. In May 1827, Grant made a treaty with the King of Brikama in which the king placed all his possessions under British protection and which gave the British the right to establish settlements on the mainland.⁸⁷ The treaty with the *Mansa* of Combo of 1816 was renegotiated in 1827 and the island of St. Mary from that date onwards was annexed directly to the crown.⁸⁸ It became the Colony of The Gambia.

Inhabitants of the Colony were considered to be British subjects and British rules and regulations guided the life of the Colony. The Sunday was observed as a day of rest and Christian feasts and holidays were celebrated. Later when the British extended their influence in the hinterland, the people in the Protectorate also

⁸² After the cholera epidemic of 1869 Mokam Town became known as 'Half Die' because of the many deaths during the cholera epidemic in that part of town.

⁸³ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 86; F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 67.

⁸⁴ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 278, 335, 336. Gray mentions that Lemain Island had already been ceded to the British in 1785. A certain Richard Bradley had negotiated the conditions on behalf of the government. The island was acquired in order to be used as a convict settlement, but it seems that by 1823 both the British and the local inhabitants had forgotten about the arrangement. Possibly Lemain Island never functioned as a convict settlement.

⁸⁵ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 65.

⁸⁶ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 82, 83.

⁸⁷ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 78. This territory became known as British Combo or *Tubabobanko* (place of the white people) and gradually extended over the years.

⁸⁸ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 65.

followed the Christian calendar. After Independence these institutions were not abolished but extended with the observance of Muslim feasts and holidays.⁸⁹

The population of the new Colony steadily increased over the years. Between 1832 and 1838 there was a new influx of people to St. Mary's when Governor G. Rendall invited groups of Liberated Africans from Sierra Leone to come to The Gambia. Some were settled just outside Bathurst, in Melville Town, later renamed New Town, while others were placed in Berwick Town at Barra Point. The majority of them however was taken to MacCarthy Island where a colony for Liberated Africans was set up.⁹⁰ The settlement of Liberated Africans at MacCarthy brought colonial officials, merchants and missionaries to the island. In the first half of the 19th century the community at MacCarthy flourished, but after the withdrawal of the troops in May 1866 most people moved away from MacCarthy and the island lost its importance.⁹¹

In the 1860s the population of the British territories in The Gambia had increased to about 6000. Missionaries from various denominations had settled in The Gambia and the mission schools flourished.⁹² Though there were wars in the hinterland the life in the Colony was well organised and relatively safe, except for the epidemics, which scourged the country every now and then. Suddenly however, the future of the Colony became precarious. France had recently been preoccupied in consolidating its possessions on the Upper Guinea Coast and had cast an eye on The Gambia. A proposal was sent to Britain to exchange territory. The initial proposal of 1866 suggested an exchange of The Gambia for French territories on the Ivory Coast, whilst a later adaptation of the scheme suggested French territories in Gabon as an exchange for The Gambia. By 1870 the plans became known in The Gambia and protest followed. Merchants, missionaries, Liberated Africans and local chiefs alike rejected the transfer. Letters of protest were sent to the British parliament that it was immoral to decide over the fate of about 6000 British subjects without even consulting them. Meanwhile the British had begun to withdraw from The Gambia. By 1870 there were hardly any British troops left in the Colony despite the fact that the Soninke-Marabout wars made the hinterland unsafe and unsettled. In 1876 the French unexpectedly withdrew their offer of transfer and on April 7 1876 the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Carnarvon informed the public that negotiations had been broken off. Though the issue of transfer came up time and again, The Gambia Colony remained British. Lord Lugard summed up the situation: 'The exchange of the Gambia... has been from time to time revived up to the present day. It would surely be an immoral and indefensible transaction, unless with consent of the people.'⁹³

⁸⁹ The Gambian weekend starts on Friday noon and lasts until Monday morning.

⁹⁰ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 363, 364.

⁹¹ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 434.

⁹² F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 79. It seems that there were about 660 children receiving education in 1860.

⁹³ Quoted as in J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 443. For the story of the transfer see J.M. Gray, *History of The Gambia*, 431-443 and F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 97-103.

The Soninke-Marabout wars: 1849-1919

The British had acquired some pieces of land along the Gambia river which together formed The Gambia Colony, but they initially had no intention to extend their territory in the hinterland or to mix themselves in the interethnic and interreligious wars on the river banks. Rather, they pursued a policy of non-intervention and endeavoured to limit the expenses in the colonies to an absolute minimum. Except in situations when the lives and well-being of British subjects were threatened, the British shied away from actions in the hinterland.⁹⁴ This attitude changed in late 19th century. There were several reasons for this. Industrialisation in Europe demanded new markets and the colonies served the double function of guaranteed markets and sources of raw materials.⁹⁵ Colonial imperialism peaked at the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 when the European imperial powers formalised the partition of Africa. The demarcation of the borders between the various colonies and protectorates implied an extension of the colonial government structures which had thus far been limited to the coastal areas and a pacification of the hinterland. In The Gambia, the activities of the Anglo-French boundary commission were started in 1889. Because the envisaged borders ignored the sphere of influence of local chieftaincies and the boundary between Senegal and The Gambia went straight through existing local kingdoms and chieftaincies, the commission met with much resistance and hostility. This led to several punitive actions.

The upheaval and unrest caused by the Soninke Marabout wars in the second half of the 19th century on the banks of the river Gambia was another reason for the British to extend their control to the hinterland. These wars, sometimes called *jihads*, were conflicts between Muslim reformers, known as *Marabouts* and the traditional Soninke chiefs. During the 19th century Muslim reformers, often inspired by the Tijani brotherhood, revolted against the traditional leadership of the local rulers and their religion throughout West Africa. The examples of famous *jihadists* like al Hajj Umar Tall and Uthman dan Fodio inspired *marabouts* in The Gambia to resist the Soninke rule and to spread Islam and Islamic leadership among the peoples of The Gambia. There were skirmishes in Combo, led by Fode Kaba Turay of Gunjur⁹⁶ from 1847 onwards and by Fode Ibrahim Turay Sillah from 1864 to 1894.⁹⁷ From 1861 to 1867 the Tijani *marabout* Ma Ba Diakhou Ba established an Islamic caliphate in Baddibu on the north bank of the Gambia river.⁹⁸ Inspired by Ma Ba the *jihadist* Fode Kabba Dumbuya waged continuous raids on the south bank of The Gambia against Muslims and non-Muslims alike from the 1880s until the turn of the century. The Fula established a Gambian version of the Islamic Fula empires of Futa Toro, Bondu and Futa Jallon. In 1875 the Fula elephant hunter Alfa Molloh revolted against the Mandinka overlord with the support of the Muslim Fula of Futa Jallon and established the kingdom of Fuladu, which lasted until the

⁹⁴ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 8, 9.

⁹⁵ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 97.

⁹⁶ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 113-120.

⁹⁷ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 144.

⁹⁸ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 94-96.

deportation of his son Musa Molloh by the British in 1919.⁹⁹ The Serahuli rallied around the figure of the famous *wali* (saint) and *marabout* of Momodou Lamine Drammeh who in the 1880s overran the empire of Bondu and established an Islamic state in the Upper River region, north of The Gambia.¹⁰⁰

The wars unsettled the country and a stream of refugees, large-scale slavery, famine and a lull in trade was the result. Many of the traditional ruling families were killed in the cause of the wars or had 'their heads shaved' and submitted to Islam. In some cases the *jihads* directly threatened British settlements, as was the case in British Combo in the 1850s and 1870s. The French obsession with the 'Islamic threat' also affected the British attitude towards the *marabout* leaders. Joint British French punitive actions led to the murder of several of the *marabouts* while others were banned from The Gambia. The British used the unrest caused by Soninke-Marabout wars as an argument to extend of their control along the riverbanks.

The Protectorate of The Gambia

The demarcation of the borders between Senegal and The Gambia began by a joint Anglo-French boundary commission in 1889. What seemed as a relatively straightforward task, drawing a border around the river Gambia, ten kilometres north and south of the river as far as Yarbutenda, soon resulted in disputes, both among the two European powers and between the commission and the local rulers.¹⁰¹ By 1900 the boundary was drawn, with the exception of the complicated area around Yarbutenda, but the French refused to ratify the borders.¹⁰² It took until 1904 before permanent border stones could replace the temporary markers. But neither of the two imperialistic powers involved proved happy about the situation. The French were still convinced that they were the losing party in the arrangement while Henry Reeve, a British colonial officer who acted as Chief Commissioner of the Anglo-French Boundary Commissions of 1895-1896 and 1898-1899, commented on the demarcation of the borders which he had supervised: 'To England it should be humiliating to see on the maps of West Africa the last remnant of the great valley, like a red snake in its contortions, dying in the immense desert of French grey.'¹⁰³

The 'Scramble for Africa' in 1884/85 left Britain with the challenge to establish a governmental system in the hinterland. Because the British government still maintained the policy of not wanting to spend money on the colonies, the system of indirect rule was developed. Two travelling commissioners were appointed for The Gambia, one for the North Bank and one for the South Bank, who were to inform the local leaders of the new situation. In cases where the traditional ruling families had been killed, the Travelling Commissioner appointed chiefs from among the people who were willing to co-operate with the British. Traditional methods of appointing new chiefs were ignored and the traditional institutions devised to control the power and the performance of the chief stopped functioning.

⁹⁹ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 27, 124, 125.

¹⁰⁰ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 33-40.

¹⁰¹ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 103.

¹⁰² H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 106.

¹⁰³ H.F. Reeve, *The Gambia*, 104.

In total 35 chiefs were recognised by the central government, but only few of them belonged to the traditional ruling houses.¹⁰⁴

The British influence in the hinterland was extended step by step. In 1894 all customary law, which did not contradict the laws of the Colony, was recognised. The country was divided into districts, headed by a chief answerable to the central government. In 1895 the Yard Tax was introduced¹⁰⁵ and in 1902 the native tribunals were established. In the same year the Protectorate Ordinance became effective and the hinterland of The Gambia became officially 'the Protectorate of The Gambia.'¹⁰⁶

A series of ordinances refined the government and laws of the Protectorate. But apart from administrative changes and levying tax, the British invested little in the Protectorate. Only after World War II, when money became available through the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, money was made available to improve the infrastructure, the health care and the education in the Protectorate. When The Gambia began to prepare for independence in the 1950s, the situation in the country was far from promising. A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey described the situation with the following words: 'The Gambia still depended upon one crop [groundnuts], and its communication and the transport infrastructure was still primitive. In the Protectorate there were no all-weather roads, only one secondary school, and one hospital for a quarter of a million people.'¹⁰⁷ It was thus that the country had to prepare for independence.

3.6 The road to Independence: Africans and government from 1821-1965

The governmental structure of The Gambia during the British colonial period

The road to self-governance and independence in The Gambia was gradual and non-violent. After World War II the participation of Gambians in the national politics and government was gradually increased and direct legislation was introduced. In the 1950s there was a true political awakening. Inspired by the independence of former British colonies like Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, pressure was exercised on the British colonial government to grant The Gambia full internal government. But participation of Gambians in the political arena was not new. Already in the past there had been participation in the government in various ways.

The administration of The Gambia had changed several times in the past. The Gambia had been an official Crown colony since May 1765 when the British possessions in The Gambia¹⁰⁸ together with Senegal formed the Province of Senegambia.¹⁰⁹ A Governor and the Legislative Council, residing in St. Louis governed the Province of Senegambia. After the dissolution of the Province of

¹⁰⁴ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 116-118.

¹⁰⁶ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 121.

¹⁰⁷ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 12, 13.

¹⁰⁸ This mainly meant James Island.

¹⁰⁹ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 45-49.

Senegambia in 1873, an official administration of the British possession in The Gambia seemed unnecessary. The fort at James Island had been completely destroyed and abandoned. The Company of Merchants received authority to look after the Gambian 'properties'. This situation changed in 1821, when Bathurst had been built. From 1821 until 1866 an administrator directly responsible to the Governor of Freetown had handled the affairs of The Gambia.¹¹⁰ During that period The Gambia had its own Legislative and Executive Council. The residents in the Colony had organised themselves in societies, through which they could exercise political pressure. These 'friendly societies' were organised according to ethnic background such as the Yoruba Society, the Free Wolof Society and the Ibo Society.¹¹¹ Also the traders in Bathurst had organised themselves in societies to negotiate favourably trade conditions.¹¹² It seems that as early as 1841 there was a recommendation to include Africans from these societies in the decision-making bodies, but the Governor rejected this decision.¹¹³ When the British government in 1865 announced its decision to prepare the West African colonies for 'self-government' many of these 'friendly societies' developed into forums for political and social issues.¹¹⁴ The Liberated African Clubs joined hands that year in supporting the study of a young man called Joseph Reffell to study law in Britain so that he could defend their interest after finishing his studies. When Reffell returned to The Gambia, he was denied the right to practice and, not surprisingly, became a fierce critic of the colonial government.¹¹⁵

The British intentions of making her West African colonies self-governing came to nothing. In order to save expense The Gambia Colony became part of the Sierra Leone government in 1866. The Legislative and Executive Councils were abolished and only a minimal administrative staff, consisting of the Administrator, the Chief Magistrate and the Collector of Customs, was maintained. In 1887 this council was expanded by an advisory group, consisting of five official and four unofficial members, two of who were Africans. In 1888 the administrative link with Sierra Leone was severed, the Legislative and Executive Councils were re-instated and The Gambia was considered a separate colony. Only in 1901 the office of Administrator was upgraded to that of Governor.¹¹⁶ The 1889 Border Convention with France had implications for the hinterland. From 1889 onwards Travelling Commissioners were appointed and gradually a system of indirect (and therefore

¹¹⁰ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 3, 4.

¹¹¹ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 87, 88.

¹¹² S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', *African Research Bulletin* 5/4 (1975), 6.

¹¹³ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 6.

¹¹⁴ Mahoney notes that the second generation of Liberated Africans was literate and much more critical about the government than their parents. This critical attitude was voiced in the so-called 'friendly societies' and caused the British government to be suspicious of these societies as political organisations. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 89.

¹¹⁵ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 145, 146. Joseph Reffell was the son of Thomas Reffell, the founder of the first among the friendly societies, the Ibo Society. In later years Joseph Reffell was one of the Gambian leaders opposing the exchange of The Gambia for French territories.

¹¹⁶ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 185.

cheap) rule was instituted in the Protectorate. The new status of the Protectorate was described in the Protectorate Ordinance of 1902.¹¹⁷

African participation in government

The African participation in the government was for a long time limited to the Colony. J.D. Richards was appointed as member of the Legislative Council as early as 1883. An enlargement of the Legislative Council in 1915 provided for three unofficial members on the Council, appointed by the governor: one was to represent the Bathurst trading community, while the two other representatives were African Christians from Bathurst. In 1921 the governor assigned one of the seats of the African Christian community to the Bathurst Muslim community.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile new political movements had begun to surface. The leading figure behind most of these movements was 'Pa' Edward Francis Small (1891-1958).¹¹⁹ Small came from a Methodist background and was the son of an Akou tailor. He went to the Methodist Primary School in Bathurst and the Methodist Boys High School in Freetown. On his return to The Gambia he taught for a while in the Methodist Boys High School. Around 1917 he offered to work as a district agent for the Methodist Church, contemplating to offer for the ministry. The Methodist Church accepted his offer and he was stationed in Ballanghar. A conflict with a trader of that town cut his ministerial career short. He clashed with both the local British administrator and the Methodist Superintendent P.S. Toye. Toye thereupon appointed him to Sukuta but the relationship between the two men did not improve. Small resented the treatment the Methodist Church had given him and openly started to criticise Toye, who thereupon dismissed Small from the church service due to insubordination. The Ballanghar incident made Small very critical of the British colonial government but it seems he remained a 'devout Methodist' throughout his life.¹²⁰

This episode seemed to have shaped Small's political vision. In 1919 he founded the Gambia Native Defensive Union, later the Gambian branch of the larger National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), founded in 1920 in Accra.¹²¹ Through this movement Small advocated African rights and criticised the

¹¹⁷ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 121.

¹¹⁸ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 185, 186.

¹¹⁹ See for a comprehensive description of Small's political career: D. Prefect, 'The political career of Edward Francis Small' in A. Hughes (ed.), *The Gambia: studies in society and politics*, Birmingham University Press, Birmingham 1991, 64-79.

¹²⁰ D. Prefect, 'The political career of Edward Francis Small', 76.

¹²¹ Small was co-founder of the NCBWA. S.S. Nyang gives different versions of the establishment of the Gambia National Congress (GNC), the Gambian branch of the NCBWA. See S.S. Nyang, *The historical development of political parties in The Gambia*, 7. The GNC was never very successful in The Gambia. The Governors were very critical of the movement and the Bathurst 'elite' was opposed to it as well. The main support for the GNC came from the lower level elite like clerks, artisans and petty traders, whereas the richer Akou were informally organised in the 'Committee of Gentlemen', led by Samuel J. Foster Jr. Foster later founded the Gambia Representative Committee in 1926. The GRC supplied candidates for the Bathurst Urban District Council before the BRPA became active and effective. D. Prefect, 'The political career of Edward Francis Small', 67, 68.

government. He voiced his ideas in his newly established newspaper *The Gambia Outlook and the Senegambia Reporter* (1922). In 1929 Small formed a co-operative, the Gambian Planters' Syndicate,¹²² to enforce higher groundnut prices and at the same time started the Bathurst Trade Union. The strike he organised in 1929 was the most successful strike in colonial Africa before World War II and did not make Small particularly popular with the British government. Through his activities in the trade union Small had world wide links with socialist and communist organisations and was instrumental in the birth of the Gambian Trade Union Ordinance of 1932.

In the early 1930s, Small became actively involved in the Bathurst Rate Payers Association, an associated founded by R. S. Rendall in July 1932.¹²³ BRPA acted as a pressure group on the central government to promote greater involvement of the local people in the municipal government and supplied candidates to sit on the Bathurst Urban District Council¹²⁴. Though technically not a 'rate-payer' himself, Small acted as the chairman of BRPA in which capacity he was voted into the Legislative Council in 1942. When the Constitution of 1947 for the first time allowed for a directly elected member in the Legislative Council, Small won the seat for the Bathurst community, thereby defeating his two opponents Sheikh Omar Faye and Ibrahim Mododou Garba Jahumpa.¹²⁵ Though he was defeated in 1951 by Garba-Jahumpa and John C. Faye, in 1954 Governor Wyn-Harris re-appointed Small to the Legislative and Executive Councils on personal merit, a seat he held until his death in 1958. Small, because of his extensive and varied political career, has often been called 'the father of Gambian politics'.¹²⁶

The emergence of political parties

The emergence of political parties in The Gambia is closely linked with a series of constitutional reforms starting in 1947. These reforms allowed for greater participation of Gambians in the Legislative and Executive Councils.¹²⁷ They increased the number of unofficial elected members in the Legislative Council (later called the House of Representatives). Eventually the elected members replaced the official members and members directly appointed by the Governor. The changes also allowed for more Gambian participation in the Executive Council. Over the years the Gambian contribution grew from membership, to co-leadership with British colonial officers as ministerial heads of the different departments and finally to full fledged ministerial responsibilities. The 1963 constitution paved the way for

¹²² Later renamed the Gambia Farmers' Co-operative Marketing Association.

¹²³ D. Prefect, 'The political career of Edward Francis Small', 67.

¹²⁴ The Urban District Council, later renamed Bathurst Town Council was formed in 1931. The Council was to act as a representative between the people of the Colony and the central government. The six members of the Council were appointed by the Governor, usually from the ranks of the Gambia Representative Committee and later in the 1930s and in the 1940s from the Bathurst Rate Payers Association.

¹²⁵ D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 155.

¹²⁶ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 165, 166; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 192, 193.

¹²⁷ A detailed description of the constitutional changes can be found in D. Faal, *A history of The Gambia*, 145-152.

the long awaited full internal self-government. The number of representatives to the House was set at 36 (7 from the Colony and 25 from the Protectorate) and a Cabinet system of government was instituted, consisting of a Prime Minister and six ministers.

In 1947, all eligible adults from the Colony were allowed to vote and an increasing number of elected members represented the interests of the Colony. The 1954 constitution was the first constitution, which provided for elected members from the Protectorate, be it that the election was indirect.¹²⁸ Before that only nominated members, representing the chiefs, sat on the Council. Only in 1960 universal suffrage was introduced in the Protectorate. With the number of elected representatives from the Protectorate growing from 7 in 1960 to 25 in 1962, the Protectorate suddenly became politically involved and important.

The first political parties that appeared on the Gambian political scene were Colony based. In February 1951 the Anglican deacon John Colley Faye (1908-1985) founded the secular Gambia Democratic Party (GDP).¹²⁹ The party was a continuation of the earlier formed 'Committee of Union and Progress.'¹³⁰ Faye had been involved in politics since 1940 when he represented Jolof Town and Portuguese Town in the Bathurst Town Council.¹³¹ When he was transferred to Kristikunda in the Upper River Division, the chiefs requested him to represent them as a nominated member on the Legislative Council, a position he held from 1947 until 1951. After he had returned to Bathurst, Faye founded the GDP and contested for the 1951 elections. Faye was popular both with the Akou and the urban Wolof. Born a Serer, he had links of ethnicity with the Serer/Wolof community and as a respectable Anglican clergyman he could also count on support from the Akou community.¹³² Faye came first in the elections of 1951. In 1954 he was re-elected in the Legislative Council, coming second in the elections because new forces had entered the political field. After the 1954 elections the influence of the GDP waned. Faye served on the Legislative Council until 1960. From 1954-1960 he also sat on the Executive Council and was ministerial head of the Department of Works and Communications. As a Colony based party the GDP endeavoured to articulate and represent the diverse interests of the Bathurst community, trying to transcend religious, ethnic and regional differences.¹³³ But once the elections became nation wide Faye's GDP proved to have Colony support only.

Faye's main opponent in the elections of 1951 was the Wolof Muslim Ibrahima Momodou Garba-Jahumpa (1912-1994), by S.S. Nyang called 'probably the most articulate and politically influential Muslim in The Gambia' of his time.¹³⁴ Edward Small had groomed Garba-Jahumpa but the two men fell out with each other in the

¹²⁸ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 189.

¹²⁹ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 13.

¹³⁰ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 75. Note: Hughes and Gailey date of the GDP to June 1951 and state that supporters of Faye started the party.

¹³¹ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 64,65. Faye was elected to the Bathurst Town Council three times.

¹³² S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 14.

¹³³ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 14, 15.

¹³⁴ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 16.

late 1940s. In 1949 Garba-Jahumpa contested with Small for a seat on the Legislative Council but lost. Garba-Jahumpa like Faye served on the Bathurst Town Council from 1942 onwards and came second in the elections of 1951. In January 1952 the influential Young Muslim Society and 41 *dairahs*¹³⁵ together formed the Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC), choosing Garba-Jahumpa as their leader.¹³⁶ The GMC was designed to promote the interests of the Muslim community and was especially concerned with the education of Muslim children. Though Garba-Jahumpa was re-elected in 1954, the GMC had come third at the poll. Many of the Muslim voters opted for the newly formed United Party of Pierre Sarr Njie, because Garba-Jahumpa was seen as too closely linked with the colonial government. With waning popularity of both the GMC and the GDP, the two parties decided to form a coalition in 1960 to counter the growing influence of the United Party: the Democratic Congress Alliance (DCA). But the alliance was to no avail. The DCA was defeated badly in the 1960 elections and only had three seats in the House of Representatives. The elections of 1962 brought only one seat for the DCA and the party was dissolved. Garba-Jahumpa for a short while established a new political party, the Gambia Congress Party which brought him into the House of Representatives in 1966 but in 1968 he disbanded the party and joined the ruling People's Progressive Party.

The third political party, the secular United Party, was also formed as a result of the 1951 elections. Pierre Sarr Njie (1909-1993), a Wolof barrister had contested in the 1951 elections but had failed to win a seat on the Legislative Council. A group of elderly supporters of Njie thereupon decided to establish the United Party.¹³⁷ Njie had both Christian and Muslim supporters. Originating from Saloum, he had many followers among the 'Saloum-Saloum', the Wolof from the Saloum region, most of whom were Muslim. But also many of Christian Wolof in Bathurst favoured Njie. According some sources, Njie had been a Muslim once, called Alieu Njie, but had converted Christianity, changing his name into Pierre Sarr Njie.¹³⁸ Njie did well in the 1954 elections coming at the head of the poll. But his participation in the Legislative Council was brief. In 1955 Njie clashed with the governor Sir Percy Wyn-Harris and resigned from the government.¹³⁹ In the 1960 election the UP not only swept the polls in the Colony but also won three out of the twelve seats in the Protectorate. This made the UP the only of the three Colony parties which also had its supporters among the people in the Protectorate.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ A *dairah* is an Islamic term for a group of people, often belonging to one of the Islamic brotherhoods who meet to study the Qur'an. Often the *dairahs* meet in a private house or the mosque. In The Gambia there are hundreds of *dairahs*, some mixed, others for women or young people only.

¹³⁶ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 16.

¹³⁷ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 132, 175, 176.

¹³⁸ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 19 and 36.

¹³⁹ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 132.

¹⁴⁰ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 19. Apart from the three Colony based parties described above, there were more parties in the Colony but none of them lasted very long. In 1954 the Gambia People's Party headed by George St. Clair Joof, contested in the elections but lost. Joof died soon afterwards and his death marked

The final and most important party that dominated the Gambian political arena for more than thirty years came from the Protectorate: the secular People's Progressive Party. Initially started as the Protectorate Progressive Society by Sanjally Bojang, the group decided to contest for the elections in 1960, when universal suffrage had been introduced in the Protectorate and changed the name to Protectorate Progressive Party.¹⁴¹ When Dawda Jawara, a British trained, Mandinka veterinarian took over the leadership just before the 1960 elections, the name was changed to People's Progressive Party (PPP). Both the PPP and Jawara did well in the 1960 elections, despite comments that the party was tribalistic, propagating Mandinka interests and undermining the traditional role and influence of the Protectorate chiefs. The PPP won 10 of the 19 available seats and Jawara was made Minister of Education. The second man of the PPP, Sherif Ceesay was made minister without portfolio.¹⁴² Both men resigned from the Executive Council when the governor Sir Edward Henry Windley appointed P.S. Njie as Chief Minister of The Gambia, despite the fact that the PPP was the largest party.¹⁴³ When the PPP again contested in the election of 1962, it won 17 of the 25 constituencies in the Protectorate and also one in the Colony. This gave the PPP 18 seats in the House of Representatives while their closest opponent the UP had 13 members in the House. This overwhelming victory led to the appointment Jawara to Chief Minister. The PPP's call for self-governance and for development of the Protectorate had found much resonance among The Gambian population. When in 1963 The Gambia received full internal self-government Jawara became the Prime Minister.

Jawara proved to be the right man at the right time. A graduate from Glasgow University, he returned to The Gambia in 1954 and worked as a veterinary officer in the Protectorate. In 1955 he converted to Christianity in order to marry Augusta Mahoney, daughter of the influential Akou Sir John Mahoney. This assured him of the support not only from the Mandinka but also from a considerable part of the Akou in the Colony. Through his policy of forming coalitions and appointing opponents to important political posts, Jawara was able to dissolve the PPP from its Mandinka context and make the PPP a nation wide party. Firmly established in his political career Jawara in 1965 reverted to Islam. He divorced Augusta Mahoney in 1967¹⁴⁴ and shortly afterwards married Chilel Njie, daughter of Modou Musa Njie,

the end of the party. Edrissa Samba, Bidwell Bright, M.B. Jones and Mr. Jobarteh formed the National Party in 1958. The party grew out of the Committee of Gentlemen and consisted mainly of young Akou and Wolof intellectuals but the party disintegrated before it could enter the 1960 elections. In 1962 one of the founders of the PPP, Sanjally Bojang formed the Gambian National Union but did not win any seats in the 1962 elections, after which most supporters shifted their allegiance to the United Party. See S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 23, 24.

¹⁴¹ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 20, 21.

¹⁴² S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 21, 22.

¹⁴³ A.Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 132; S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in The Gambia', 22. Hughes and Gailey mention that Njie owed his appointed to his influence with the Protectorate chiefs who felt challenged and threatened in their authority by the PPP.

¹⁴⁴ This divorce was supported by the controversial Dissolution of Marriage Act 1967 and is discussed in paragraph 9.5.

the financial backbone of the United Party, the most important political opponent of the PPP. This proved a severe blow to the UP. Shortly afterwards Jawara married a second wife, Njaime Mboge.¹⁴⁵

The call for self-governance was attended to in 1963, but another problem began to feature on the horizon: the viability of The Gambia as an independent state. Various options circulated of which a total independence, integration with Senegal and the so-called Malta option were the most important. The Malta option was designed to give small non-viable former British possessions internal self-governance and offered them a federation with the British government in matters of defence. But when Malta became independent, the 'Malta' option was considered no longer feasible.¹⁴⁶

Already in 1961, under the then Chief Minister P.S. Njie, a request had been sent to the United Nations to look into the possibilities of integration with Senegal. The 'United Nations Report on the Alternatives for Association between The Gambia and Senegal' gave three options: a total and direct integration of The Gambia in Senegal, a loose federation between the two countries or a gradual process of political integration. The Senegalese preferred option one, the Gambians option two and in the end option three was chosen. The Gambia became an independent state on the 18th of February 1965 and signed a series of treaties of co-operation with Senegal, of which the defence pact from 1967 later proved to be the most important one.¹⁴⁷ Until 1970, The Gambia remained a political autonomous territory under the British crown, with the Queen of England as official head of the State, represented by the Governor General. A first referendum to change The Gambia in a republic in 1965 did not receive adequate support. Only after a second referendum five years later, on 2nd April 1970, The Gambia became an independent republic with Dawda Jawara as its first executive President.¹⁴⁸

3.7 Politics in The Gambia after Independence: 1965-2000

Consociational democracy

After Independence in 1965 Jawara started in The Gambia what the historian Arnold Hughes called 'a consociational democracy'.¹⁴⁹ Hughes derived this term from Arent Lijphart who had studied and theorised on the phenomenon of establishing a democracy in a plural society. Hughes quotes Lijphart's definition of a consociational democracy in his article *From colonialism to confederation*: 'consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a

¹⁴⁵ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 98-100.

¹⁴⁶ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 207.

¹⁴⁷ G. Hesseling and H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, KIT/NOVIB, Den Haag 1996, 61. See also: S.S. Nyang, 'Ten years of Gambia's Independence: a political analysis', *Présence Africaine* 104 (1976), 29ff.

¹⁴⁸ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 16, 17.

¹⁴⁹ A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', *Civilisations* 22/3 and 23/1 (1982-1983), 5-95.

democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy.¹⁵⁰ Lijphart saw the success of the consociational democracy in its ability to overcome the different entities within society, be they religious, be they tribal, by appointing people to act as brokers on behalf of these entities. An elite of each entity could defend the rights and interest of the represented group.

Initially the UP had acted as broker for the Wolof, while the PPP had performed a similar function for the Mandinka. But in the early 1970s PPP had transformed into a 'grand coalition' of 'all provincial ethnic solidarities'.¹⁵¹ Hughes described the situation in The Gambia in the following words:

This transformation of the PPP into a national party could only have come about as a result of elite cooperation. Notwithstanding their differences and rivalries, the divisions between the party leaders were not profound. (...) Indeed the almost embarrassing ease with which individual politicians have abandoned old friends and parties suggest an ideological flexibility which borders on the unprincipled. A scrutiny of their major policy statements (if ideology is too emphatic a term to describe party beliefs) indicates little difference between the main parties (...) All leading political figures and parliamentarians were broadly in agreement on a mixed economy and a qualified form of parliamentary democracy at home, and a pro-Western interpretation of non-alignment in foreign policy. The main battle, that between geographically and communally based segments, was overcome by the willingness of the PPP to share the spoils of victory with the losers once they came over to the winning side.¹⁵²

This policy of the PPP had two major consequences. First of all it led to its 'almost embarrassing large electoral victories in 1972 and 1977'.¹⁵³ Secondly it earned The Gambia its reputation of a model democracy, reason why in 1989 the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies settled in The Gambia.¹⁵⁴ But this situation was not to last. The opposition to the PPP coalition system came from two sides. One group of opponents came from the PPP's own breeding grounds: the Mandinka. Many die-hards among the Mandinka objected to the generous sharing of resources and power by the ruling party with other ethnic groups and advocated a more deliberate furtherance of the Mandinka interests. They also resented Jawara's treatment of Sherif Dibba, a Baddibu Mandinka and once Vice-President, who had fallen from grace and had been sacked.¹⁵⁵ Dibba's National Convention Party, which he established in 1975, had only limited success in 1977 elections – they won five seats, partly because the PPP's effective campaign in accusing the NCP of 'tribalism'.

¹⁵⁰ A. Hughes, 'From colonialism to confederation: The Gambian experience of Independence: 1965-1982' in R. Cohen (ed.), *African islands and enclaves*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills 1983, 63.

¹⁵¹ A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', 76.

¹⁵² A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', 76, 77.

¹⁵³ A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', 77.

¹⁵⁴ S.S. Nyang, 'Ten years of Gambia's Independence', *Présence Africaine*, 104 (1977), 45.

¹⁵⁵ Dibba was first sent to Brussels as the Gambian High Commissioner and on his return was appointed Minister of Economic Planning but later sacked on accusations of trying to destabilise the cabinet. A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', 83.

The second group of opponents to the consociational democracy was formed by the younger generation. Many young people felt that the elite political system left the young people without a chance to participate. With an increasing number of educated but unemployed young people in the urban areas this was breeding ground for radicalism. Groups like the 'Black Scorpions' and the 'Black Panthers' appeared.¹⁵⁶ In the 1972 elections the PPP Youth Wing made an attempt to change the situation when a number of the PPP Youth Wing members decided to stand as independent candidates in the elections rather than to support the PPP candidates. Only one of them succeeded. Disillusioned with the established political arena in The Gambia, these young people sought an outlet for their disappointment. Many supported Pap Cheyassin Secka's National Liberation Party in the 1977. But Secka's radical socialist criticism of the government did not bring him any seats in the House of Parliament and the NLP was apparently disbanded. In 1980 two new radical political movements appeared: the Gambia Socialist Revolutionary Party of Gibril George and the Movement for Justice in Africa-Gambia branch of Koro Sallah.¹⁵⁷ Both parties were self-made Marxist movements and propagated a revolution. The Marxist slogans and open critic of the government and the elite of the country appealed to many of young radicals.

The attempted coup d'état of 1981 and the Senegambian Confederation

The first signs of unrest in this so-called paradise of democracy in Africa appeared 1980.¹⁵⁸ On the 27th of October that year a Field Force constable Mustapha Danso shot the Deputy Commander of the Field Force Eku Mahoney. To the innocent observer this incident seemed little more than an argument that had got out of hand because of drugs. The government responded by calling upon Senegal to aid with military assistance, because The Gambia itself did not have an army. Thereupon 150 Senegalese soldiers were sent to restore order, indicating that something more was going on. The government intelligence suspected that the incident had been a sign of discontentment and radicalism among the Field Force and a prelude to a coup. The Senegalese army stayed a week in The Gambia to stabilize the situation. Both MOJA-G and GSRP were banned after the incident. An assistant Commander in the Field Force, Ousman Bojang was forcibly retired and the large Libyan embassy in Bathurst, suspected of financially supporting the radical factions, was closed down and the personnel was expelled. With these measures Operation Fode Kabba I seemed to have successfully dealt with the unrest and peace seemed restored.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ A. Hughes, 'From colonialism to confederation: The Gambian experience of Independence: 1965-1982', 67. See also A. Hughes, 'The attempted Gambian coup d'état of 30 July 1981' in A. Hughes (ed.), *The Gambia: studies in society and politics*, 94. Hughes states there: 'The earliest radical groups were formed among the urban young often on the basis of neighbourhood associations, known as *vous* (said to be a shortened form of 'rendezvous').'

¹⁵⁷ A. Hughes, 'The limits of "consociational democracy" in The Gambia', 85.

¹⁵⁸ Because The Gambia had a solid reputation as a stable democracy the African Centre for Democracy and Human Right Studies chose The Gambia as its location. It was established in The Gambia in June 1989.

¹⁵⁹ A. Hughes, 'The attempted Gambian coup d'état of 30 July 1981', 97.

The events of October 1980 had already indicated that there was a convergence of dissatisfied elements both within the security forces and among the civilian population. In July 1981, with Jawara attending the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana in England, radicals from these two groups cooperated in an attempt to seize power. The coup, which started on Thursday July 30 1981, came to be known as 'the taxi drivers coup', because most of the core-group leading the coup were illiterate Jola taxi drivers, living in Talinding.¹⁶⁰ Kukoi Samba Sanyang, a radical, self-styled Jola Marxist who had studied abroad, led the coup.¹⁶¹ The group left for the army barracks early Thursday morning, overpowered the guards and with inside help of members of the Field Force took weapons from the armoury. Within a short period of time, Radio Gambia, the airport and part of Bathurst were captured and the rebels seized some 105 hostages among whom Lady Chilel Jawara and some of Jawara's children. The only setback proved the Central Police Station in Bathurst which was successfully defended by the Inspector General of Police A.S. M'Boob and some of his men. There the Vice-President Assan Camara and other cabinet members found refuge and were able to contact Jawara.

Jawara responded to the coup by again calling upon Senegal for military assistance. About 2000 soldiers landed in The Gambia. Meanwhile the plotters were losing control of the situation in The Gambia. The release of prisoners from the Mile Two Prison, heavy looting of commercial premises, settling of old scores etc. led to a total anarchy which the rebels could not contain. Within a week the Senegalese troops were able to restore law and order. The leaders of the coup had fled to Guinea-Bissau. About a thousand people were arrested for their involvement in the coup, among whom Pap Cheyassin Secka who was sentenced to death and Sherif Dibba who was later acquitted from any participation.¹⁶² Most of the prisoners were released soon after the order had been restored, while the others stood trial before a court of judges from the Common Wealth countries. Though the state of emergency was in effect for about 6 months, Jawara was able to lead the country back to a democracy. In May 1982 general elections were held in which the opposition

¹⁶⁰ A. Hughes, 'The attempted Gambian coup d'etat of 30 July 1981', 99; G. Hesselting and H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, 62. An amusing side detail of the coup was the fact that though several of the leaders were taxi drivers, the plotters walked the five miles between Talinding and Fajara where they captured the army barracks!

¹⁶¹ Kukoi Samba Sanyang is a self-styled Marxist opponent of the PPP regime. Sanyang (1953-) is a Jola from Casamance who grew up in Foni where he offered for the priesthood. As Dominique Salvoa Sanyang he attended the Roman Catholic Seminary in Ziguinchor but withdrew after a few years. It seems Sanyang studied in the USA and visited the Sowjet Union after which he returned to The Gambia. In 1977 he stood as a candidate for the NCP in Foni East but was defeated by the PPP candidate. After that Sanyang seems to have travelled abroad again and returned to The Gambia in May 1981 and joined the outlawed GSRP. With them he organised the coup of 1981. When the Senegalese army was called in to put down the insurrection, Sanyang fled to Guinea-Bissau and from there was deported to Cuba. In 1999 Sanyang was still abroad but regularly mingling in Gambian politics. The 1996 attack on the army barracks in Farafenni was said to have been instigated by followers of Sanyang. For more information see: A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 154, 155.

¹⁶² A. Hughes, 'From colonialism to confederation', 73.

parties, including Dibba and his NCP were allowed to participate, even though Dibba himself was not yet been acquitted of his involvement in the coup. The PPP showed it had learned from the coup by discarding some of the older members and replacing them by younger people to stand for elections.¹⁶³ Despite all the problems, the PPP still was able to win 62 percent of the votes for parliament and Jawara was re-elected president with 72 percent of the votes.¹⁶⁴

The coup had two major consequences for The Gambia. First of all a Gambian army was formed. Secondly, as a result of the coup the confederation with Senegal, recommended by the UN at Independence, was reconsidered and February 1, 1982 the Senegambian Confederation came into being.¹⁶⁵ The treaty signed by the two countries had far-reaching consequences. It contained plans for the integration of two armies, for the development of an economic and monetary union and for coordination in foreign policy. Also the political structure was re-organised. The Confederation was to have a joint parliament that was to meet bi-annually, a cabinet, headed by the President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf while Jawara acted as vice-president.¹⁶⁶

From its start the success of the Senegambian Confederation was debatable. Both countries had a different political culture, influenced by the respective colonisers France and England. Communication between the two countries also proved difficult despite the fact that Wolof was introduced as the third language of the Confederation after French and English. For the Gambians the open border and customs union meant a decline in revenue. There had always been a lively trade and smuggle of wares from The Gambia to Senegal where the prices were higher. There were also mixed feelings in The Gambia about the continued presence of the Senegalese army in The Gambia and Jawara wanted the presidency of the confederation to rotate between The Gambia and Senegal. On the Senegalese side there was a growing fear of an anti-Senegalese coalition between the three B's: Banjul, Bissau and Bignona (Casamance). In August 1989 Diouf suddenly withdrew all Senegalese troops from The Gambia because of problems at the Mauritanian border. The troops never returned. A month later, in September 1989 Diouf announced that the Senegambian Confederation had come to an end.¹⁶⁷

The end of the PPP regime: the 1994 coup d'état and the Second Republic of The Gambia

In 1992 Jawara announced his intention to retire from politics. The opposition against the PPP dominated politics had increased and the rumours about large-scale corruption were becoming stronger. Nevertheless, PPP politicians convinced Jawara to stand for presidency one more term and in 1994 he was re-elected. On the 22nd of July 1994, a group of junior army officers seized power in a brief and bloodless

¹⁶³ Bakary Darbo was only 36 when he was appointed vice-president in 1982.

¹⁶⁴ A. Hughes, 'From colonialism to confederation', 74.

¹⁶⁵ G. Hesseling; H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, 63.

¹⁶⁶ M.P. van Dijk, 'Senegal, Gambia, Senegambia: recente ontwikkelingen in West-Afrika', *Internationale Spectator*, xxxvii/8 (August 1983), 501.

¹⁶⁷ G. Hesseling; H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, 63.

coup. Jawara and his family were allowed to board a nearby American navy ship which had come to The Gambia for a military exercise and an Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), headed by the 29 year old Lt. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, ruled the country. Attempts of Jawara to convince the Americans and Senegalese to curb the coup, failed. Neither cared to intervene. Jawara received political asylum in Senegal¹⁶⁸ and The Gambia became a military dictatorship, styled after Jerry Rawlings.¹⁶⁹

A period of purging followed. Many government employees lost their jobs, accused of corruption, others were put in prison or under house-arrest accused of supporting the former government or of being too critical about the new regime. Initially the AFPRC had countrywide support, especially among the young people. But gradually the critically voices increased: the press was silence, the National Intelligence Agency seemed very powerful and rumours that also AFPRC perpetrated corruption have grown stronger.¹⁷⁰ It was also unclear whether or when the AFPRC would announce general elections. A Senegalese newspaper wondered: *Jammeh or Jamais?*¹⁷¹ Several attempts have been made to overthrow Jammeh. There was an incident in November 1994 and in January 1995 two of the four junta members who had staged the 1994 coup attempted to seize power: Lt. Sana Sabbaly and Sadibou Hydara. Both men were captured and Hydara died in prison later that year.¹⁷²

In early 1996, general and democratic elections were announced. There were to be parliamentary elections in September 1996 and presidential elections in January 1997. But the process of the transition to democracy was not without controversy. The AFPRC pushed through a new and controversial constitution, while ignoring some of the recommendations made. The new constitution inaugurated the Second Republic of The Gambia.¹⁷³ Jammeh, who initially had announced his retirement from politics, was appointed as head of a new party called APRC, Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction. A civil organisation, the July 22 movement, effectively promoted the APRC among the larger public, though no form of official campaigning was allowed. The results of the elections were not surprising. The APRC received more than 70 percent of the votes and Jammeh was elected president.¹⁷⁴

Despite the large victory for the APRC, the government has continued to face opposition and with declining economic conditions its popularity is waning. Both the press and the opposition parties have been critical about the lack of freedom of expression in the country and accusations of financial irregularities have been made. The Amnesty International reports on The Gambia have since 1997 regularly

¹⁶⁸ Jawara returned to The Gambia in 2002.

¹⁶⁹ G. Hesselting and H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, 66,67.

¹⁷⁰ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 20, 21.

¹⁷¹ G. Hesselting and H. Kraemer, *Senegal/Gambia: mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, 66.

¹⁷² A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 93.

¹⁷³ E.g. the minimum age for a candidate for presidency was dropped to allow Jammeh to stand for presidency in 1996.

¹⁷⁴ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 22.

accused the APRC government of torture, human rights abuses and other offences.¹⁷⁵ In November 1996, armed men, allegedly supporters of Kukoi Samba Sanyang, attacked the army barracks in Farafenni and in 1997 there was an attack on a police post at Kartong.¹⁷⁶ Political opposition parties have been hampered in their activities and have encountered many difficulties in calling assemblies. There is still a considerable number of political detainees in the country.¹⁷⁷ In 2000 there was a large student demonstration which was precipitated violently. Several young people were killed, many battered and imprisoned. The protests against the reaction of the government have been strong. Meanwhile also the economy is experiencing a recession and the dalasis has devaluated dramatically. Tourism, the main source of income of the country, is declining and the price for the groundnut crops, the other main source of income, is dwindling. The fees for residential permits for people from ECOWAS countries have increased sharply and have led to an exodus of teachers and nurses. All in all, the present political and economic situation in the country is far from bright.

3.8 Conclusion

Very little is known about The Gambia's earliest history. Archaeological findings indicate that there were people living along the river in the first millenium AD but few details are known about who these people were and what type of life and religion they had. Oral traditions indicate that over the years different ethnic groups settled along the riverbanks. It seems a fact that most of the present ethnic groups in The Gambia had settled along the river by the 15th century, though migration has continued up till the present day.

Trade has always been an important element of Gambian life. Before the European trading companies began their commercial ventures in West Africa from the 15th century onwards, the trade was geared towards the inland and the major trade routes were those across the Sahara. Gradually however the trans-Saharan routes lost their importance and the ship of the sea replaced the ship of the desert. Maritime trade substituted the traditional trans-Saharan commerce and the navigable rivers rose in importance. Forts along the river and on islands in the river, became places of strategic importance and were much contested. In The Gambia Albreda and James Island changed hands many times. The change from trans-Saharan to transatlantic trade resulted into the decline of the important commercial towns in the heart of Africa and new commercial towns and settlements rose along the coast. Both the trans-Saharan and the transatlantic trade brought new religions to sub-Saharan Africa. Traders introduced both Islam and Christianity in West Africa.

¹⁷⁵ See <http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2002.nsf/afr/gambia> Date: 8-1-2003
<http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2001.nsf/webafrcountries/GAMBIA> Date: 8-1-2003
<http://web.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar98/afr27.htm>. Date: 8-1-2003

¹⁷⁶ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 22.

¹⁷⁷ <http://web.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar98/afr27.htm>. Date: 8-1-2003

The description of the history of West Africa from the European point of view has often created the impression that the presence of European traders indicated a new period in African history. It seems however much more in accordance with reality to state that until the 19th century the European presence in West Africa was a marginal incursion and had little impact on the daily life of the indigenous people. Portuguese, British and French traders and their descendants the Mulattos, settled in small towns along the rivers and coast of West Africa and paid annual fees or a certain amount of tax over their produce to their local hosts. Good relations with the local chiefs were of crucial importance to the traders, because the local chiefs enabled the traders to settle in their territory. Even after the establishment of a Colony at St. Mary's, the British influence was limited to St. Mary's and MacCarthy Island, Ceded Mile and British Combo. The hinterland was left unaffected by the British colonial schemes. Even after the hinterland was decreed Protectorate in 1902 the British colonial impact on the lives of the people was limited. The central government was far away in Bathurst, the infrastructure limited and the development of the Protectorate neglected. The true European impact on The Gambia has been in the life of the people living at the coast, in places like Banjul and Greater Banjul area. There missionaries and colonial officers have left their indelible stamp on the life of the people and European education has influenced the lives of generations of young Gambians.

The history of Christianity in The Gambia is closely linked with the intercontinental trade between West Africa and Europe. The Portuguese settlers were the first Christians in the country. Their descendants, the Mulattos, identified with both the Portuguese culture and religion and guarded Christianity over the centuries. From 1816 onwards new groups were joining the Christian community: the British garrisons, artisans from Gorée and traders and their Mulatto wives from St. Louis and Portendic (many of whom were Christians) settled in St. Mary's. From 1821 the church was consolidated by the arrival of missionaries. Gradually, through preaching and education, the Christian community grew.

The history of The Gambia is closely intertwined with the history of the slave trade and its abolition. From the first European encounter with the Senegambia, slaves were transported from the Guinea Coast to Europe. Less than 50 years later slaves were taken directly from the Guinea Coast to the West Indies and America and Senegambia became one of the major slave trade centres. The great demand for slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries unsettled the region and scarred the African continent. Interethnic wars served as an excuse for slave raiding and millions of Africans were captured, sold and abducted to 'the New World' to never return. The ruins of the forts and slave castles are kept as a testimony and an ever-present memory of the trauma of the triangle trade and the racism, which legitimised it.

The abolition of the slave trade and the consequent British purchase of St. Mary's Island was of crucial importance to development of The Gambia as a country. From a base to intercept slave ships, The Gambia developed into a British crown colony in 1827 and in 1902 the hinterland became Protectorate. Because the British were solely interested in the river as a waterway for transport and trade, The Gambia became a country with what Gailey called 'ludicrous borders': a river with banks of 10 kilometre width on both north and south side. The viability of this

country as an independent state was much debated before its actual independence in 1965 and a federation with Senegal seemed the most logical and plausible solution. But despite its geographical and economic handicaps The Gambia became an independent state in 1965. The political skill of The Gambia's first president Dawda Jawara was able to create feelings of 'Gambian nationalism' among the different ethnic groups and was one of the reasons why the Senegambian Confederation (1982-1989) did not work. Though a democracy at present, the country had faced several constitutional crises and coup d'états. Recent reports from Amnesty International have pointed to violation of human rights and corruption in the present Second Republic of The Gambia. The contemporary political tension, the present worldwide economic crisis and the crop failures due to decline rainfall of the last years predict a difficult and unsure future for the country.

4. THE HISTORY OF ISLAM IN THE GAMBIA

4.1 Introduction

The majority of the present day population of The Gambia indicates that it is Muslim. Estimates vary from 85 to 95 percent.¹ The exact percentage of Muslims in the country is uncertain but it is beyond doubt that The Gambia is a predominantly Muslim state. This does not mean that the relations between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority are strained. In 1983 A.A. Njie, then minister of Economic Planning and Industrial Development, stated in an Opening Address at a seminar on Christianity and Islam in Banjul:

Not only is the international reputation of the Gambia for tolerance and co-existence of the highest repute, but Gambia is a country which knows no difference between a Christian and a Muslim except for in connection with religious ceremonies, despite the fact that the former are a minority. This spirit of co-operation has been nurtured by the impact Christians have had in the educational, social, cultural, economic and political development of this country.² (...) Instances of sharing in one another's joys and sorrows abound in Gambia. Religious festive occasions like *Id al Kabir (Tobaski)* and Christmas are times of joy for Muslims and Christians alike. For the Christian it would be most unusual not to receive a bowl of porridge during Ramadan and portions of mutton and *cherreh*³ at *Tobaski*. Equally so for the Muslim sharing in the joys of Easter means a helping of *nanburu*⁴ from a Christian friend, and Christians in Gambia would never be the same without Muslims participating in masquerades and lantern parades during Christmas. Attendance at weddings and funerals knows no religious bounds, and the feelings generated on such occasions stem from the communality of concern of man for his fellow man.⁵

¹ See www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ga.html#people who cites 90 percent. Date: February 13 2003. An article in the journal *BICMURA* gives percentage of 84.9 in 1981. R. Ammah, 'New light on Muslim Statistics for Africa', *BICMURA*, 2/1 (Jan. 1984), 11-20. Barrett gives a number of 86.9 percent for mid 2000. D.B. Barrett; G. T. Kurian; T.M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopaedia: a comparative survey of churches and religions in the modern world*, Vol. 1, second edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 294. The Gambia German Family Planning Programme estimates the number of Muslims at 96 percent of the total population. See www.dosh.gm/ggfpp/html/project_environment.html. Date: February 13 2003. Hughes and Gailey write that in the 1993 census 95 percent of the Gambian population stated that they were Muslim. See: A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *A historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 146. The author of this book has the impression that 95 percent would indeed seem closer to reality than 85 percent. Though the majority of the Gambian population confesses Islam, both Muslims and Christians have retained elements of the African traditional religions in their way of life and their worldview.

² A. A. Njie (minister van Economic Planning and Industrial Development), 'Opening address at the seminar on Christianity and Islam, Banjul, Gambia, September 1983', *BICMURA* 3/3 (July 1985), 1.

³ Cherreh is a dish of pounded and steamed millet, traditionally prepared at festive occasions.

⁴ Nanburu is porridge prepared of milk, sugar and the fruit of the baobab. It is the traditional dish, prepared on Good Friday, with which Christians break the fast to mark the end of Lent. On Good Friday large quantities of Nanburu are cooked and distributed among friends and neighbours, Muslims and Christians alike.

⁵ A.A. Njie, 'Opening address', 4.

The irenic relations between Christians and Muslims have had a long history. Islam arrived in The Gambia several centuries before Christianity. Nevertheless, both religions were minority religions in the country for a considerable period of time. Until the 19th century the majority of the people living on the banks of The Gambia adhered to the African traditional religions. Records show that Muslims and Christians were aware of their guest status and behaved accordingly. The cohabitation with the African traditional religions has influenced both religions deeply. Both Islam and Christianity in their early years accommodated to African customs and rituals. Especially West African Islam is known for its contextualisation. The famous West African Muslim mystic and writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ said: 'In Africa, Islam had no more colour than water; and it is exactly that which explains its success; it adapts to the shades of the territory and the stones.'⁶

The easiness, with which Islam adapted to its environment, can be explained by the brand of Islam, which arrived in The Gambia. Lamin Sanneh claims that the Senegambian Islam was of a predominantly peaceful and accommodative strand, which adapted to its environment by specialising in divination and the production of amulets.⁷ Though the Muslim clerics did not settle in the traditional African villages but established separate settlements, there was a continuous interaction between the two communities. The clerics performed services like education, council and medicine for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This cohabitation of Muslims and traditional believers was mutually beneficial: the traditional believers turned to the clerics for amulets, education and their literacy skills while the clerics had a form of income to guarantee their livelihood and a point of entry in the community for teaching Islam. Thus both parties were interested in keeping the relations harmonious. Only in the 19th century Gambian Islam - and Christianity - became increasingly exclusive and adopted a more confrontational attitude, both towards African traditional religions and towards each other. Two outside factors caused this change: the incursions into Africa of advancing colonialism and the influence of reformist movements within Islam. But also internal factors contributed to the change of attitude. Political, social and economic dissatisfaction among Muslims found an outlet in religious reforms and militant *jihads* raged through the country. In the 20th century, with the cards shuffled and most Gambians belonging to Islam or Christianity, peaceful coexistence seems to have returned.

The two communities of Muslims and Christians are closely interrelated and a substantial number of particularly urban families have Muslim as well as Christian members. This has enhanced good relations. Also the contributions of the Christian community to the general well being of society, in the form of education and healthcare, have contributed to the present good relations. Influences from abroad however, both on the Christian side and on the Muslim side, potentially endanger this harmonious coexistence.⁸

⁶ Cited as in H.J. Fisher, 'Conversion reconsidered: aspects of religious conversion in Black Africa', *Africa*, 43 (1973), 30.

⁷ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanké Muslim clerics*, 22-24.

⁸ On the Christian side exclusivist Evangelic and Pentecostal churches tend to have an aggressive attitude towards Muslims. On the Muslim side, Islamic scholars who have studied

This chapter describes the spread of Islam in The Gambia and hopes to trace when Islam became the religion of the majority of the Gambians. Paragraph 4.2 describes the earliest contacts of West Africa with Islam, covering the period from the 8th until the 11th centuries. Paragraph 4.3 sketches the history of Islam from the 11th to the 17th centuries. First some attention is paid to the general West African context, after which the paragraph focuses on the Senegambia. The *jihadi* movements in West Africa in 18th and 19th century which influenced the Gambian *jihads* are discussed in paragraph 4.4, whilst paragraph 4.5 concentrates on the *jihads* which occurred in The Gambia in the second half of the 19th century. Twentieth century Islam is discussed in paragraph 4.6. A short West African overview wants to give the context in which to understand the Gambian situation, which is described later on in this paragraph. The chapter is closed with a conclusion in paragraph 4.7.

4.2 The earliest history of Islam in West Africa: 8th to 11th centuries

The trans-Saharan trade routes

The earliest contacts of Islam with West Africa are rather obscure. Sources on West African Islam before the 17th century, both oral and written, are limited. Most of the written records available were until modern times composed by people from outside the West African region, such Arab travellers and European explorers and traders. Oral traditions are abundant and have preserved long genealogies but their primary aim was transmitting cultural heritage rather than historical facts. Therefore their use as sources for academic history is ambiguous to say the least.⁹

The Sahara has for a long time served as a barrier in the contacts between *Bilad al Sudan* (the land of the blacks) and North Africa. Nevertheless, there is evidence of uninterrupted contact between these regions. J.S. Trimingham notes that the trans-Saharan trade, which had supplied the Mediterranean lands with gold and slaves in exchange for copper, salt, cloth and tools in antiquity, lapsed during the Roman occupation of North Africa.¹⁰ The introduction of the camel as a pack animal in the 4th century A.D. completely changed the trans-Saharan trade and enabled regular contacts between North and sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹ The trans-Saharan trade routes that developed, were controlled by the Berbers who served as guides through the desert.

in North Africa and the Middle East return to The Gambia with an exclusivist view and the dream of an Islamic state in The Gambia.

⁹ For a discussion of the sources of West African Islam see J. S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 1-8.

¹⁰ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of West Africa*, 13.

¹¹ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of West Africa*, 15. It seems the camel was introduced in North Africa in 525 BC with the Persian conquest of Egypt, but not used extensively as a beast of burden until the fourth century AD. Though the camel was effective as vehicle in the desert, the animal turned out to be vulnerable to the tsé-tsé fly, which was abundant in the forest areas of West Africa. This is possibly one of the reasons why the Sahel and Savanne parts of West Africa, which were exposed to Islam from the 11th century onwards, are predominantly Muslim, while the forest areas were only exposed to Islam in the early 20th century.

Islam reached West Africa via the trans-Saharan trade. Traditions that Uqba ben Nafi, who conquered most of North Africa in the 7th century, also penetrated sub-Saharan Africa have been qualified as legends, but there seem to have been slave-raiding expeditions into sub-Saharan Africa as early as the 8th century.¹² Clarke states:

Not long after the Arab conquerors had overrun North Africa, the Umayyad rulers there began organising military expeditions and slave raids into the southern regions of Morocco and as far south as the boundaries of Ancient Ghana. One such slave-raiding expedition seems to have been organised between 734 and 740 A.D. by the then Governor of Ifriqiyya, Ubayd Allah b. Habib, and placed under the joint command of his son, Ismail, and General Habib b. Abi 'Ubayda. This expedition not only returned to North Africa with slaves, but also brought back large quantities of gold. It was these gold supplies that prompted the Umayyad governor to find ways and means of acquiring continuous supplies of this precious metal from West Africa. The way to do this, the governor decided, was to develop and make more efficient and secure the trans-Saharan routes. To this effect, Abd al-Rahman, appointed Governor of Ifriqiyya in 745 A.D., ordered wells to be dug along the trade routes leading from Southern Morocco across the Western Sahara to West Africa.¹³

The search for gold and slaves indeed stimulated the development of the trans-Saharan routes.

The conversion of the Berbers to Islam

During the 8th century, the Sanhaja Berbers who controlled the Western trade routes increasingly came under the influence of Islam. The Berbers had successfully resisted any form of Christianisation in earlier times and initially also withstood Islamisation after the Arab conquest of North Africa. The North African town of Qairawan¹⁴, which later developed into an influential centre of orthodox Islamic studies, was built and intended as a military camp to extend control over the Berber population. When from the 8th century onwards the Berbers gradually began to adopt Islam, they opted for the Ibadite and Sufrite branches of the schismatic Kharijite Islam, rather than for Sunni Islam.¹⁵ This schismatic Kharijite Islam was said to be more egalitarian than Sunni Islam. Possibly this appealed to the independent spirit and egalitarian society of the Berbers. By becoming Ibadite Muslims the Berbers subjected themselves to the Arab

¹² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 8.

¹³ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 8,9.

¹⁴ Close to Carthago. In West Africa villages and town named after Qairawan are called Kerewan.

¹⁵ Kharijite Islam can into existence during the Caliphate of Ali (656-661). A group of Muslim rejected Ali's peace treaty with the Muslim governor of Damascus and founder of the Umayyad dynasty Mu'awiyya, who had challenged Ali's caliphate. The word 'Kharijite' is derived from the Arabic *kharaju* 'to secede' or 'to go out'. The Kharijites separated themselves from the larger Muslim community and developed some unorthodox ideas about who was a Muslim and who wasn't. For more information see: P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 5, 6.

conquerors while at the same time resisting their influence.¹⁶ It was this unorthodox form of Islam, which first reached West Africa by means of the Berbers.¹⁷

4.3 Clerics, court and commerce: Islam from 11th-17th centuries

The West African setting

The history of Islam in West Africa is usually divided into two main periods: the period in which Islam was 'the religion of the elite' or 'the imperial cult' and the time when Islam popularised and became the 'religion of whole people groups'.¹⁸ Detailed studies of West African Islam, such as those of the Islamologist J.S. Trimingham and the British West Africa specialist P.B. Clarke distinguish more phases of development.¹⁹ But within these periods they still maintain the two main stages of Islam as the religion of the elite and the popularisation of Islam.²⁰

By the 10th century North African Muslim merchants, often of Berber stock, began to settle in the main towns along the trans-Saharan routes and in the capitals of West African states such as Goa, Ghana and Tekrur.²¹ The merchants lived in a special quarter of the town, which enabled them to practise their religion. This phenomenon of Muslims living in a separate quarter or a village, rather than intermingling with traditional believers continued until the 19th century.²² Meanwhile intermingling of another sort had begun to take place: Muslim merchants began to marry local women and thus integrated into society.²³

¹⁶ P.J. Stamer, *Islam in sub-Saharan Africa*, Editorial Verbo Divino, Estella (Spain) 1995, 16. See also M. Dyer, *Central Sahara trade in the early Islamic centuries (7th-9th centuries A.D.)*, Working papers of the Africa Study Centre/Boston no. 19, African Study Centre, Brookline 1979, 10.

¹⁷ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 20.

¹⁸ L. Rasmussen, *Christian Muslim Relations in Africa*, 5, 6; J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 34, 155; J.S. Trimingham, *The influence of Islam upon Africa*, Longman, London, 1980 (1968), 11.

¹⁹ J. Spencer Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978 (1962); P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: a study of religious development from the 8th to the 20th century*, Edward Arnold, London 1982. They differentiate between the earliest stages of Islam (until about 1100), the time when Islam was a religion of clerics, traders and people at the court (1100-1600), the period of pagan resistance and Muslim response to it (1600-1800), the 19th century reforms and modernity. Note: J. Spencer Trimingham was Professor at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon. In the 1950s he was asked by the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to make a survey of Islam in Africa. Several books on African Islam were the result. P.B. Clarke is Professor at Kings College in London and has specialised in World Religions. He has published several books on Islam and Christianity in West Africa.

²⁰ See also J.S. Trimingham, *The influence of Islam upon Africa*, 34.

²¹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 10.

²² In many cases the popularisation of Islam made an end to this phenomenon. In several towns in Ghana such as Kumasi and Techiman however, the Muslim quarters (*zongos*) still exist.

²³ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 187.

As early as the 10th century Islam began to spread among black Africans.²⁴ The oldest records are about a king of Kawkaw (Gao), who seems to have converted to Islam around 985 A.D. He had a mosque built in his capital and set aside a special place in the town for public prayers. Mosques seem to have abounded in ancient Ghana. Al-Bakri, writing before the battle between the Almoravids and Ghana in 1076, claims that there were more than 12 mosques in the capital.²⁵ War-Dyabe (d. 1040 A.D.), the ruler of the kingdom of Tekrur, which was located along the Senegal river, converted to Islam in the first half of the 11th century and made the *Shariah* the law of his kingdom.²⁶ Thus gradually, Islam began to gain foothold in the sub-Saharan towns and at the courts. Trimmingham stresses, however, that in most cases 'where Islam was professed by the ruler it was merely as an additional religious safeguard, running parallel to his traditional religion but not displacing it, whilst the masses of the people did not and were not expected to adopt even a veneer of Islam.'²⁷ Rasmussen adds that the conversions of the African chiefs and kings were possibly also motivated politically. By becoming Muslims the rulers could protect their kingdoms against potential attacks from Muslim armies while at the same time they could control the other potential threat: a Muslim 'state' within their state.²⁸

Around the same time another important development took place, which had far reaching consequences for West Africa: the Berbers abandoned their Ibadite Islam for a more orthodox form of Sunni Islam. This happened in the 11th century at the initiative of one of the Sanhaja chiefs Yahya ben Ibrahim. Yahya ben Ibrahim went on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1035/36. Anxious to conform West African Islam to the standards of the prophet, he visited Qairawan on his return journey. There he requested the famous Islamic scholar Abu Imran al-Fasi to send one of his students to the Sahara and to instruct the Sanhaja in Sunni Islam. Yayha ben Ibrahim, though a devout man, probably had not merely religious reasons, but also political motives for this request. He hoped that by uniting the various Sanhaja branches under the banner of Sunni Islam, he would be able to consolidate the Sanhaja unity and to have a better control of the trade routes as well.

After some negotiations, a cleric called Abdullah ben Yasin was found willing to work among the Sanhaja. Soon after his arrival he began to gather people around him to teach them orthodox Islam. He is said to have been a harsh and uncompromising man and his work was not without opposition. In 1054, Abdullah ben Yasin officially declared a *jihad* in the Western Sudan. When he was killed in 1059, the movement, which became known as the Almoravids, was well on the way and had (forcibly) converted many of the Berber Muslims to Sunni Islam. His successor Abu Bakr ben Umar concentrated on expansion towards the south.²⁹ This expansion included the conquest of Adwaghost and the much-debated battle with Ghana in 1076/1077. Some

²⁴ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 28.

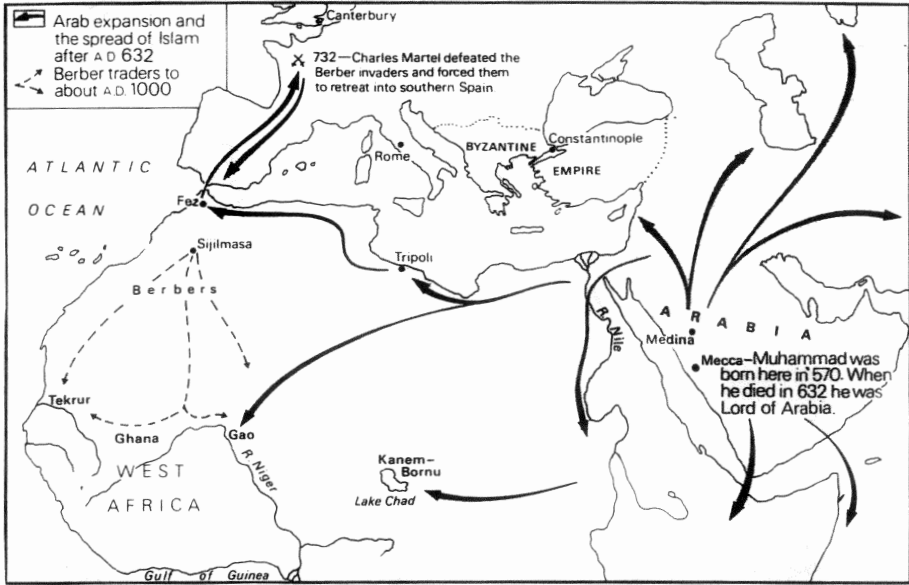
²⁵ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 28.

²⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 32.

²⁷ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 29.

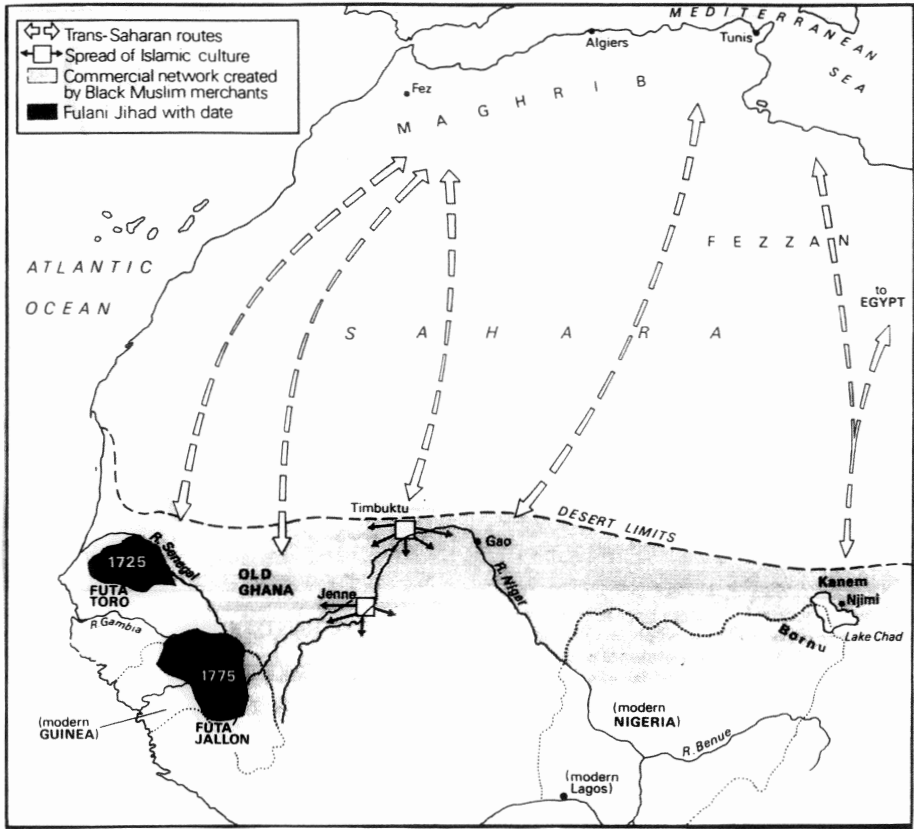
²⁸ L. Rasmussen, *Christian Muslim Relations in Africa*, 5.

²⁹ A cousin of Abu Bakr ben Umar was in charge of the Northern branch of the Almoravids. P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 17.



*The expansion of Islam**

* Reproduced from B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjogbin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, 4.



*Islam in West Africa 1000-1775**

* Reproduced from B. Catchpole and I.A. Akinjogbin, *A history of West Africa in maps and diagrams*, 14

believe that Abu Bakr ben Umar overran the capital of ancient Ghana and forcibly converted its ruler and many of its citizens to Islam.³⁰ Others have challenged this view.³¹ While the Almoravid movement continued its power in North Africa and Spain, the southern branch declined with the death of Abu Bakr ben Umar in 1087.

The impact of the Almoravid movement in West Africa is much debated. It seems clear that the movement can be credited for propagating Sunni Islam in West Africa. Due to their *jihads* large groups of people accepted Sunni Islam. But the influences of Ibadi Islam persisted, for example in architecture. The Almoravids also promoted the study of Islam and missionary activity in West Africa. Clarke observes that socio-economic motives might have played a role in the movement as well. He interprets the Almoravid *jihads* as a clash between the impoverished Berber Muslims of the desert and the rich Muslim merchants in the towns. According to Clarke the Almoravid actions were motivated by their desire to control the trans-Saharan routes.³²

The militant tradition of the Almoravids formed an exception to the otherwise peaceful spread of Islam in West Africa in the period under discussion. Due to literacy and learning, the Muslim scholars and merchants gradually gained an increasingly stable position at the courts of West Africa. Many of the leaders of the Mali Empire were Muslim. The king of Jenneh seems to have adopted Islam around 1200³³ and Jenneh and Timbuktu developed into renowned centres of Islamic study. Ibn Batuta (1304-1368/77), who visited Mali in the middle of the 14th century, recorded that the Muslims with whom he met in Mali, were meticulous in observing the Islamic practices as well as that law and order reigned in the land. He wrote: 'On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque he cannot find a space to pray because of the large numbers of people there.'³⁴ One of the Mali rulers, *Mansa Musa*, an unimportant person from a secular perspective, reached legendary fame in North Africa because of his pilgrimage to Mecca. Tradition says that when he went on *hajj*, he carried so much gold along, that the gold prices in Cairo devaluated as a result of it.³⁵ Despite the Almoravid reforms, traditional practices such as divination and the matrilineal inheritance system continued.

The rulers of the other large empire in West Africa, Songhay, were also Muslims. Gao's king converted to Islam around 1000, while a neighbouring king of the Songhay, Za-Kossai, converted to Islam around a decade later. Al-Bakri writes around 1068, that the *Askiya* of Gao received a Qur'an, a shield and a sword at his enthronement, sent to him by the Caliph in Bagdad. A later *Askiya* of Songhay, Sunni Ali, was less interested in Islam. Conquering the towns of Jenneh and Timbuktu around 1469 and therewith replacing Mali as the most important empire in West Africa, he expelled many of the Muslim scholars from Timbuktu and encouraged the traditional religion. A later successor to the throne, Muhammad Ture, also known as *Askiya* the Great, had a more favourable attitude to Muslims. During his reign from 1493-1528 he encouraged

³⁰ P.J. Stamer, *Islam in sub-Saharan Africa*, 17; J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 29,30.

³¹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 17, 18.

³² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 22-24. For a detailed discussion of the Almoravid movement in West Africa see pages 13-27 of the book.

³³ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of West Africa*, 31.

³⁴ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 45.

³⁵ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of West Africa*, 32.

Muslim scholars to settle in Songhay and appreciated their contributions in culture and education. Among the advisers of *Askiya* the Great was the well-known Muslim academic al-Maghili from Tleecen in Algeria. Al-Maghili's conviction was that every hundred year a Muslim reformer, a *mujaddid* would arise and reform Islam from its un-Islamic practices and beliefs. Maghili's concept was quite influential in West Africa and influenced 18th and 19th century West African reformers.

After the death of *Askiya* Muhammad the influence of Songhay declined and a time of instability followed. The Moroccan invasion of 1591 made a definite end to this greatest of the West African empires.

Islam in the Senegambia

Around the 11th century Islam began to exercise attraction on people in the Senegambia. War-Dyabe of Takrur was one of the first rulers in West Africa, who converted to Islam. His conversion in the early 11th century influenced the Senegambia in a way that superseded the political importance of Takrur. After his conversion War-Dyabe reorganised Takrur according to Islamic principles and the inhabitants of Takrur became missionaries of Islam to other ethnic groups in the region. The crucial function of Takrur in the trans-Saharan salt trade facilitated this development.³⁶ Trimmingham attributes the dissemination of Islam among such groups as the Fula, the Wolof and Mandinka to the inhabitants of Takrur.³⁷ Gamble quotes Monod, who stated that the Islamisation of the Wolof chiefs took place between the 11th and 15th centuries.³⁸ But whereas Monod sees a connection between the Islamisation of the Wolof and the Almoravid movement, Clarke points out that the conversion of War-Dyabe took place before the Almoravid *jihads* in West Africa and was possibly instrumental in the conversion of the Wolof to Islam.

The Dyula, a group of Mande traders, also made an important contribution to the spread of Islam in the Senegambia. These Mande traders were known by a variety of names such as Dyula, Marka, Yarse and Wangara. They converted to Islam through their contacts with Berber Muslim merchants, possibly somewhere around the 12th century.³⁹ When Mali rose in importance and surpassed Ghana around the 13th and 14th century, these traders extended their network of trade routes and travelled throughout West Africa. Specialised in cola nut trade they took Islam into the dense forest areas of West Africa. Clarke remarks that it would be wrong to suppose that all the Dyula were active missionaries. Most of them were neither preachers nor teachers.⁴⁰ But on their journeys the Dyula were always accompanied by a Muslim religious guide or cleric. Possibly this guide annex cleric might have acquitted himself of the missionary task.⁴¹

³⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 32.

³⁷ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 47.

³⁸ D.P. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 70.

³⁹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 34; J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 31.

⁴⁰ J.A. Mbillah talks in this respect about 'the dispersion of Muslims rather than the spread of Islam.' J.A. Mbillah, *Evangelism and the Muslim presence*, paper presented at the First Evangelism Consultation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, March 1-4 1994, 27.

⁴¹ Clarke states that theologically the Dyula were not even convinced of the need to convert people to Islam. They seem to have had the conviction that people of other faiths could be

Thus, the Dyula activities substantially contributed to the spread of Islam. They established 'pockets' of Islam in the Senegambia and other areas of West Africa along the trade routes and indirectly influenced the people. Charlotte Quinn estimates that the Dyula introduced Islam in The Gambia during the 14th and 15th centuries.⁴² Faith Renner speaks of the introduction of Islam into Combo about the 11th or 12th century through Serahuli families.⁴³

Muslim scholars, belonging to specific clerical traditions, formed a third group of people who promoted Islam in the Senegambia. In the Senegambia especially the clerical traditions of the Torodbe and the Jakhanke were influential. The Torodbe were a militant clerical tradition, to which Fula *jihadists* such as Uthman dan Fodio and al-Hajj Umar Tall felt related. By the 16th century, some of the Torodbe had established Muslim villages in the Futo Toro and other parts of the Senegambia, while others had attached themselves to the pastoral Fula people. Accompanying the Fula in their nomadic wanderings they expanded Islam throughout West Africa.

The Jakhanke had a more peaceful approach to the propagating Islam. Lamin Sanneh has made an elaborate study of this clerical tradition in his book *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics: a religious and historical study of Islam in Senegambia*. He describes the pacifistic tradition of the Jakhanke and their ability to adapt to their environment. The abilities of the Jakhanke to contextualise Islam provided them with income. Divination, the production of amulets and powerful potions formed an important source of income next to the education.

There is some discussion about the date when the Jakhanke clerical tradition came into existence, but it seems that the dispersion in the Senegambia started around the 12th or 13th century.⁴⁴ Around that same time a centre of Jakhanke learning was established in Diakha Bambuk in Senegal, later followed by Gunjur in Bondu.⁴⁵ Oral traditions trace Gambian Jakhanke centres of learning such as Gunjur in Combo back to the 15th century.⁴⁶ André Alvares de Almada, a Cape Verdian trader who visited The Gambia around 1594, observed that there were three main centres of Islamic learning on the North Bank of the Gambia river, which he called 'monasteries'. One was said to be located near the mouth of the estuary of the river Gambia. The second, called Malor was located about 350 kilometres up river while the third, called Sutuco, was said to have been located another 250 kilometres further up stream. Sanneh confirms that Sutuco was a Jakhanke centre, established in the 15th century.⁴⁷ Possibly the other two locations were Jakhanke centres of learning as well.⁴⁸ De Almada stresses the ascetic

saved without becoming Muslims. After death these non-Muslims were thought to enter a kind of purgatory after which they would reach paradise. P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 34.

⁴² C. Quinn, *Mandingo Kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 54.

⁴³ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 85. Renner doesn't specify whether these Serahuli families were traders or not, but it seems likely.

⁴⁴ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 29; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 35.

⁴⁵ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 30-32.

⁴⁶ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 42.

⁴⁷ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 42.

⁴⁸ Skinner has pointed out that there was another clerical tradition active in the Senegambia, that of the Saghanughu. He says: 'Another scholarly clan, the Saghanughu, have had very

lifestyle of the Muslims in the settlements and their dedication to learning.⁴⁹ Richard Jobson, who visited the Gambia river about 25 years later, noted that the Jakhanke were traders as well as clerics and owned large numbers of slaves to provide them with a basic income through agriculture and weaving.⁵⁰ Much of the Jakhanke economy indeed depended on income generated by slaves.⁵¹

These three main groups spread Islam throughout the Senegambia from the 11th to 17th centuries: the missionaries from Takrur, the Dyula traders and the Muslim clerics. Immigration of people also increased the number of Muslims in the Senegambia. During the heyday of the Mali Empire ambitious princes and generals left Mali and emigrated with groups of people to other areas. In the 13th century an immigration of that type took place to the banks of the river Gambia. General Tiramang Touray left Mali for a punitive expedition against the Senegambia and is said to have had around 75000 people accompanying him. Many of them settled in the Senegambia and along the Gambia river. Tiramang himself did not return to Mali either but was instrumental in the establishment of the Kaabu Empire. And though the majority of the Mandinka at that time were still traditionalist, there was also a considerable number of Muslims among the new settlers.⁵²

European and Cape Verdian eyewitnesses of Senegambian Islam: 15th - 17th centuries

From the arrival of the Portuguese onwards there is documental evidence of Muslims living in the Senegambia and along the Gambia river. The Venetian explorer Cadamosto, who reached the Senegambia in 1455 visited one of the Wolof chiefs and was invited to enter a mosque. There he observed how the chief and his entourage performed the *salat* and exchanged thoughts with the chief on religion.⁵³ Cadamosto believed that the chief's attachment to Islam was only superficial and politically motivated.⁵⁴ Valentim Fernandes, who visited the Guinea Coast between 1506 and 1510, confirmed that the Wolof chiefs were predominantly Muslim. He recounts that the Muslim advisers at the court were whites (Moors) from Fez and Morocco who had come to the Senegambia to convert the local people to Islam.⁵⁵ Diogo Gomes, a

close educational and personal relations with the Jakhanke. In The Gambia the Saghanughu are known as Sanuwo, and there they intermarry with the Jakhanke. Both groups are noted for their piety, and missionary fervour in West Africa.' D. E. Skinner, 'Islamic Education and missionary work in The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone during the twentieth century', *Bulletin for Islam and Christian Muslim Relations in Africa*, 1/4 (October 1983), 8.

⁴⁹ Note that all the distances were estimates! D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'André Alvares de Almada' in *The discovery of river Gambia*, 277; W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea coast*, 229-230.

⁵⁰ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 122, 123.

⁵¹ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 215-238.

⁵² Families like the Sanneh, the Sanyang, the Conteh, the Bojang and the Jassy all trace their ancestry to migration from ancient Mali. P. Sonko-Godwin, *Ethnic groups of the Senegambia*, 4-6.

⁵³ G.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 1937, 40, 41.

⁵⁴ For more information about Cadamosto and Gomes see paragraph 5.2.

⁵⁵ Th. Monod (ed.) *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels) par Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510)*, 7.

Portuguese who visited the Senegambia in 1456 and 1458, observed the presence of a Muslim adviser at the court of the Niumi *Mansa*. He wrote:

A certain bishop of their church was there, a native of Mali, who asked me about the God of the Christians, and I answered him according to the intelligence God had given me. Finally I questioned him respecting Muhammad, in whom they believe. What I said pleased his lordship the king so much that he ordered the bishop within three days to leave his kingdom.⁵⁶

The result of the conversation was that the *Mansa* asked Gomes for baptism and when that proved impossible, he agreed to receive Christian missionaries in Niumi. Before the missionaries arrived however, his enthusiasm for Christianity had declined. No doubt the expelled Muslim adviser or one of his colleagues had meanwhile returned at the court. Duarte Pereira, who visited The Gambia regularly between the 1480s and 1520s, observed that many people along the river spoke Mandinka and were Muslims,⁵⁷ an observation confirmed by Fernandes.⁵⁸ Thus gradually Islam settled in The Gambia.

Most explorers and traders noticed that the Muslims lived in separate villages, the so-called *Morikundas* or *Fodekundas*. Richard Jobson stated: 'The Mary-buckles are separated from the common people, both in their habitations and course of living.'⁵⁹ This different way of living was evident in the way of clothing, in diet and in ethics. Most of the *Morikundas* were guided by the Shariah law and strict rules regarding marriage, food and inheritance were observed. A distinct and obvious difference between a *Morikunda* and a traditional village was the complete rejection of any form of alcohol by the Muslims.⁶⁰

The Portuguese explorers had a special term for the *marabouts*. They called them *bixirin*. Monod suggests that the term is derived from the Arabic 'al-Mubashirun', meaning 'those who propagate the religion.'⁶¹ These *bixirin* were considered to be 'holy men' and according to Almada 'these heathen priests go about looking thin and worn out by their abstinences, their fasts and their dieting, since they will not eat flesh of a creature killed by any person who is not of them.'⁶² L. Coelho adds that some of the *marabouts* lived on alms only and that students of the *marabouts* were obliged to support themselves with alms as well.⁶³ This seems to be only half of the truth. There were groups of clerics who lived of alms, especially when they travelled. Jobson seems to confirm this observation.⁶⁴ But the other half of the truth is that the *marabouts* supported themselves by the income of their farms, run by slave labour.

⁵⁶ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of the river Gambia*, 263.

⁵⁷ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *The discovery of river Gambia*, 266

⁵⁸ Th. Monod (ed.) *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels) par Valentim Fernandez (1506-1510)*, 45.

⁵⁹ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1632) by Richard Jobson*, 122.

⁶⁰ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1632) by Richard Jobson*, 132.

⁶¹ Th. Monod (ed.) *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels) par Valentim Fernandes*, 151.

⁶² D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, André Álvares de Almada', *The discovery of river Gambia*, 277.

⁶³ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'Lemos Coelho', *The discovery of river Gambia*, 297.

⁶⁴ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia by Richard Jobson 1623*, 133.

Nearly all Portuguese, Cape Verdian and British visitors to the Senegambia observed that the *marabouts* had adapted Islam to the West African context. Fernandes described how the *marabouts* were involved in the production of powerful potions, not just for human use but also for newly acquired horses:

When the Christians bring to that place horses that the king or an important person has bought or is supposed to buy, he brings with him one of the *marabouts* who before the purchase of a horse, is there and writes his benediction on a wooden slate. After that he takes a manger filled with water and washes off the letters from the slate. He then gives that water to drink to the horse, after which the master takes it.⁶⁵

These rituals were not just performed for animals, but also for human beings and were known as 'drinking the Qur'an'.⁶⁶ Coelho described another type of water ritual: 'I saw a *fodigé* bless water in his fashion and sprinkle all the people in the village, which action they received as a holy deed.'⁶⁷ Numerous as well are the references to amulets or *greegrees* made by the *marabouts*.⁶⁸ Jobson gives the following description of *greegrees*:

⁶⁵ Th. Monod (ed.) *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels) par Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510)*, 9. Translated from French: 'Quand les Chrétiens y amènent des chevaux que le roi ou un grand seigneur a acheté ou qu'il doit acheter il amène avec lui un de ces marabouts lequel avant la remise du cheval est là et écrit sur une tablette de bois ses bénédictions. Après il prend une auge pleine d'eau et il efface ainsi les lettres de cette tablette et il donne cette eau à boire au cheval et alors son seigneur l'emmené.'

⁶⁶ See A.O. El-Tom, 'Drinking the Koran: the meaning of the Koranic verses in Berti erasure' in J.D.Y. Peel and C.C. Steward, *Popular Islam south of the Sahara*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1985, 414-431; For a description of the role and activities of *marabouts* in present day Mali, which are similar to those in the past see G. Mommersteeg, *Het domein van de Marabout: Koranleraren en magisch religieuze specialisten in Djenné, Mali*, Thesis Publishers, Amsterdam 1996. See as well: R.L. Moreau, *Africains Musulmans*, Inadès Edition-Présence Africaine, Abidjan/Paris 1982, 241-279. The Methodist missionary William Moister who worked in The Gambia in the 1830s observed a variety of these Muslim methods to cure, when he visited a young commandant who was sick. Moister writes: 'On returning to his residence on one occasions after an absence of two or three days, I found him ill with fever, and to my surprise he was surrounded by a number of old women who were administering "bush medicine," which appeared more likely to kill him than to cure. This was not all. They had suspended several *greegrees* around his neck, to send away the evil spirits which, in their opinion, had caused his sickness. At the same time they were actually making him drink *greegree water*, a nostrum prepared by a Mohammedan priest who writes a charm on a tablet, and washes off the writing into a calabash for the patient to drink.' W. Moister, *Missionary stories: narratives, scenes and incidents*, Wesleyan Conference Office, London 1877, 220, 221.

⁶⁷ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'Lemos Coelho', *The discovery of river Gambia*, 296.

⁶⁸ André Donelha (1625) writes: 'It is well known that the best traders in Guinea are the Mandingas, especially the *bixirins*, who are the priests. These people, as much for the profit they draw as (because they desire) to spread the cursed sect of Mohammed among the uncivilised, make their way through all the hinterland of Guinea and to all the seaports. And hence at any port, from (those of) the Jalofos or of Rio São Domingos or of Rio Grande up to Sierra Leone, one finds Mandinga *bixirins*. And what they bring to sell are fetishes in the form of ram's horns and amulets and sheets of paper with writing on them, which they sell as

The Gregories bee things of great esteeme amongst them, for the most part they are made of leather of severall fashions, wouderous neatly, they are hollow, and within them is placed, and sowed up close, certaine writings, or spels which they receive from their Mary-buckles, whereof they conceive such a religious respect, that they do confidently beleeeve no hurt can betide them, whilst these Gregories are about them, and it seemes to encrease their superstition; the Mary-buckles do devide [devise?] these blessings for every severall and particular part, for upon their heads they wear them, in manner of a crosse, aswell from the fore-head to the necke, as from one eare to another, likewise about their neckes, and [a]crosse both shoulders about their bodies, round their middles, great store, as also upon their armes, both above and below the elbow, so that in a manner, they seeme as if they were laden, and carrying [carrying] an outward burthen of religious blessings, whereof there is none so thoroughly laden as the Kings.⁶⁹

Jobson also observed that certain traditional funeral rites had been integrated into Islam. Attending a funeral of an esteemed Jakhanke cleric, he saw how the students of the deceased cleric took the earth from the grave, mixed it with water into small balls and took it with them as a relic.⁷⁰ Jobson nevertheless had very positive evaluation of the *marabouts* and their religion. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he believed that Muslims and Christians worshipped the same one and only God.⁷¹

The production of amulets, potions and other practices showed the tolerance of Muslim clerics to the African way of life. Walter Rodney summarises the Muslim attitude for the period under discussion:

Muslims were extremely tolerant of the African way of life, and were not regarded as aliens. Their forbearance was in distinct contrast to the attitude of some Catholic priests, who went about breaking ancestral lares, and demanding the limitation of the number of wives of the polygamous peoples they were trying to convert. On a fundamental issue such as initiation and circumcision, a marabout could become the individual in charge of the ceremony. This involvement was possible because African Muslims still shared most of the basic conceptions of their society, especially with regard to metaphysical force.⁷²

This ability to adapt to the African environment was the strength of West African Islam. But it was also exactly this accommodative attitude which gave rise to the reformist *jihads* in the 18th and 19th century. Pilgrims who had visited Mecca on *hajj* returned convinced that West African Islam was a corruption of 'true Islam' and was badly in need of a reform.⁷³

(religious) relics, and while they are selling they are spreading the sect of Mohammed in many districts.' D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'André Donelha (1625), *The discovery of river Gambia*, 290.

⁶⁹ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 113.

⁷⁰ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 129.

⁷¹ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 126.

⁷² W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 229, 230.

⁷³ According to Rodney, Coelho noted that there were certain Moors in the Senegambia who remarked that the Senegambian Islam was full of deviations from the law of Muhammad. Rodney comments: 'Conceivably however, the Moors may have been speaking from a sectarian position. The great emphasis on education, along with the possibility of regenerative influence from the north, must have helped to keep the religion of Upper Guinea relatively orthodox, at least by Sudanic standards; though at the same time it was the flexibility of religious

4.4 Muslim reforms in West Africa: 18th and 19th centuries

Resurgence of the traditional religions and stagnation of Islam

The second phase of Islam in West Africa, that of the popularisation of Islam, began towards the end of the 17th century and continued until the middle of the 20th century. In some ways Islam did not make much progress in the 17th and 18th centuries. Trimingham speaks about a period of 'Islamic stagnation and pagan reaction'.⁷⁴ The breakdown of the Songhay Empire caused unrest and upheaval in West Africa and the large kingdom scattered into petty chieftaincies. The historian as-Sa'di wrote in his famous *Tarikh al Sudan*:

The Sudan was one of God's most favoured countries in prosperity and fertility at the time this expeditionary force entered the country. Peace and security reigned in all parts thanks to the beneficent rule of the Prince of Believers, Askiya al-hajj Muhammad, whose justice and firm rule was so respected that orders issued from his palace were executed in the most distant parts of his kingdom, from the frontiers of the country of Dendi to those of al-Hamdiyya, and from the confines of the country of Bunduku to Taghāza and Tawāt, as well as in all their dependencies. Now all that has changed. Security has given place to danger, prosperity to misery and calamity, whilst affliction and distress have succeeded well-being. Over the length and breadth of the land the people began devouring one another, raiding and war sparing neither life nor wealth nor status, disorder spreading and intensifying until it became universal.⁷⁵

The resurgence of the African traditional religions after the decline of Songhay took on different shapes. The two Bambara states of Segou and Kaarta ascended to power. They tolerated Islam within their midst, but based their states on the principles of the traditional religion. This was one of the reasons why the *jihadi* al-Hajj Umar Tall waged war against Kaarta and Segou in the 1850s and 1860s.⁷⁶ Also the nomadic Fula, called the red Fula by Trimingham, resisted Islam.⁷⁷ Another branch of Fula established the Denyanke chieftaincy of Futa Toro in the middle of the 16th century. They remained in power until the Tokolor clerics conquered the state in 1776 and established an Islamic rule.⁷⁸

The state of anarchy after the fall of the Songhay Empire and the apparent resurgence of the traditional religions did not prevent the ongoing spread of Islam. The Dyula continued their trade and brought Islam further into the tropical rainforest. They established settlements as far south as Kankan in Liberia, Kadioha

practice which helped to maintain Muslims high in favour of the mass of Africans.' W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 231.

⁷⁴ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 141.

⁷⁵ As-Sa'di, *Tarikh al Sudan*, as cited in J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 145.

⁷⁶ The novel of Maryse Condé, *Segou: les murailles de terre*, Editions Robert Laffont, Paris 1984, tells the tale of the fall of Segou and al-Hajj Umar Tall's victory over the Bambara states.

⁷⁷ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 160.

⁷⁸ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 151.

in Ivory Coast and the Mossi and Gonja countries of the Volta region.⁷⁹ But next to this quiet spread of accommodative Islam another brand of Islam began to surface. In response to the revival of traditional religions a more purist form of Islam began to gain foothold in West Africa. The loss of prestige of the Muslim clerics at the courts, the harassment of Muslim traders and peasants by the traditional warrior classes, the continually increasing taxes and the lax observance of the Muslim laws by so called Muslim rulers gave rise to a reform movement in Islam.⁸⁰ This urge for renewal took a twofold shape: the peaceful form of the brotherhoods (*turuq/ sing. tariqa*) and the more militant form of the *jihād*. When these two merged in the 19th century, Islam in West Africa became a powerful political force, which changed the religious map of West Africa completely.

The brotherhoods

Rasmussen calls the brotherhoods the 'agents of Africanisation of Islam'.⁸¹ They began to emerge in West Africa the second half of the 15th century when the Qadirriyya brotherhood was introduced in West Africa. The Qadirriyya brotherhood was founded by Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani in the 12th century in Bagdad and from the 15th century onwards it found its way through the whole of West Africa.⁸²

The Tijianiyya was other influential brotherhood in West Africa. It was founded by al-Hajj Ahmad al-Tijan in present day Algeria in the 18th century. The main propagator of the Tijianiyya in West Africa was al-Hajj Umar Tall who in the early 19th century was appointed as *khalifa* of the Tijianiyya for the Western Sudan.⁸³

Toward the end of the 19th century a West African indigenous brotherhood emerged. The Wolof Ahmad Bamba founded the *tariqa* of the Mourids, which has its headquarters in Touba. This brotherhood, which mainly has its supporters in the Senegambia, was a response to the French imperialism in Senegal and combined Wolof identity with groundnut cultivation and Islam. The growing control of the Mourids over the groundnut production has made them a political force to reckon with. The Mourids can be credited for the completion of the islamisation of the Wolof.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 143.

⁸⁰ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 81, 82.

⁸¹ L. Rasmussen, *Christian Muslim Relations in Africa*, 6.

⁸² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 31.

⁸³ J.H. van der Kerke, *Aspecten van de Islam in Senegal (en Gambia): enkele recente ontwikkelingen en een evaluatie van de geraadpleegde literatuur*, unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Utrecht, 1987, 10, 11. In the 20th century the Senegalese Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (1900-1975) played a crucial role in the propagation of the Tijianiyya in West Africa. After his death in 1975 his son-in-law temporarily led the Tijianiyya order in West Africa, but handed over to Ibrahim Niasse's grandson Shaykh Hassan Cisse, chief imam of Kaolack, Senegal. The headquarters of the Tijianiyya in Senegambia is Tivaouane. Thousands of Tijani make a pilgrimage to Tivaouane annually. The headquarters in Tivaouane is active in propagating the brotherhood. Printed materials on the Tijianiyya are available and the Tijani way is propagated via the media and Internet. See www.earthlink.net/~halimcisse/introtijaniyya.html. Date: April 10 2003.

⁸⁴ R.L. Moreau, *Africains Musulmans*, 165-175.

The brotherhoods emphasise the importance of devotion, the observance of the five pillars of Islam and the study of the Qur'an. They prescribe special litanies for prayers and the members meet regularly in small groups, called *dairahs*. The leader or *shaykh* of the brotherhood is of crucial importance. He was said to be endowed with a special charisma and special *baraka* (blessings). People interest in the brotherhood can be initiated into 'the way' of this particular brotherhood. Initially, the brotherhoods made only gradual progress. But in 18th and 19th centuries, stimulated by the *jihads*, a revival took place. From that time onwards, to be a true Muslim meant to be a member of one of the brotherhoods.⁸⁵

The appeal of the brotherhoods to West Africans has raised much discussion. Scholars have wondered why the response to Islam in the form of brotherhoods was so immense. It is clear that the brotherhoods have given the illiterate peasant people a way to participate in Islam. They can partake in the way of Islam, without having to worry too much about the Islamic laws. Many are only initiated into the first stages of the *wird* and never have had the ambition to move beyond this superficial participation. The brotherhoods have offered people a feeling of safety and security in a time when there was much unrest and war and have given people a renewed sense of community.

Trimingham's *The Sufi orders in Islam* describes the development of the various orders and their political role in the 19th century.⁸⁶ He indicates how gradually a conviction developed that the leader of a brotherhood possessed a special type of *baraka* (blessing) and could intercede on behalf of the members of the brotherhood. Thus the members who were at the initial stages of the initiation of the brotherhood (which formed the majority) were acquitted from the bulk of rules and regulations as long as they were obedient to the leader. 'I work for him and he prays for me' was a famous summary of the way in which the brotherhoods functioned.⁸⁷ Thus the brotherhoods operated on two levels. There was a small elite group of initiated mystics and clerics who actively observed the Islamic code and there was the larger part of the people who could on the one hand continue their lives relatively unchanged and on the other hand participate in the blessings of Islam, because of their leaders.

Militant Islam: the West African jihads in the 18th century

There was, however, another response to the resurgence of the traditional religions and the neglect of Islamic laws: that of the *jihads*. From the 17th century onwards, Muslim groups increasingly began to promote the cause of Islam by the means of *Jihad*. They strived for the establishment of Islamic states to guarantee Muslims a place to exercise their faith without harassment. In the Senegambia region these *jihads* concentrated themselves in three regions: Futa Toro, Bondu and Futa Jallon.

Militant West African Islam first manifested itself in Futa Toro. As early as 1673 Nasir ad-Din waged a *Jihad* against the Denyanke of Futa Toro. The *Jihad* resulted in the establishment of a theocracy in southern Mauritania and parts of the

⁸⁵ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 158, 159.

⁸⁶ J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1971, 13.

⁸⁷ J.H. van der Kerke, *Aspeten van de Islam in Senegal (en Gambia)*, 9.

Senegambia. Within the jurisdiction of this Islamic state any form of accommodative Islam was rejected. But Nasir-ad-Din's victory was short lived. He died in 1674. Soon after his death the reform movement collapsed and in 1677 the Denyanke were able to regain power.⁸⁸

About a century later, another *jihadi*, a Torodbe named Sulayman Bal, followed Nasir ad-Din's example. In the 1760s and 1770s Bal, with the support of the Tokolor, was able to subject the Denyanke and carve out a clerical empire in the Futa Toro. Suleyman Bal died in 1776. He was succeeded by Abd al-Qadir. He continued the *jihadi* and divided the conquered territories into provinces. Political expediency made him to appoint some of the subjected Denyanke chiefs at high places, but this proved a mistake. In 1805 the Denyanke staged a coup with the help of the *Almami* of Bondu and Abd ad-Qadir was killed.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the Denyanke maintained the theocratic organisation of state, headed by an elected *Almami*. The last *Almami* Sire Baba Lih died in 1890. After his death all the provinces of Futa Toro were annexed by the French and became part of the Senegalese Protectorate. Al-Hajj Umar Tall, the great Tijani *jihadi* of the Western Sudan, came from the Tokolor Torodbe tradition of the Futa Toro. His fellow Gambian Tijani *jihadi* Ma Ba Diakhou Ba also belonged to the Torodbe tradition and studied in Futo Toro as well.

Bondu was another centre of *jihadi*. Instigator was Malik Sy. Sy was born and raised in Futa Toro and possibly had participated in Nasir ad-Din's *jihadi*. Strengthened by Fula and Tokolor refugees from Futa Toro, Sy deposed the ruler of Gaidaga in 1696 and founded the state of Bondu. This successful co-operation between elite from Futa Toro and pastoral Fula, resulting in an Islamic state, was repeated in history time and again. In the case of Bondu it led to an Islamic state, which functioned for more than 200 years, though in later times the strict observance of Islamic law seems to have wavered.⁹⁰ The convenient location of Bondu along one of the important cola-nut routes, led to settlement of a large number of Jakhanke cleric in Bondu. They founded in the town of Gunjur, which developed into a Jakhanke centre of learning, renown in the sub region. But despite the presence of a large concentration of Jakhanke clerics, Bondu was not an Islamic state in the strict sense of the word, comparable to Futa Toro. The *Almami* was not elected, but appointed from the Sisibé family of Malik Sy. Mungo Park, who visited Bondu around 1795, was told that the reigning *Almami* was not a Muslim but a '*kafir* or pagan'.⁹¹ Possibly this meant that *Almami* was not implementing the Islamic laws very conscientiously. It seems that over the years the *jihadi* of Malik Sy lost its impetus. Charlotte Quinn calls this phenomenon 'the secularisation of the *jihadi*'.⁹² The consequence of this was that in later years Bondu had to face the challenge of new *jihadists*, such as Momodou Lamine, who advocated the reform of Islam in Bondu.

⁸⁸ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 79, 80.

⁸⁹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 86.

⁹⁰ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 79, 80.

⁹¹ Cited as in J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 173.

⁹² C. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 157.

The Islamic tradition of Bondu had a special impact on The Gambia. Situated along one of important cola nut trade routes, Bondu was a place where cola nuts, a highly valued item in the traditional Gambian society, could be purchased. Thus regular contact with Bondu through traders travelling up and down the river with their wares, implied that there was an intense contact with the Islamic tradition of Bondu. From Bondu Jakhanke clerics dispersed to different areas in the sub-region, such as places along the Gambia river, while Gambian students, who had finished their studies in their localities were sent for further training to Gunjur. Thus people in The Gambia had regular contacts with the Islamic tradition of Bondu.

The Futa Jallon was a third area where militant Islam seized power in the 18th century. From about 1675 onwards large groups of Fula began settling in the plains of the Futa Jallon. In the early 18th century they commenced their strife for supremacy in the region, thereby using, to quote Trimmingham, 'Islam as their war cry to submit the resident Jalonke traditionalists.'⁹³ The *jihād*, which began around 1720, was led by the cleric Ibrahim Musa, also known as Alfa Karamoko and by the warrior Ibrahim Sori. Though the battle against the Jalonke and other groups continued after the death of Alfa Karamoko in 1751, the religious aspect dwindled. Ibrahim Sori, who took over the leadership, was first of all a secular leader. He and his successors continued to carry the title of *Imami* but in practice the *Imami* of the Futa Jallon was first of all a political rather than a religious leader. Walter Rodney comments: 'To a large extent, Ibrahim Sori's ascendancy represented the eclipse of the *Jihād* in the strict sense of a war to protect or extend Islam.'⁹⁴ Throughout the Fula reign in Futa Jallon the power struggle between the clerics (the *alfaya*) who had their centre in Fugumba and the warriors (the *soriya*) who had their capital in Timbo continued. Clarke comments that the *jihād* in Futa Jallon was to some extent counter-productive. Some of the adherents of the traditional religions, who initially had supported Alfa Karamoko and Ibrahim Soro, later withdrew their collaboration and turned against Islam.⁹⁵

In the early 19th century a new wave of Fula Muslims, mainly Jakhanke entered the Futa Jallon. Their charismatic leader Karamokho Ba founded the clerical community of Touba,⁹⁶ which exercised considerable influence over other parts of West Africa. Renner claims that the tracts of Karamokho Ba were readily read in the Senegambia.⁹⁷ The Fula of Futa Jallon were also instrumental in aiding the Gambian Fula Alfa Molloh to overthrow the Mandinka overlordship and to establish a Fula state along the Gambia river, called Fuladu.

The three examples of Futa Toro, Bondu and Futa Jallon show that waging a *jihād* was one thing, but establishing an Islamic state and implementing the *Shariah* was quite another. In all these cases, a 'secularisation' (Quinn) or 'eclipse' (Rodney) of the *jihād* took place and private, political or ethnic motives overtook the religious

⁹³ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 166.

⁹⁴ W. Rodney, 'Jihad and social revolution in Futa Djallon in the 18th century', *Journal of the historical society of Nigeria*, iv/2 (June 1968), 272.

⁹⁵ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 84, 85.

⁹⁶ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 102, 103.

⁹⁷ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 93.

zeal. Collaboration with large groups of people within the Islamic state who continued to practice the traditional religions proved a necessity. Thus in 19th century a new group of reformers emerged. Uthman dan Fodio and al-Hajj Umar Tall were the most important among them. They disapproved of the lax way in which the Islamic states were adhering to Islam and called for another round of *jihad*.

Militant Islam: West African jihads in the 19th century

The most famous and best-documented *jihad* in West Africa was probably the Muslim reform movement in Hausa land, led by the illustrious Qadiriyya leader Uthman dan Fodio. Influenced by al-Maghili's teaching that every 100 year there would be an Islamic reformer, Dan Fodio became convinced of his call as *mujaddid* and launched a *jihad* in Hausaland in 1804. The *jihad* was aimed at both unbelievers and back-sliding Muslims, who did not take Islamic law seriously. Of Fula related descent and supported by the Fula, Uthman dan Fodio was able to create an immense caliphate, known as the caliphate of Sokoto. The establishment of Dan Fodio's Islamic state led to the islamisation of large areas of present day Northern Nigeria and Niger. After his death in 1817, his son Muhammad Bello became caliph of the Sokoto empire. Muhammad Bello died in 1837. By that time, the actual power of the caliph had begun to decline and the empire split into smaller units. When the British invaded Sokoto in 1904, they met no military resistance. Due to the British system of indirect rule however, the Islamic structures of government and the legal system were consolidated and institutionalised. Combined with the prohibition of Christian missionaries to enter the region, it strengthened the Muslim presence in Northern Nigeria. Up till the present day the caliph of Sokoto, though deprived of his political power, is still a powerful and influential person.⁹⁸

Al Hajj Umar Tall was the second influential *jihadist* in the 19th century. Though not as successful as Uthman dan Fodio, al Hajj Umar Tall was of key importance to the advance of Islam in the Senegambia. Most of the Senegambian *jihadists* were inspired and commissioned by al Hajj Umar Tall.

Umar Tall, officially called Umar ben Sa'id al-Futi al-Turi al-Kadiwi was born around 1794 in Halwar, near Podor in Futa Toro. His father Sa'id ben Uthman Tall was a Tokolor cleric, belonging to the Torodbe tradition. His mother Adama Aissa Cissé is also said to have been a pious person. Her son seems to have repeatedly exclaimed that there were many men like his father in Futa Toro but there were no women as pious as his mother was.⁹⁹ Umar was brought up first under the guidance of his father and from the age of about 15 started wandering about, looking for new teachers to supervise his Islamic studies.¹⁰⁰ While travelling he came into contact with members of the Tijaniyya brotherhood. Interested in mystical Islam, he turned to one of the leading *muqaddamin*

⁹⁸ P.B. Clarke, *West African and Islam*, 100, 101, 113-120; J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 195-207.

⁹⁹ A. Gouilly, *L'Islam dans l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, Editions Larose, Paris 1952, 73.

¹⁰⁰ J.R. Willis, 'The writings of al-Hajj Umar al-Futi and Shaykh Mukhtar b. Wadi at Allah: literary themes, sources and influences' in J.R. Willis (ed.), *Studies in West African Islamic history: Volume I The cultivators of Islam*, Frank Cass, 1979, 177.

of the Tijaniyya in West Africa: Abd al-Karim ben Ahmad al-Naqil al-Futa Jalloni. Tradition tells that al-Karim initiated Umar into the first stage of the Tijaniyya around 1823.¹⁰¹

After a prolonged stay with al-Karim of another two years, Umar set out to accomplish his pilgrimage to Mecca. His journey to Mecca brought him in contact with several *jihadists* in West Africa, such as Ahmadu Lobbo¹⁰² and Muhammad Bello. In Mecca Umar attached himself to the spiritual guidance of the Tijani *khalifa* for the Hijaz, Muhammad al-Ghali Abu Talib. The two men are said to have been very close and after a period of three years al-Ghali initiated Umar Tall into the deepest secrets of the Tijaniyya and appointed him one of its *khalifas*.¹⁰³ Possibly the Wahabiyya reformers who endeavoured to reform Islam in Arabia also influenced Umar. Tradition says that al-Ghali encouraged Umar to return to the Western Sudan and 'sweep the country of the vestiges of paganism and summon the people to Islam'. From his departure from Mecca around 1831 until his death in 1864, these words became the guiding principle in al-Hajj Umar Tall's life.

During his return journey to West Africa al-Hajj Umar preached the Tijani *wird*. He again paid a visit to Muhammad Bello and married one of his daughters Miriam, who became the mother of his successor/son Ahmadu. Around 1840 he established himself in Diaguku in the Futa Jallon. The town soon became a religious colony of students interested in the Tijaniyya. The next decade al-Hajj Umar spent in preaching and teaching, the so-called spiritual *jihad*. In this period he is said to have met with several people in the Senegambia, among whom Ma Ba Diakhou Ba, and recruited them for the Tijani *wird*.¹⁰⁴ Struck by the similarities between the Arabs before the coming of Islam and the Fula in West Africa, al-Hajj Umar Tall gradually came to see himself as the *khalifa*, not just of the Tijaniyya brotherhood, but of the prophet Muhammad himself.¹⁰⁵

In 1851 al-Hajj Umar withdrew from Diaguku to Dinguiray. The tensions with the *Imamy* of Timbo under whose jurisdiction Diaguku fell, had increased and the *Imamy* felt threatened by al-Hajj Umar's radical teachings. In September 1852 al-Hajj Umar Tall declared 'that Allah had informed him that he was authorised to undertake the *jihad* against the infidel'.¹⁰⁶ By 1854 he had subdued Bambuk and several provinces of the state Khasso. Between 1855 and 1857 Umar conquered Kaarta and continued his

¹⁰¹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 131.

¹⁰² The person, who most successfully established an Islamic state in West Africa, was Ahmadu Lobbo I. Ahmadu Lobbo launched his *jihad* in 1818 in the Segu area and established the Islamic state of Masina at the expense of his Bambara overlords. He instituted an Islamic government structure in which clerics played a crucial role, both on the district and the local level. He himself was a member of a council of 40 elders who ruled Masina, acting as a *primus inter pares*. *Shariah* guided the state. Masina was conquered in 1862 by al-Hajj Umar Tall and disappeared from that moment on. See P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 129-131.

¹⁰³ J.R. Willis, 'The writings of al-Hajj Umar al-Futi and Shaykh Mukhtar b. Wadi at Allah', 178.

¹⁰⁴ J.R. Willis, 'The writings of al-Hajj Umar al-Futi and Shaykh Mukhtar b. Wadi at Allah', 179. *Wird* means devotion.

¹⁰⁵ R.L. Moreau, *Africans Muslims*, 141.

¹⁰⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 133.

jihad to complete his victory over Khasso. In 1857 he clashed there with the French and was defeated. From that moment on al-Hajj Umar Tall turned his attention eastwards, realising that a French coloniser in combination with Senegambian chiefs was too powerful a combination for him. The Bambara state of Segu fell into the hands of the *khalifa* in 1861 and a year later he conquered Masina. A revolt against his rule sounded the end of al-Hajj Umar Tall. He died in a battle in February 1864.

His son Ahmadu succeeded his father and endeavoured to consolidate the vast Tokolor Empire. Al-Hajj Umar had died before he had been able to consolidate his power and did not leave an empire with a strong central administration. Ahmadu's leadership was never universally accepted. Two of his brothers and a cousin reigned in various parts of the empire, whilst Ahmadu's influence was limited to Segu. The French, who found the Tokolor Empire an obstruction to their imperialistic plans, supported subversive elements within the empire. In the late 1880s they began to attack the empire and part by part conquered it. The curtain fell in 1893 when Ahmadu was defeated at Banjagara. He fled and found protection in the Sokoto Empire of his mother's family. He died there in 1898.¹⁰⁷

Al-Hajj Umar Tall's unexpected death prohibited the establishment of a firm Islamic state in the upper and middle Niger regions. In that sense, al-Hajj Umar did not reach his goals. Much of the administration of the Tokolor Empire continued as it had been under the Bambara states. But al-Hajj Umar did achieve a large-scale propagation of the Tijani brotherhood in West Africa, both among non-Muslims and among nominal and Qadiriyya Muslims. He influenced many people by his emphasis on orthodox Islam based on the Qur'an, the Sunna and *Ijma* (concensus) as principle sources for Islamic doctrine. Many pursued his idea that *jihad* was a legitimate instrument to implement the ideals of Islam.¹⁰⁸ In the Senegambia he inspired Muslim clerics like Ma Ba Diakhou Ba, Fode Kabba Dumbuya and Momodou Lamine to revolt against the 'corrupt' leadership and establish an Islamic state by the means of *jihad*. Also the Fula leader Alfa Molloh is said to have taken a Tijani oath.

Quinn, in her book *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia* summarises the influence of the surrounding *jihads* on The Gambia as follows:

The movement for religious revival and political reform along the Gambia lay within a lengthy continuum of revolutionary activity by Islamic leaders both in Fula and Wolof dominated areas of the Senegambia, extending over two previous centuries. Revolts by Islamized populations in the Futa Toro and Jolof, Cayor, and Walo in the 1670's; in Bondu in the 1860's; in the Futa Jalon around 1726; and again in the Futa Toro in the 1770s had toppled ruling elites and established instead in each, however briefly (in Futa Toro and the Wolof states for less than 10 years during the seventeenth century), a form of theocratic rule under the titular leadership of an almami. These dynasties survived in Bondu and the Futa Jalon into the nineteenth century, although by then the ruling class in Bondu had begun to come under critical attack from a new generation of reformers. Itinerant Muslim scholars

¹⁰⁷ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 186.

¹⁰⁸ J.R. Willis, *The writings of al-Hajj Umar al-Futi and Shaykh Mukhtar b. Wadi at Allah*, 190.

and traders must have drawn the Gambian Marabouts into close contact with this rich background of agitation and revolt.¹⁰⁹

The *jihads* in West Africa during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries had several consequences. First of all they, together with the brotherhoods, spread Islam. Many of the people who were forcibly converted to Islam in the 18th and 19th centuries remained Muslims, even after the Islamic states had disappeared. Secondly the *jihads* in the 19th century and the unrest they created, gave the colonial powers France and Britain a pretext for intervention in West Africa. Thus the colonisers expanded their influence in West Africa and many territories were declared 'Protectorate'. But the initial goal of the *jihads*, i.e. the attempt to purify West African Islam from its accommodative aspects, was not reached. Amulets, divination, powerful potions, and other aspects of West African Islam continue up till the present day. The *marabout* is still a key person in West African Islam.¹¹⁰

4.5 The Soninke-Marabout wars: jihads in the (Sene)gambia in the 19th century¹¹¹

General context

Along the Gambia river Islam continued to spread peacefully throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. Nevertheless, the *jihadist* movements in the sub-region of West Africa had their effects in The Gambia. Inspired and sometimes even commissioned by influential Muslim leaders like Uthman dan Fodio and al-Hajj Umar Tall, Gambian Muslim leaders, known as *marabouts*¹¹² instigated *jihads* on the banks of the Gambia in the second half of the 19th century. These wars, known as the Soninke-Marabout wars, dominated the Gambian scene for more than 50 years. Quinn described the situation in the middle of the 19th century as follows:

By the middle of the nineteenth century a supratribal grouping had appeared along the Gambia which would challenge traditional Mandingo supremacy. The spread of Islam to the Senegambia had been accompanied by a proliferation of Muslim political institutions, and an Islamic shadow state was emerging which threatened patterns of established Mandingo rule. The terms *Soninke* and *Marabout* had, in fact, become the most important expressions of socio-political classification in the Senegambia, and social status was closely tied to religious identity.

In a ritual context *Soninke* was used as a synonym for the Arabic *kafir* (unbeliever), a term for animists or Muslims who failed to observe Islamic practices. *Marabout*, meaning cleric or teacher, was a term associated with the saints cults of North Africa. In

¹⁰⁹ C. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 65, 66.

¹¹⁰ R.L. Moreau, *Africains Musulmans*, 243, 244.

¹¹¹ I have used the term (Sene)gambia here because many of the states established by the *jihadists* extended beyond the later borders of The Gambia into what later became French Senegal.

¹¹² The term *marabout* is a term associated with the religious brotherhoods of North Africa (al-murabit), meaning those who lived in a *rabit*, a fort. In the Senegambia the word referred in the 19th century to all who adhered to a purified form of Islam as well as to Muslim clerics who had a knowledge of healing, divination and the production of amulets.

the Senegambia it referred to all who accepted a purified form of Islam. The symbol of differences between the two groups was highly individual and particularized: if a man drank alcoholic beverages he was considered a 'Soninke'; if not, he was a 'Marabout'. Politically these terms represented a division of the population into two sharply opposed factions which cut across ethnic and traditional political groupings.¹¹³

It is evident from Quinn's quotation that the causes of the Soninke Marabout wars were not just religious. Social, political and economic factors also played a role. Both Quinn and Gailey¹¹⁴ elaborate on this topic. Quinn describes how Muslims, since their arrival in The Gambia, had lived in separate villages, apart from the Soninke communities, practising a type of *hijra* (withdrawal) from the non-Muslim world (*jahiliya*) surrounding them. In those cases where the rulers had converted to Islam, Muslims and former Soninke lived side by side. The situation was complicated by role of the *tyeddo* or *Jawara*. They were soldiers, who belonged to the nobility and protected the position of the *Mansa*. Most of them had not converted to Islam and were known for their adherence to the traditional religions, for their heavy drinking and for harassing the local population, including the Muslim trading communities, in order to get money. Renner adds that the Muslim leaders also objected to the fact that the *Soninke* chiefs gave Muslim land to the 'infidel' British government.¹¹⁵

In the 18th and 19th centuries Muslims began to protest against this situation of discrimination and oppression. West African *jihadists* who called for a purification of Islam supported their remonstrance. The Muslims objected to the way West African Islam had accommodated to the traditional religions, rejected the lax observation of the *Shariah* by many of the Muslim Mandinka rulers and found it unacceptable that infidels ruled over Muslims. Thus they pursued an 'ideal Muslim state', both by their preaching and by means of a *jihad*. As a result of this preaching, many of the Muslims who had lived in the traditional villages again moved out and founded new settlements along the river. By the 19th century, these Muslim villages had developed into an Islamic shadow state.¹¹⁶ Strict Muslim regulations regarding eating, drinking, dress, marriage and inheritance were observed. The *Shariah* governed the life in the villages, both in the personal and the political sphere.

At the same time that the Muslim community started to emancipate, the traditional religions and traditional leadership were weakening. Many of the traditional rituals, such as the name's giving- and circumcision ceremonies, had been Islamised due to the long contact with Islam or had completely disappeared, as was the case with communal agricultural rites, the rain ceremonies and the secret societies.¹¹⁷ The traditional ruling

¹¹³ C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 53.

¹¹⁴ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 39-42.

¹¹⁵ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 98-100. She describes that the *Jawara* constantly raided Muslim farms, stole their wives, slaves and harvest, imposed heavy taxes and humiliated Muslims by forcing them to prune trees.

¹¹⁶ C. A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou and the Gambian *jihad*, 1850-1890' in J.R. Willis (ed.), *Studies in West African Islamic history*, Frank Cass, London 1979, 239.

¹¹⁷ C.A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou and the Gambian *jihad*, 1850-1890', 240-242 and C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 63-65.

families were divided amongst themselves: some were traditionalists, others were Muslims. The loss of income due to the decline of the slave trade was another factor, which contributed to the destabilisation of the traditional societies. The *marabout* communities on the contrary, who had invested in groundnut production, increased in wealth. Quinn remarks that a Muslim groundnut trader called Jata Jagne was the richest man in Baddibu in the middle of the 19th century.¹¹⁸ The time was ripe for change. And the change came in the form of the Soninke-Marabout wars.

Jihad in Combo: Fode Kaba Turay and Fode Sillah Combo

The first clashes between *marabouts* and *Soninke* took place in Combo where the famous Muslim centres of learning Gunjur and Sabiji were located.¹¹⁹ Neglected by historians such as Clarke and Trimmingham, the Combo *marabouts* successfully raised up against their *Soninke* overlords and were able to establish an Islamic state for a period of nearly twenty years.

Islam has a long and diverse history in Combo. Renner believes that Serahuli families introduced Islam in Combo around the 11th or 12th century. These families built the settlement of Faraba and laid the nucleus for what in the 15th century developed into the *morikunda* of Gunjur.¹²⁰ She also states that from the 15th century onwards Jakhanke settled in Combo.¹²¹ Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries there was an influx of Fula Muslims from the Futa Jallon. They built the towns of Sabiji, Brufut, Kafuta, Perang, Tujering, Kartong, Mandinari, Sanyang and Bakau.¹²² By the middle of the 19th century, with a growing Muslim influence and an increasing discrimination of the Muslims by the *tyeddo*, the tension between the *Soninke* and the *marabouts* had escalated to a point where a struggle for power in Combo between the *Soninke*, the *marabouts* and the British was unavoidable.

The first skirmishes in Combo took place around 1849. At stake was the fate of the Muslim town of Sabiji, located near the British part of Combo, *Tubabobanko*. Sabiji had rapidly increased over the years, a sign that Muslims were obeying the command to cut themselves off from contamination with 'infidels'. The *Soninke* observed this expansion with suspicion. They rightly interpreted this development as a pre-requisite for a *jihad*. Because they themselves were not able to stop the development, they began negotiations with the British to include Sabiji into the British territory *Tobabobanko*.¹²³ Enraged the Muslims put an ultimatum to *Mansa Sulang Jatta* of Yundum, asking him to embrace Islam, to renounce *Soninke* or to

¹¹⁸ C. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 64, 65.

¹¹⁹ Originally Combo consisted of 6 autonomous principalities, each ruled by a *sibisito Mansa*. The principalities were: Brikama, Yundum, Busumbala, Manduar, Faraba and Jambur. At instigation of the *Mansa* of Jambur, Combo in the 19th century was divided into three provinces: Afet, Combo Santo and Narang.

¹²⁰ Renner is not consistent in her dates regarding the introduction of Islam in Combo. On page 42 she speaks about the 12th or the 13th century while on page 85 she estimates that it was approximately one century earlier. F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 42, 85.

¹²¹ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 85.

¹²² F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 43, 76, 86.

¹²³ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 49.

face death. The clash that took place as a result of this challenge, initially seemed to result in a victory for the *marabouts*, but *Soninke* aid from the Casamance was able to contain the Muslim forces. The battles continued for a period of three years, with neither side winning.

In 1853 Governor O'Connor decided to reopen negotiations over the annexation of Sabiji, because he felt uneasy with militant Muslim activities so close to *tobabobanko*,¹²⁴ The Muslims, already annoyed by the activities of the Wesleyan missionaries in Sabiji,¹²⁵ responded by striking back at both the *Soninke* and the British. The *jihād* entered a new phase. A surprise attack of the British led to the conquest of Sabiji and some of the Muslim leaders were captured and imprisoned in Banjul.

An incident in 1855 set off a new *jihād*, led by Fode Kabba Touray. With the help of a Moor, called Umar who was said to have been an officer in the army of Abd al-Qadir¹²⁶ Sabiji was stockaded. Though the fighting was fierce, a joint venture of *Soninke* and British troops was able to capture Sabiji. The town was destroyed, the Muslims were forbidden to resettle in the town and a treaty was signed in which all parties agreed to lay down arms.¹²⁷

For a period of six years (1856-1862) there was relative peace. It seems around 300 of the Muslims from Combo joined Ma Ba Diakhou in his *jihād* in Baddibu.¹²⁸ Then the fights flared up again and attempts of the British to impose another peace treaty failed. It seems that around 1863 Fode Kabba Turay proposed to seek for a younger man to lead the wars. With the help of diviners Ibraimah Turay, better known as Fode Sillah of Combo was chosen.

Fode Arafang Ibraimah Turay was born around 1830. Though not Jakhanke, the Turay family identified with the Jakhanke tradition of teaching, healing and working on the field. Their hometown was named Gunjur, after the Jakhanke Gunjur in Macina. Fode Sillah received a Jakhanke training. Sonko-Godwin claims that he studied in Pakau in the Casamance with Foday Ibrima Sillah, whilst Renner states he studied in Bani Israeli at the feet of Fode Marang Sillah Ba (Sillah the Great).¹²⁹ Fode Sillah Combo returned to Combo in the 1850s and settled in the village of Kanume near Sanyang where he established a Qur'anic school. It seems he acquired a large following of around 1500 students. His popularity was due to his piety, his divination skills and his secular abilities in farming and trading. He himself continued his studies under Jomarr Jagne in the Casamance and seems to have written many tracts to edify the Muslim community, though none of them so far has

¹²⁴ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 109.

¹²⁵ Renner states: 'It would also seem that the attacks made by Wesleyan missionaries on Islam and the prophet Mohammed between 1820 and 1850 may have aggrieved the Muslims, which in any event, they regarded as *Soninke*.' F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 100.

¹²⁶ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 116.

¹²⁷ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 45.

¹²⁸ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 123, 124.

¹²⁹ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 46; F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 131.

come to light.¹³⁰ It was this man who was the newly elected *Amir-al-Mu'minin* (commander of the faithful) and who after a short period of *khalwa* (retreat) decided to accept the invitation and to lead the Muslims in establishing an Islamic state in Combo.¹³¹ Moving from Kanume to Gunjur, he declared a *jihad*.

From 1865 until 1875 consistent raids and attacks at the Soninke were made. Fighting was done in the dry season and was interrupted during the rainy season when farming was done. Step by step the *Soninke* towns were conquered and the inhabitants were forced to shave their heads. In 1872 the Muslim warriors received assistance in the form of 5000 warriors from Baddibu who crossed the river to aid their companions in Combo.¹³² By September 1875 the last remnant of the *Soninke* resistance in Lamin surrendered. The Caliphate of Combo was a fact. Though the *Soninke* never completely gave up their resistance, Combo was an Islamic state until 1894 with Fode Sillah as its leader.¹³³ The British had no option but to recognise Fode Sillah as the legitimate ruler of Combo and paid him a stipend. With Combo subjected, Fode Sillah turned his attention to the Jola in Casamance, who were still traditionalist believers. During these raids he extended his territory as far south as the Casamance river. Peter Mark, however, believes that these military actions did not result in the conversion of the Jola to Islam.¹³⁴

The demarcation of the border brought Fode Sillah into conflict with the colonial powers. His constant raids against the Jola, which destabilised the region and interrupted the trade, had already annoyed both the French and the British. When Fode Sillah, quite understandably, refused to cooperate with the partitioning of his Caliphate between Britain and France, joint Anglo-French actions were taken against him. In 1894 Combo was conquered and Fode Sillah was captured in the Casamance by the French, assisted by the Jola, and banned to St. Louis. There, later that same year 1894, he died.¹³⁵

Fode Sillah was no doubt one of the more successful *jihadists* of the Senegambia. He was not only able to defeat the *Soninke* rulers, but also managed to set up a Caliphate guided by *Shariah* law. Most of the people who converted to Islam during the Combo *jihads* remained Muslims after Fode Sillah was overthrown. In that sense the *marabouts* had not just achieved a temporary victory. Their ultimate aim of the conversion of the 'infidels' was reached. From their point of view the *jihad* had not just been legitimate, but had proven to be successful.

Ma Ba Diakhou Ba: a Tijani jihad in Baddibu

Probably the best-documented Gambian *jihad* is that of Ma Ba Diakhou Ba. Both Charlotte Quinn and Martin A. Klein have published elaborately about this Tijani

¹³⁰ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 132, 133. Renner suggests that a much circulated pamphlet which described the civil war in Combo between 1888 and 1889, was written by Fode Sillah.

¹³¹ The theme of *halwa* is classic among *jihadists*. Both al-Hajj Umar Tall and Uthman dan Fodio went into retreat before proclaiming a *jihad*.

¹³² C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 170.

¹³³ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 144.

¹³⁴ P. Mark, *A cultural, economic and religious history of the Basse Casamance*, 689, 690.

¹³⁵ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 60.

marabout who established a Muslim caliphate in Baddibu on the north bank of The Gambia.¹³⁶ Ma Ba Dikahou was born around 1809 as the eldest son into a clerical family from Futa Toro. Klein believes that he belonged to a Jakhanke family¹³⁷ whereas Quinn assumes he was a Torodbe. Considering the tradition of Futa Toro, the latter seems more likely.¹³⁸ Ma Ba was the eldest son of N'Diogou Penda Ba and a Wolof woman called Diakhou Jaya. The couple moved to Baddibu before Ma Ba was born.

Ma Ba grew up under the guidance of his father, who had a Qur'anic school in Baddibu. He was sent to M'Bayène in Kayor for further studies and later moved to Jollof where he studied under *Shayk* Momar M'Baye.¹³⁹ While studying in Jollof Ma Ba himself also opened a Qur'anic school. He seems to have gained a good reputation, for he married the niece of the *burba* Jollof Matti N'Jie, who became the mother of his son and successor Sait Maty.¹⁴⁰ When his father died in 1827, Ma Ba did not return to Baddibu, though he was the oldest son. Rather, one of his younger half-brothers Saer Diaklehou took over the leadership of the family, while Ma Ba continued his studies. A few years later however, his family travelled to Jollof to persuade him to return home. Tradition states that he did so reluctantly. In Baddibu he was warmly welcomed by the *Mansa* of Baddibu, Jeriba Marong.¹⁴¹ He received permission to build his own town Ker Maba (Wolof), called Manbakunda in Mandinka but his attempts to convert the *Mansa* failed.

Ma Ba spent his first ten years in Baddibu teaching. Many of his students, the majority of whom were Wolof, later participated in the *jihad*. Somewhere during this time of teaching in Baddibu, Ma Ba is said to have encountered al-Hajj Umar Tall. Klein dates that meeting around 1850 in the village of Kabakoto. Quinn indirectly points to a similar time.¹⁴² According to oral tradition, Ma Ba and Umar

¹³⁶ C. A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihad: 1850-1890', in J.R. Willes, *Studies in West African Islamic history*, Vol. 1 The cultivators of Islam, Frank Cass, London 1979, 233-259; C. A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 107-156; C.A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Diakhou Ba: Scholar-Warrior of the Senegambia' in O. Ikime (ed.), *Leadership in 19th century Africa: essays from Tarikh*, Longman, London 1974, 33-44; M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1968. Ma Ba's story is also published as a novel: I. D.Tham, *MaBa Diakhou Ba: almamy du Rip (Sénégal)*, ABC, Paris/Dakar/Abidjan 1977.

¹³⁷ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 66.

¹³⁸ C.A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Dkiakhou and the Gambian Jihad', 234.

¹³⁹ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 67. Cayor had many schools in the Torodbe tradition. Stephen Harmon indicates that the schools at Pir and Koki were founded by Hammat Fall and Matar N'Doumbe Diop respectively, who had studied with Torodbe followers of Nasir ad-Din's movement. S.A. Harmon, 'Ils sont retirés des bien du monde: Islamic reform and community in Senegambia: c. 1660-1800, *Afrika Zamana*, 3 (July 1995), 59.

¹⁴⁰ C. A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihad', 235.

¹⁴¹ C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 112.

¹⁴² C.A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihad', 242. Quinn seems to imply that the meeting took place at Ma Ba's initiative. She writes: 'At this time the Tijaniyya leader, al Hajj Umar, was gathering support for his attack on the states of the Upper Senegal valley, and in 1850 Maba arranged a meeting with him. According to tradition the two men prayed together for three days and Umar told Maba of the significance of the Tijaniyya brotherhood

prayed together for three days and three nights after which Umar chose Ma Ba as the Tijani representative for Baddibu.¹⁴³ If this date is correct, this would imply that Ma Ba continued to teach quietly for several years, promoting the Tijani *wird* by a spiritual *jihad* rather than by the sword.

There are different versions as to what triggered the *jihad*. According to one oral tradition Math Diaker, the son of the *Mansa* of Baddibu, kidnapped the wife of a Muslim and demanded a cow from Ma Ba to celebrate the marriage. Annoyed, Ma Ba responded with an insult: he sent a bowl of porridge and beans instead. When Math Diaker thereupon seized the person bringing the bowl, Muslim forces attacked Passy Khour, killed Math Diaker and thus the *jihad* had begun.¹⁴⁴

Both Klein and Gailey however, carry a more likely version. This account tells that the *jihad* was triggered by a British punitive action against Baddibu. The tradition tells that the British came to Baddibu to punish the inhabitants for harrasing British traders. According to the story Ma Ba came aboard of the Governor's ship and agreed to accompany the expedition, provided his village would be spared. Having heard of this agreement, the *Mansa* became furious and sent his son Math Diaker to kill Ma Ba. Drunk Math Diaker bragged about his intentions to kill Ma Ba and thus spilled the plot. He was killed by Muslim forces before he could execute his plans. This incident started off the *jihad* in Baddibu.¹⁴⁵ This story reflects the delicate power balance that existed in Baddibu, the threat felt by the *Mansa* from the growing Muslim community in Baddibu and the dissatisfaction of the Muslims with the situation of being ruled by a non-Muslim chief.

When the *jihad* started in 1861, there was no way stopping it. The Muslim forces swept through Baddibu, killing the *Mansa* and conquering village after village. Many refugees turned to the British for help and some were resettled in Combo. At the same time Muslims from Combo travelled to Baddibu to assist in the *jihad*. Renner reports that Fode Kabba Turay crossed over to the North Bank with a party of 300 men, whilst the Muslims from Bakoteh sent Ma Ba 400 dollars to support his cause.¹⁴⁶ Also from other areas Muslims streamed to Baddibu to back up the *jihad*. The Jakhanke Muslim leader Fode Kaba Dumbuya joined Ma Ba in 1862 and functioned as one of the lieutenants.¹⁴⁷

There are various accounts, which tell of Ma Ba's intention to return to his teaching and his farm once he had overthrown the *Soninke* leadership of Baddibu.¹⁴⁸

and the *jihad* (holy war) he proposed to bring to the Senegambia. It is said that he and Maba divided the area between them and that Maba was to be responsible for carrying the *jihad* to the Gambia valley.' C.A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou Ba: Scholar-Warrior of the Senegambia', 35.

¹⁴³ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 67.

¹⁴⁴ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 71.

¹⁴⁵ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 71; H.A. Gailey, *A history of the Gambia*, 46.

¹⁴⁶ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in British Combo*, 124.

¹⁴⁷ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 62.

¹⁴⁸ C.A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou Ba: Scholar-Warrior of the Senegambia', 37. H.A. Gailey, *A history of the Gambia*, 47.

He himself never seems to have carried weapons and merely supported the fights by prayer. However, once the aggression was unleashed, there was no easy way to contain it. Muslims in neighbouring states, such as Niumi, appealed for assistance to rise against the *Soninke* and *Soninke* rulers within Baddibu tried to regain power. While aiding the Muslims in Niumi, the king of Saloum invaded Baddibu and the *marabout* army had to return in haste to defend their territory.¹⁴⁹

After an initial Muslim victory over the Saloum, the *Soninke* from Saloum made a coalition with the French. Their joint attack on the *marabout* forces meant a heavy blow for the Muslim army. The *Soninke* Samba Laobe was reinstalled. When he died in 1864, the *marabout* forces reacted immediately. They conquered large parts of the Saloum and imposed Islam on the Serer. The victory resulted in the recognition of Ma Ba as *almamy* of Baddibu and the Saloum by the French. Ma Ba's state came to be known as 'Rip'. In 1862 an attempt was made to extend the *jihād* to Kiang on the south of the river but the attempt failed.¹⁵⁰ Gradually the *marabouts* were able to extend the borders of the state northwards, including Jollof into their territory. By 1865 Ma Ba controlled most of the territory between the rivers Gambia and Saloum and was closer than any one had been for a long time in uniting the former Wolof Empire. An alliance with the Moors and the Tokolor from Futa Toro seemed immanent, but the *marabout* armies had to return to Baddibu to suppress a revolt. The opportunity to unite the whole of the Senegambia was over once and for all.¹⁵¹

Initially the French had preferred a union of the different groups under the Muslim flag of Ma Ba to the pillaging *tyeddo*. After a while however, they realised how close they had been to losing all their influence in Senegal and their attitude towards Ma Ba changed. When Ma Ba gave protection to Lat Dior, a renowned opponent of the French colonial government, their position hardened and they began attacking the *marabout*.¹⁵² Their initial attempts had little effect. By 1867 Sine was the only territory left that was not controlled by the *marabouts*. But Sine proved Ma Ba's Waterloo. When he invaded Sine in 1867, he met with a fierce resistance. The battle of Somb became a heavy loss for the *marabout* forces and Ma Ba was found dead at his prayer mat.¹⁵³

After Ma Ba's death the momentum was lost. Ma Ba had not left a centralised state nor appointed a successor. A council of chiefs appointed Ma Ba's brother Mamadou N'Dari Ba as his successor, but he missed Ma Ba's charisma and soon conflicts started. Quinn calls this 'the secularisation of the *jihād*'. The disputes were settled by a division of Ma Ba's territory. His brother Mamadou N'Dari Ba (on behalf of Ma Ba's son Sait Maty Ba) ruled the western parts with Nioro as capital. One of Ma Ba's lieutenants, Biram Ceesay, reigned over the eastern parts of Ma

¹⁴⁹ The Niumi Muslims did not succeed in the *jihād*. British intervention resulted in a peace treaty between the *Soninke* and the *marabouts* in Niumi. The treaty prescribed that the Muslims submitted again to *Soninke* rulership.

¹⁵⁰ C. A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihad', 245, 246.

¹⁵¹ C.A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou Ba: Scholar-Warrior of the Senegambia', 40.

¹⁵² M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 80, 81.

¹⁵³ M.A. Klein, *Islam and imperialism in Senegal*, 91.

Ba's empire.¹⁵⁴ In the early 1880s Sait Maty successfully disputed Mamadou's right to the throne and gained control of Baddibu. He continued his strife for his father's inheritance by attacking Biram Ceesay. In 1887 the French feared that the fights might extend to the Saloum and intervened, aided by the *tyeddo* of Saloum. Sait Maty fled to the Ceded Mile for British protection and lived quietly in one of the villages in British Combo where he died in 1897. Biram Ceesay was captured in 1888 and deported to Gabon.¹⁵⁵

Though Ma Ba was able to wage a *jihad* for only about 6 six years and did not leave a centralised Islamic state with well-instituted structures, he succeeded in his aims. He waged a *jihad* according to the Islamic principles and was able to rally large groups of people, who were dissatisfied with the *Soninke* leadership, under the banner of Islam. He never allied himself with non-Muslims and all people serving in his army were Muslims. The British governor is reported to have observed – to his astonishment – that on a certain occasion in 1865 the whole of Ma Ba's army prostrated itself as one person in evening prayers.¹⁵⁶ Ma Ba imposed Islam on large regions of the Senegambia, which had been virtually untouched by Islam before.¹⁵⁷ Many were converted, be it forcibly, and remained Muslims after the decline of Rip.¹⁵⁸ Among them were the kings of Jollof and Kayor who voluntarily converted to Islam under Ma Ba's guidance. His *jihad* inspired Muslims in other areas to overthrow the *Soninke* leadership. On the negative side it must be stated that Ma Ba's *jihad* caused a lot of upheaval and destruction in the region and brought about a stream of refugees. It is difficult to assess whether Ma Ba really wanted to abdicate from power in 1862, but the fact that he was unable to do so shows the depth of discontent amongst Muslims with their *Soninke* overlords.

Momodou Lamine Darameh (1885-1887): wali or adventurer

One of the most contested figures among the Senegambian *jihadists* is the Serahuli Momodou Lamine Darameh.¹⁵⁹ Trimingham lists him among the 'military adventurers' who 'used Islam largely as a cloak for their personal ambitions' and 'made use of Islam as a rallying cry for resistance against European conquest'.¹⁶⁰ Sanneh sketches him as the man who betrayed his irenic *Jakhanke* tradition for personal political ambitions.¹⁶¹ Clarke on the contrary describes him as a true

¹⁵⁴ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 94-96.

¹⁵⁵ A. Hughes and G.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 51, 153, 154.

¹⁵⁶ C.A. Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou Ba: Scholar-Warrior of the Senegambia', 42.

¹⁵⁷ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 142.

¹⁵⁸ Quinn reports that statistics taken in the second quarter of the 20th century showed that over 80 percent of the population of the old *Soninke* states was Muslim. C.A. Quinn, 'Ma Ba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihad', 254.

¹⁵⁹ There are many variations both of the first name and of the family name of Momodou Lamine. Some call him Mamadou Lamine or Mahmadu Lamin, while the name Darame, is also spelled as Drammeh or Dramé. I have opted for the spelling of Lamin Sanneh, who studied the *Jakhanke* clerical tradition of which Momodou Lamine was a member.

¹⁶⁰ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 165.

¹⁶¹ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 78, 89.

reformer, a man of the calibre of Uthman dan Fodio and al-Hajj Umar Tall¹⁶², whereas Sonko Godwin describes him as a *wali*, a Muslim saint.¹⁶³ Ibrahim Kaké in his novel *Mamadou Lamine: marabout et résistant Soninké*¹⁶⁴ gives a similar positive interpretation. Ivan Hrbek states that it is 'an undeniable fact that he belonged to the same category of Muslims revivalists as the above *mujahidin*' (he mentions Uthman dan Fodio, al-Hajj Umar Tall, Sheku Amadu Lobbo and others). But he adds that 'he must be seen against this Islamic and local context, and regarded as a Muslim as well as a Sarakholle, a *shaykh* as well as a warrior'.¹⁶⁵

The fact that Momodou Lamine only had a very short political career, is part of the interpretation problem faced by historians. The data, which can serve as an interpretation frame, are limited because the *jihad* 'was launched at a time when the French colonial conquest in West Africa was at its most vigorous phase'.¹⁶⁶ This is complicated by the fact that Momodou Lamine himself left very little written evidence of his aims and intentions. The reconstruction of Momodou Lamine's *jihad* is mostly based on French colonial sources and oral Jakhanke traditions.¹⁶⁷

From the point of view of the biography there are remarkable similarities between al-Hajj Umar Tall and Momodou Lamine. Just like al-Hajj Umar, Momodu Lamine was born into a clerical family somewhere between 1830 and 1840. His official name was Demba Dibassi Darame but later he became known under the name of Momodou Lamine.¹⁶⁸ His father was a Serahuli Jakhanke named Mamadou-Khoumba who initially lived in Madina, the capital of Khasso, but shortly after the birth of Momodou Lamine settled in Safalou in southern Bondu.

Momodou Lamine studied in Bondu, first under the guidance of his father, later under other clerics in Gunjur. At some time during his youth Momodou Lamine had a negative experience with the people of Gamon, a state south of Bondu.¹⁶⁹ Gamon later became the first object of Momodou Lamine's *jihad*. There are also traditions that relate that somewhere during his youth, Momodou Lamine met with al-Hajj Umar Tall. There is however no evidence to support these stories, apart for the fact that Momodou Lamine became a member of the Tijaniyya brotherhood at an early age.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 147.

¹⁶³ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 33.

¹⁶⁴ I.B. Kaké, *Mamadou Lamine: marabout et résistant Soninké*, ABC, Paris/Abijan/Dakar 1977.

¹⁶⁵ I. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities' in J.R. Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic history*, Vol. 1 The cultivators of Islam, 211.

¹⁶⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 147.

¹⁶⁷ I. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 220, 221.

¹⁶⁸ I. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 212.

¹⁶⁹ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 68. One version tells how both Momodou Lamine and his mother were captured during a raid and kept in detention for some time, in expectation of a ransom. The tradition says that his mother, frail in health died before the ransom could be paid, reason why Momodou Lamine held a grudge against the people of Gamon. Another tradition relates that the young Momodou Lamine was captured during a military raid of Bondu against Gamon and maltreated while imprisoned.

¹⁷⁰ I. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 212. Sanneh gives more examples of stories that imply a meeting between al-Hajj Umar Tall and Momodou Lamine,

Like al-Hajj Umar, Momodou Lamine went on an extended pilgrimage/study tour to Mecca, possibly somewhere in the 1850s. On his journey he met Sheku Amadou Lobbo in Masina and possibly Muhammad Bello as well. His stay in Mecca in this period (Momodou Lamine was away from Bondou from about 1855 to 1879) is not documented. It is unclear whether he stayed in Mecca the whole time or whether he travelled around.¹⁷¹ He returned to West Africa in the late 1870s and visited Masina where he befriended al-Tijan, al-Hajj Umar's nephew. Later, between 1878 and 1880, he proceeded to Segou where he met with Ahmadu Tall. Possibly Ahmadu felt threatened by the growing popularity of the Serahuli *shaykh*, for he detained Momodou Lamine for a period of about five years. Other sources say that Ahmadu was vexed with Momodou Lamine because he accused Ahmadu of failing to implement the *Shariah* in his empire. He claimed that he, Momodou Lamine himself, was the rightful leader of the Tijaniyya and the successor to the heritage of al-Hajj Umar in the Western Sudan.¹⁷² Several, rather legendary accounts, relate how miraculous interventions protected Momodou Lamine from assassination attempts by Ahmadu.¹⁷³

In 1885 Momodou Lamine was able to escape from Segou. Serahuli Dyula had already spread his fame far and wide. Returning to his hometown Gunjur around mid 1885, he was warmly welcomed and celebrated as a saint (*wali*) and an al-Hajj.¹⁷⁴ A few months after his return to his native land, he began to preach a *jihad* against unbelievers. Gamon, for obvious reasons, became the object of the *jihad*. Unique in the history of West Africa was the fact that Momodou Lamine requested permission from the French to wage a *jihad*.¹⁷⁵ Again the sources differ in interpretation as to why he did this. Sonko-Godwin and Clarke present Momodou Lamine first of all as a man who genuinely wanted to wage a *jihad* against unbelievers and was able to rally the Serahuli community to his support, but who did

but rejects them as legends. He concludes: 'All these accounts have one thing in common, namely the suggestion that Momodou-Lamin and al-Hajj Umar enjoyed a religious *entente cordial*, and that their aims were the same, that is, the overthrow of pagan powers, and their compromised Muslim supporters, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the institution of a reformed Islamic political order.' L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 67, 68.

¹⁷¹ D. Nyambarza, 'Le marabout El Hadj Mamadou Lamine d'après les archives françaises', *Cahiers d'études Africaines*, 33 /ix (1969), 125. Nyambarza suggests a stay in Constantinople and also places like Cairo are suggested.

¹⁷² P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 146. Clarke also mentions that there was a conviction among the Tokolor that al-Hajj Umar Tall had not been killed in battle but vanished and would return in the hour of greatest need. By claiming to be the Tijani *khalifa* Momodou Lamine indirectly stated that al-Hajj Umar was dead and would not return.

¹⁷³ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 72-76.

¹⁷⁴ There are numerous stories about the many gifts Momodou Lamine had received on his return journey from Mecca. Among them were 300 leather bound copies of the Qur'an, most of which were later destroyed by the French in the battle of Kydira in 1886. All these stories underline the prestige and the respect that surrounded Momodou Lamine on his return. L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 71.

¹⁷⁵ L. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmada Lamin's activities', 217.

not want to antagonise the French.¹⁷⁶ D. Nyambarza sketches Momodou Lamine's *jihad* as a cover for resistance against the French. Sanneh sees him as a man who had personal ambitions for wanting to overturn the Tokolor Empire of Bondu and who hoped that good contacts with the French thereafter would result in his recognition as the new leader of Bondu by the French.¹⁷⁷

By the end of 1885, less than half a year after his return to Gunjur, Momodou Lamine was seen as the spiritual and temporal leader of the Serakhule people throughout the region. The turn from preaching and teaching to military action came in the beginning of 1886. In December 1885 the *Almami* of Bondu, Bakar Saada, a friend of Momodou Lamine had died and Bondu was thrown into a struggle for succession. The rightful heir was a weak and old man and several younger candidates hoped to seize the opportunity to become *Almami* themselves. Under the guise of asking permission to travel through Bondu in order to wage a *jihad* against Gamos, Momodou Lamine seized power in Bondu, aided by one of the candidates to the position of *Almami*, Usman Gassi.¹⁷⁸ Hrbek states: 'This unexpected victory profoundly changed all the projects of Mahmadu Lamin; he abandoned the *jihad* against Gamos forever, and began to turn Bondu into the nucleus of a Sarakholle state. Many Torodbe left their villages and fled to Ferlo, or to the vicinity of Bakel, and Mahmadu Lamin began to resettle the abandoned villages with Sarakholle people.'¹⁷⁹

Attracted by the victory over Bondu many joined Momodou Lamine's army. By the end of 1886, Momodou Lamine had a militia of more than 7000 men mainly from Serakhuli descent. Hrbek believes that Momodou Lamine had intended to abandon any further military action after he had conquered Bondu and wanted to settle as ruler of Bondu. Even if that was the case, fate decided otherwise and the choice was no longer his to make. His initial partner Usman Gassi turned against him when it became clear that Momodou Lamine had no intention of handing over the rule of Bondu. The French also looked at Momodou Lamine's popularity with growing apprehension. The assembled army was eager to fight against the Tokolor who had oppressed them for so many years¹⁸⁰ and against the French, who had humiliated the Serakhuli and compelled them to forced labour.¹⁸¹ It seems there was no way to contain the assembled men and to establish a quiet, Islamic rule in Bondu. The result was an enormous and impressive conquest of the surrounding area. In 1886, Momodou Lamine laid the foundations for an empire, which included the states of Bambuk, Bondu, Gouy, Khass and the Kaarta province of the Tokolor Empire.¹⁸² Sanneh notes that when it became clear that Momodou Lamine had

¹⁷⁶ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 34; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 146,147.

¹⁷⁷ D. Nuambarza, 'Le marabout El Hajj Mamadou Lamine d'après les archives françaises', 131, 132; L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 82.

¹⁷⁸ L. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 221-223.

¹⁷⁹ L. Hrbek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 224.

¹⁸⁰ D. Hrbek 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 221.

¹⁸¹ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 77.

¹⁸² P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 33-40.

political ambitions, many Jakhanke families withdrew their support and left Bondu for other areas.¹⁸³

The remaining part of the story is easily told. The first battle with the French in March 1886 was a victory for the Serahuli army. Also several other skirmishes in 1886 did not have the envisaged result. Therefore, in 1887 the French made a treaty with Amadu Tall, renown enemy of Momodou Lamine, in which he promised to deal with Momodou Lamine's son Swaebou. A joint army of French soldiers, the Sisibé family of Bondu and their supporters and the king of Fuladu Musa Molloh eventually cornered Momodou Lamine. In December 1887 the decisive battle was fought at Touba Kuta, where the French defeated the Serakhuli army. Momodou Lamine fled the battlefield and was killed by his enemies in the village of Kanaya a few days later.¹⁸⁴

Momodou Lamine was both a *marabout* reformer and a warrior defending Serahuli interests. There is no doubt that his zeal for Islam was sincere. He spent most of his life studying, preaching and teaching the Qur'an. Clarke's comment that Momodou Lamine's *jihad* was badly planned time-wise, is correct. It coincided with the increasing French imperialism in West Africa. Thus Momodou Lamine never had the chance to establish an Islamic state based on *Shariah* principles in Bondu. In that sense his mission failed because his context was quite different from that of al-Hajj Umar Tall, Ma Ba Diakhou Ba and Uthman dan Fodio. Hbrek summarises it: 'The time for a militant form of revival in this part of Africa was over; the tragedy of Mahmadu Lamin was that he did not realize it.'¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Momodou Lamine had a profound impact on Islam in the Bondu region. His preaching caused a revival among the Serahuli community, both in the religious life and their life as an ethnic community. A side effect of Momodou Lamine's *jihad* was a wave of dispersion of Jakhanke clerics from Bondu to other areas such as the Futa Jallon.¹⁸⁶

The eclipse of the jihad movement

Militant Islam was prominent in the Senegambia in the second half of the 19th century. But at the periphery of the movement there were also people who used the term *jihad* to advance their own careers. Quinn calls this 'the secularisation of the jihad'. One of these men was Fode Kabba Dumbuya. A Jakhanke by tradition,¹⁸⁷ Fode Kabba was born at Kosse in Wuli as the son of a well-known Islamic scholar Fode Bakari Dumbuya. Some traditions say that the family left Wuli for Jimara and established a wharf called Majali, while others say that they established themselves at Pirifu in Fuladu East.¹⁸⁸ This last tradition seems more likely because the family later got into trouble with the Mollohs who reigned over Fuladu.

¹⁸³ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 80.

¹⁸⁴ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 40.

¹⁸⁵ D. Hbrek, 'The early period of Mahmadu Lamin's activities', 227.

¹⁸⁶ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 88.

¹⁸⁷ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 191.

¹⁸⁸ C.A. Quinn, *The Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 172; L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 191.

According to Patience Sonko-Godwin, Fode Kabba 'was brought up in a strict Islamic environment and therefore dedicated his life to the promotion of Islam.'¹⁸⁹ Certainly in his early years, Islam played a key-role. His father was a trader, rather than an agriculturist. However, he was first of all a Jakhanke cleric. No doubt Fode Kabba spent the first years of his schooling at his fathers feet, but no details about further studies are known. Though a Jakhanke, Fode Kabba joined Ma Ba Diakhou in his *jihad* in Baddibu in 1862 and stayed in there, defending the cause of Islam, even in the 1870s.

In later years, however, the purpose of his life changed. Around 1876, Alfa Molloh, the Fula overlord of the Dumbuya family, killed Fode Kabba's father, Fode Bakari Dumbuya.¹⁹⁰ Fode Kabba thereupon returned to his hometown and in revenge started raiding Fuladu and its surroundings. It was thus that he gained his reputation of 'being a veteran troublemaker'.¹⁹¹ Though not able to subjugate Fuladu, Fode Kaba was able to conquer large areas in Kiang, Nyamina, Jarra and Foni and established Medina in Casamance as his centre of operation. Islam seems to have played little part in Fode Kabba's later years.¹⁹² He cleverly played the British and the French out against each other, thus being able to maintain his power. Fode Kabba's career came to an end when in 1900 the travelling commissioner Sitwell and 8 others were shot at an incident in Sankandi and Fode Kabba proved involved. A joint British and French operation against Fode Kabba resulted in the complete destruction of Medina and all its inhabitants, including Fode Kabba.¹⁹³ Fode Kabba was 82 at the time of his death. Despite his obvious non-religious motives during the largest part of his life, oral tradition seems to have valued Fode Kabba as a good Muslim. Clarke concludes his paragraph on Fode Kabba with the words: 'Much maligned in European records and eventually defeated by a three pronged British, French and Fulani assault in 1901, Fode Kaba nevertheless is presented in some oral traditions as a great Muslim leader, as a man endowed with miraculous powers, who among other things, could command rivers to dry up so that his troops could cross in safety and escape the enemy.'¹⁹⁴

Fode Kabba's greatest enemies, the Mollohs, also seem to have used Islam to further their own power. In 1868, after the fall of Kaabu, a Fula elephant hunter called Molloh Egue revolted against his Mandinka overlords. With the help of the Fula of Alfa Umar from Futa Jallon he was able to overthrow the traditional rulership. Born in the Mandinka state of Jimara around 1820, Molloh Egue became the new *Mansa* of Firdu and proceeded to conquer the Mandinka states of Jimara, Tumanna, Wuropana, Pate, Kamko, Yega and Fambantan, thereby laying the foundation for a new empire, called Fuladu.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 62.

¹⁹⁰ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 458.

¹⁹¹ H.A. Gailey, *A history of the Gambia*, 54.

¹⁹² Sanneh maintains that the Jakhanke clerics withdrew their support and prayers from Fode Kabba's activities. L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 192.

¹⁹³ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia region*, 61-68.

¹⁹⁴ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 143.

¹⁹⁵ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 69.

Molloh Egue is said to have converted to Islam to underline the newly formed friendship between himself and the leaders of the Futa Jallon, to which Fuladu was a tributary. He later proceeded to the Futa Jallon for Islamic studies after which he accepted the name of Alfa Molloh. Some say he took a Tijani oath in 1867. But it is often suggested that Molloh's religious allegiance was more a matter of political expediency than of religious devotion, because his conversion to Islam guaranteed him the military back up of the two powerful Fula Islamic empires of Futa Toro and Futa Jallon.¹⁹⁶

After Alfa Molloh's death in 1881 a power struggle ensued between Alfa's brother Bakari Dembel, who according to the matrilineal system was the rightful inheritor of the throne and Alfa's son Musa Molloh. Musa Molloh withdrew with his supporters to Hamdallai in the Casamance and from there gradually re-conquered Fuladu. Molloh junior did not seem to have had any particular claims of being a *marabout*. In 1892 he proclaimed himself king of Fuladu. The partition of the Senegambia, Musa Molloh's continued slave raids and his power play between the French and the British eventually led to his downfall. In 1919 he was banned to Sierra Leone and Hamdallai was destroyed. On his return to The Gambia in 1923 until his death in 1931, Musa Molloh was only a shadow of his former self, shorn of all his power.¹⁹⁷

The attitude of the Mollohs to Islam was ambiguous to say the least. It is certain that there were clerics at the court in Fuladu. Sanneh mentions that there were Jakhanke clerics in Alfa Molloh's entourage and according to Quinn even at later times there were clerics at the court in Fuladu.¹⁹⁸ Reeve states that the people in Fuladu 'were fiercely religious Mohammedans, being ruled by a war chief and priest in one, so that the Christian was barred from entering their towns.'¹⁹⁹ Yet Musa Molloh seems to have been more of a war chief than a cleric. Sonko-Godwin states that Musa Molloh was 'a traditional worshipper though he claimed to be a Muslim, who had a firm belief in the powers of Marabouts and the *juju*.'²⁰⁰ Quinn denies Reeve's statement of the hostility of the Mollohs to Christianity. She mentions that Musa Molloh sent 'a number of his innumerable children to Anglican or French Protestant schools in Bathurst and was on excellent terms with the Christian missions in the area.'²⁰¹ Nevertheless, though Islam played a role in the conquests of the Mollohs and they themselves used the term *jihad* for their conquests, they cannot be classified as *jihadists*. They fought against fellow Muslims and showed no inclination to convert the *Soninkeya* to Islam. Personal gain and a desire for power seem to have been the main motives for their conquests.

¹⁹⁶ A. Hughes and G.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 27, 124, 125.

¹⁹⁷ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 74-82.

¹⁹⁸ L. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim clerics*, 191; C.A. Quinn, *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia*, 175.

¹⁹⁹ H.F. Reeve, *the Gambia*, 141.

²⁰⁰ P. Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia*, 72.

²⁰¹ C.A. Quinn, 'A nineteenth century Fulbe state', *Journal of African history*, XII/3 (1971), 439.

4.6 Islam in The Gambia in the 20th century

Colonialism and Islam in West Africa

The *jihads* of the 19th century coincided with increasing British and French imperialism in West Africa. Though the conference of Berlin in 1884/5 is often seen as the hallmark of colonialism, both countries had already begun to extend their influence in West Africa from the beginning of the 19th century onwards. Clarke says: 'The Berlin Conference did not initiate the European "scramble" for Africa in the 1880s but rather laid down the rules to be followed by a European power if its occupation of a part of Africa was to be considered valid by the rest of Europe.'²⁰²

Neither France nor Britain had a clearly out-spelled policy towards Islam. French anticlericalism rather favoured the spread of Islam in Africa to that of Christianity. Western-trained West African Christians were seen as troublemakers and critics of the colonial regime. Besides, many French colonial officers saw conversion to Islam as a first step towards the civilisation of Africans. A doctoral thesis on the French policy towards Islam in West Africa of Quellien summarises this view. It states: 'Muslim propaganda is a step towards civilisation in West Africa, and it is universally recognised that the Muslim peoples of this region are superior to those who had remained fetishist, in social organisation, intellectual culture, commerce, industry, well-being, style of life and education.'²⁰³ People like Governor Faidherbe also saw Islam as an instrument to unify the French West African possessions.²⁰⁴ But where the aspirations of the *jihadists* clashed with French imperialistic interests, as in the cases of Ahmadu Tall, Ma Ba Diakhou Ba and Momodou Lamine, this positive view of Islam was shelved and military expeditions were summoned.

England had a different policy. For a long time, the British maintained an attitude of non-intervention and *laissez faire*. The colonies were not supposed to cost money and military expeditions only were legitimate when the fate of British subjects was threatened. In practice this meant a policy of maximum co-operation in terms of the existing local administration, even where this local administration was the result of a recent Muslim *jihad*. In many cases it implied that the British policy of indirect rule enhanced the consolidation and spread of Islam.²⁰⁵ Challenged by the increasing French imperialistic aspirations towards the end of the 19th century, the British government progressively intervened in religious conflicts in the hinterlands, such as the Senegambian Soninke-Marabout wars, and thus extended its authority.

²⁰² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 185.

²⁰³ Cited as in P.B. Clarke, *West African and Islam*, 190.

²⁰⁴ M.A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum*, 41.

²⁰⁵ J.S. Trimmingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 226, 227. 'The Islamic state, although it collided with both British and French colonial expansion, survived the transformation much better than did the traditional state. In Nigeria, the British maintained the Emirates as the structures through which to rule - even though so much of the population was not Muslim. As a result, Islam spread far more effectively under colonial rule than it had ever done under the jihads. In general, the colonial powers were careful about Islamic sensibilities and did their best to avoid provocation, not least by damping down Christian missionary activity.' A.F. Walls, 'Africa, Africa in Christian history: retrospect and prospect', *Journal of African Christian thought*, 1/1 (1998), 9.

The policy of the colonisers towards Islam was diverse and often opportunistic. Similarly, the response of the Islamic community to colonialism was diverse. The reactions were threefold. First of all there was resistance. Many of the 19th century *jihādists* saw the promotion of an Islamic state as a way to resist the colonial powers. Fode Silla Combo and Lat Dior might serve as examples.²⁰⁶ Secondly, there were Muslim leaders who co-operated with the colonial government. Ma Ba Diakhou Ba was recognised as *imam* of the Baddibu/Rip for a while, before it came to a military confrontation and Momodou Lamine attempted to avoid a clash with the French. Leaders like the Senegalese founder of the Murids, Ahmadu Bamba and the Mauretaniai Shaikh Sidiya Baba, after an initial period of resistance, openly supported the French colonial government and encouraged their people to do likewise.²⁰⁷ Thirdly there were groups of Muslims who adopted the classic reaction of *hijra*, withdrawal. Though not literally leaving the colonial territory, these Muslim communities withdrew psychologically from the colonial occupation by avoiding any form of contact with Western influences through culture, education etc. Clarke quotes a Bamidele (Northern Nigeria) song, which expresses the sentiment of these groups. It sings: 'My child will not travel to a European country... as for Mecca, he, his wife and child will go.'²⁰⁸ This attitude, which was adopted by large groups of people, had as consequence that after independence many Muslims lagged behind in development because they had rejected Western education. This hampered their participation in the modern states and modern economy.

Muslim emancipation in West Africa after independence

From 1950s onwards there was a wave of Muslim emancipation in many West African countries. Muslim parties and pressure groups called for a Muslim equivalent to the Christian schools, for the inclusion of Islamic knowledge in the national curriculum and for the official recognition of Muslim holidays and festivals.²⁰⁹ Money coming from the oil-countries since the 1970s has facilitated the implementation of these demands. Large numbers of Muslim primary and secondary schools were established all over West Africa. In some schools the Islamic dressing code has been introduced. Numerous mosques have been built, not just in the main towns, but also at school compounds and in the most remote villages. Oil money has also supported development initiatives, such as well-digging, agricultural programmes and health care projects. The input of large amounts of money into Africa by both the Western world and Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Sudan and Libya has given rise to the expression 'the race for Africa'. The 20th century has meant large numerical increase of both Islam and Christianity in (West) Africa.

A final development in the 20th century is the increasing participation of West Africa and West Africans in the larger Islamic community and in world-wide Islamic organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Conferences. An increasing number of West African students has received scholarships for universities in North Africa and the

²⁰⁶ J.S. Trimingham, *A history of Islam in West Africa*, 175.

²⁰⁷ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 194.

²⁰⁸ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 194.

²⁰⁹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 225.

Middle East. Improved infrastructure has enabled a growing number of people to participate at least once in their lifetime in the *hajj*. This exposure of West Africans to a different type of Islam has given rise to a 'resurgence of Islam' in West Africa. It is a type of Islam, which is less tolerant to both the traditional accommodative Islam and Christianity. It calls for a purification of Islam and the introduction of the *Shariah* in certain West African countries.²¹⁰ Though at present a minority, it has given rise to political tensions and clashes in several West African countries.

Muslim emancipation in The Gambia

Islam in The Gambia developed along similar lines as in the larger West African context. The Soninke-Marabout wars had made a profound impact on the country. The upheaval and wars had enhanced colonial imperialism and had led to the creation of the Gambia Protectorate in 1902. Because many of the traditional ruling families had been massacred during the wars, the British appointed new chiefs in their place, chiefs who were not necessarily of a royal background. In matters of religion the Soninke-Marabout wars had formed the turning point. Islam had become the religion of the majority of the Gambians. Though there are no statistics of the Muslim population in The Gambia before the Soninke Marabout wars, it is clear that many *Soninke* converted to Islam as a result of the *jihads*.

The Islamisation process of The Gambia continued in the first decades of the 20th century. Clarke points to the conversion of the Serer and Jola to Islam in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s. He attributes this increase to the work of the Tijani and Murid brotherhoods and the Qur'anic schools of the Jakhanke.²¹¹ This observation is confirmed by missionary sources, which state that the Serer, the Jola and groups of Fula who in the 1910s and 1920s were still adhering to their traditional religions, gradually converted to Islam.²¹² Social pressure and intermarriage were seen as important factors in the continuing process of Islamisation in The Gambia. According to the latest census of 1993 about 95 percent of the population claimed to Muslims.²¹³

The Soninke-Marabout wars also raised the Islamic self-consciousness. Around 1900 the demand for Muslim education increased. In the 19th century Western education had equalled Christian education. The majority of the Muslims had looked at these schools with apprehension and parents preferred to send their children to traditional Qur'anic schools.²¹⁴ Renner shows that around the turn of the century Muslims formed less than 5 percent of the total students enrolled in the Christian schools.²¹⁵

Around 1900 Muslims in Bathurst took the initiative to open a "modern" (read: Western styled) Muslim school. Among the originators was the father of Ibrahim Momodou Garba-Jahumpa.²¹⁶ In 1903, with the support of the government, the

²¹⁰ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 254, 255.

²¹¹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 202.

²¹² See Chapter 8.

²¹³ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 146. They give a total of 42,083 for the Christian community, which is about four percent.

²¹⁴ D.E. Skinner, 'Islamic education and missionary work', 5.

²¹⁵ F. Renner, *Intergroup relations and British imperialism in Combo*, 244.

²¹⁶ D.E. Skinner, *Islamic education and missionary work*, 9.

Mohammedan Primary School officially became part of the colonial education system. By 1916 the primary school had as many as 113 students enrolled, many of whom later competed for places in technical and high schools.²¹⁷ Also in the rural areas there was a demand for education. In 1923 Governor Cecil Armitage opened a school for the sons of chiefs in Georgetown. This school was started with the intention to provide formal education for students who did not want to join one of the Christian schools.²¹⁸ Initially, the school did little more than providing students with some basic literacy skills. But gradually, after the government had opened some native arrangement primary schools in the Protectorate, Armitage School developed into a post primary boarding school, which became the nursery of many leading politicians from the Protectorate.²¹⁹

Another Muslim educational initiative also started in the capital. In 1936 a group of young Western educated Muslim formed the Young Muslim Society. The YMS encouraged Muslim parents to send their children for formal education and young Muslim students to enter the teaching profession. The main purpose of the YMS was to raise the social and educational consciousness of Muslims in the capital through education. From the Young Muslim Society the Young Renaissance Club developed. Their aims were to provide scholarships for Muslim youths to attend schools, to advocate the interests of Muslim civil servants and to promote social events.²²⁰ Another initiative of the YMS was the formation of the Gambia Muslim Congress. The Young Muslim Society, together with a number of smaller Muslim organisations (*dairas*) was one of the constitutive members of the Gambia Muslims Congress of Garba-Jahumpa.

In 1966 the Young Muslim Society took the decision to widen its activities and to start an Arabic secondary school, a government recognised secondary school which includes an Islamic *daira* curriculum for students who wanted to continue their Islamic Studies abroad.²²¹ The initial stages of the school were linked to Mohammedan Primary School but in 1975 it led to the establishment of an independent school: Muslim High School.

There are also other Gambian organisations interested in reorganising the classical Muslim education to include English and a European-oriented curriculum. Among them are the Islamic Union founded in 1950 and funded by Saudi Arabia and Libya and the Islamic Solidarity Association of West Africa founded in the 1970s by E.T. Jeng and Alhaji Hatab Bojang. In 1982/83 ISA had 50 primary schools operating throughout The Gambia.²²² When in the early 1990s Islamic Knowledge became a compulsory subject in the school curriculum, these organisations have aided in upgrading the qualifications of Islamic Knowledge teachers.

Not only Gambian organisations have been active in providing Islamic education. Also the missionary minded Ahmadiyya movement has been operating on the Gambian

²¹⁷ D.E. Skinner, *Islamic education and missionary work*, 6.

²¹⁸ In the 1920s there were only two primary schools in the Protectorate: a Roman Catholic School in Basse and a Methodist School in Georgetown. In the 1930s mission schools were built in Bwiam and Kristikunda.

²¹⁹ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 32, 33.

²²⁰ D.A. Skinner, 'Islamic education and missionary work', 8.

²²¹ D.A. Skinner, 'Islamic education and missionary work', 13. This school was started with aid from Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Libya and the Islamic Solidarity Fund,

²²² D.A. Skinner, 'Islamic education and missionary work', 13.

educational scene. According to H.J. Fisher the Ahmadiyya movement has had contacts with The Gambia since the 1950s but requests for a permit for an Ahmadiyya missionary were repeatedly refused.²²³ In 1963 the request was granted and a full time missionary settled in The Gambia.²²⁴ The movement received a boost when the president of the local Ahmadiyya movement, Alhaji Farimang Singhateh was appointed as Governor General of The Gambia in 1966.²²⁵ The Ahmadiyya have put much effort in education and medical work. An Ahmadiyya hospital was set up and Nusrat Senior Secondary School (formerly Nusrat High School) was opened in 1971. In 1997 the government banned all non-Gambian Ahmadi's from The Gambia, despite their reputation in development work.²²⁶ The Supreme Islamic Council has issued a Gambian *fatwa* against the Ahmadiyya movement.²²⁷ Several others Muslim primary and secondary schools have since been built often sponsored by development aid from Islamic countries. Muslim schools like Nusrat and a school in Bakoteh have prescribed Islamic dressing codes for both teachers and students. This is a new phenomenon in The Gambia where Muslim women have not observed the *hijab* so far, but have maintained the traditional African way of dressing.

In recent years the number of Islamic development organisations has increased. Among them are the World Islamic Call Council, the Africa Muslim Organisation, Islamic Dawah, the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Cultural and Development Association. While there had been Muslim organisations supporting the country since the 1970s, the number has multiplied since the 1994 coup d'état. When the European Union and the United States of America pronounced sanctions against The Gambia because of its military government and withdrew their financial support, Islamic countries from the Middle East and North Africa stepped in the vacuum. They have since developed themselves as the most important donors to The Gambia.

Revival and a raised Muslim consciousness

Some people speak of a revival within Senegambian Islam since the 1970s. They point to a variety of signs. There is an increased visibility of Islam in the media and in the society. There have been discussions about the introduction of the Shariah.²²⁸ The *hijab* is gradually introduced at Islamic schools and is becoming more common. There is an ever-growing streams of pilgrims to the holy places of Senegambian Islam Touba (Murid) and Tivaouane (Tijani) and to Mecca for *hajj*. There is a renewed attention for the *dairah* system and both men and women attend to study the Qur'an. All these observations have all given rise to speculations that Islam in the Senegambia is experiencing a revival and is closing its ranks.²²⁹

²²³ H.J. Fisher, *Ahmadiyya: a study in contemporary Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1963, 126.

²²⁴ D.A. Skinner, 'Islamic education and missionary work', 10.

²²⁵ www.gambianew.com/info%20on%20Gambia/gambia_chronical.htm. Date: February 26 2003. See also A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *A historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 162, 163.

²²⁶ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *A historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 26.

²²⁷ www.alhafeez.org/rashid/gambia.html. Date: February 26 2003.

²²⁸ www.website.lineone.net/~gambiagts/sharia.htm. Date: 26-3-2003. The discussion on the introduction of the *Shariah* began in 2001 but did not find much support.

²²⁹ J.H. van der Kerke, *Aspeten van de Islam in Senegal(en Gambia)*, 51.

No doubt the visibility of Islam has increased over the last decades. Many mosques have been built, Muslim schools have been started, development projects sponsored by Muslim countries have been executed, radio and television broadcast Islamic programmes and most Gambian newspapers carry a weekly column of one of the Islamic scholars, explaining the faith.²³⁰ Islamic knowledge has become part of the compulsory curriculum and the many young girls wearing *hijab* create the impression of an Islamic country.

Education and financial support have facilitated the emancipation of the Muslim community. Through a vigorous attention for education in the last fifty years, Muslims have reached levels of education comparable to Christians who in the past had always taken the lead. The many scholarships for students to Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have had as side effect that the students have returned to the country with a more strict and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, both towards the Christian community and towards an accommodative form of Islam. Financial support by the so-called oil-countries has also contributed to the raised self-consciousness amongst Muslims. The awareness to be part of world-wide respected community has contributed to their increased self-esteem. This exposure to the wider world of Islam – Gambia is member of the Organisation of Islamic Conferences since 1974²³¹ – has had its influence on the Senegambia and helped Muslims in the definition of their identity. Parallel to the Gambia Christian Council the Muslim organisations have united themselves in the early 1990s in the Supreme Islamic Council, which functions as a forum for the government.²³²

This revival however is one side of the coin. The other side is the ongoing accommodation of Islam. The *marabout* and the *juju* still play a crucial role in the life of the average Gambian Muslim.²³³ Christian Muslim relations are still highly valued and seen as part of the Gambian cultural heritage. This double attitude of accommodativeness and a proud Islamic self-consciousness is reflected in an interview with the president of the Supreme Islamic Council Banding Drammeh. He states: 'There is an unprecedented advance in Islam and Arabic culture in The Gambia. Islamic awareness is universal now, even among the Western-educated scholars. There are over 250 Arabic schools in the country with a corresponding number of graduates from Arabic universities teaching in these schools.' But a few lines later he adds: 'We always encourage dialogue between us and people of other faiths, particularly Christians. In The Gambia there are no inter-religious strives. Christians and Muslims should come together and fight for the common enemy of communism and atheism.'²³⁴

²³⁰ The propagation of Islam in The Gambia is mainly via the radio and the television. Apart from the Qur'an and classical commentaries on the Qur'an there is little published material available from the Gambian soil. Possibly this has to do with the fact that a large percentage of the population is still illiterate.

²³¹ www.oic-oci.org. Date: 26-3-2003.

²³² www.gambianet.com/pages/whoso/banding.shtml. Date: 26-3-2003.

²³³ J.H. van der Kerke, *Aspecten van Islam in Senegal (en Gambia)*, 41; R.L. Moreau, *Africains Musulmans*, 246, 247.

²³⁴ www.gambianet.com/pages/whoson/banding.shtml. Date: 26-2-2003

4.7 Conclusion

Around the 11th or 12th century Islam arrived in the Senegambia. Thereafter it spread slowly but gradually. For a long time, Islam was the minority religion of traders, clerics and the nobility. Though Muslims were respected for their connections with the wider world, for their observance of Islamic laws, for their emphasis on education and for their skills in writing, counselling and divination, the majority of Senegambians did not become Muslim for many centuries. As a minority religion, accommodativeness was Islam's trademark: divination, *jujus* and adaptation to matrilineal cultures show the flexibility and the contextualisation of West African Islam.

The peaceful spread of Islam by means of traders (Dyula), clerics and sufi brotherhoods continued throughout history. From the 18th century onwards a more militant tradition of Islam featured in West Africa. This tradition spread to The Gambia comparatively late, in the second half of the 19th century. Inspired by people like al-Hajj Umar Tall and following the example of the Islamic states of Bondou and Futa Jallon Muslim *marabouts* like Fode Sillah, Ma Ba Diakhou and Momodou Lamine who were dissatisfied with the social-political situation in their country endeavoured to establish Islamic states in The Gambia. Because the *jihads* in The Gambia started at the time when colonial imperialism was advancing, none of the *jihadists* was able to establish a long-lasting Islamic state. Nevertheless their *jihads* had a permanent impact on the Gambian population. Due to the Soninke-Marabout wars of the 19th century Islam became the religion of the majority of the people. The Islamisation of The Gambia continued in the first half of the 20th century. Inter-marriage and social pressure were instrumental in this progress of Islam. The census of 1993 estimates that around 95 percent of the Gambians profess Islam.

The Soninke-Marabout wars have also enhanced a process of emancipation within the Muslim community in the 20th century. Muslims have demanded the establishment of formal Western-oriented Muslim schools at all levels, the institutionalisation of the traditional Muslim education and the inclusion of Islamic Knowledge as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. Aided by large sums of money from Islamic countries and by the assistance of Islamic NGO's these demands have been realised. Islamic NGO's have also contributed substantially to development projects in the agricultural and medical sector.

The contact with the wider Islamic world has led to the emergence of new Gambian Muslims associations and organisations, such as the Supreme Islamic Council, and the Gambian Muslim community is now participating actively in world-wide Islamic events. More and more young Gambians Muslim have been given the opportunity to study and are now able to participate in the government at the highest levels. A considerable number of students has received a scholarship to study in the Middle East. Many of them return home with ideas to reform Gambian Islam and have advocated a more fundamentalist type of Islam. It seems that where Christianity in the second half of the 20th century emphasises the need to contextualise both Christianity and the gospel, the Muslim community develops into the opposite direction. Many Muslim leaders advocate abandoning the traditional accommodative type of African Islam and want Gambian Islam to be in conformity with Middle Eastern models.

It goes without saying that these developments have given the Muslim community a new vitality. There have even been speculations that The Gambia is experiencing a Muslim revival. However, while there are tendencies towards a more fundamentalist type of Islam, the accommodative type of West African Islam continues as well. Though both in the 19th and the 20th centuries there have been attempts to purify Islam of its accommodative aspects, the traditional 'Islam noir' with the *marabout* rather than the imam as crucial figure, still persists. It is this accommodative type of Islam, with its openness towards Christianity and the traditional religions, which has guaranteed the centuries of peaceful coexistence of Christians, Muslims and traditional believers in the Senegambia valley.

5. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONS AND PROTESTANT CHAPLAINCIES TO THE FORTS (1456 – 1820)

5.1 Introduction

With the arrival of the Portuguese at Arguin Island, near the Mauretania coast and the discovery of the river Senegal in 1444/45 begins the history of Christianity in West Africa. From that time onward more or less unintermittantly, there was some type of Christian presence in what became known as the Senegambia region. Traders, settlers, missionaries, the Mulattos and indigenous Christians each in their own way contributed to the establishment of a Christian community in the Senegambia. The first ships reached The Gambia in 1455.

Initially the Cape Verde islands were the main focus of Christian activity. The Portuguese settlers, who started a trading colony at the Cape Verde islands, were Christians. Also the descendants of settlers and African women adopted Christianity as their main religion. Churches were built on the various islands and priests came from Portugal to look after the parishes. In 1514 the diocese of Funchal (Madeira) was established to look after the newly established churches in Africa.¹ Despite the high mortality rate among both settlers and clergy, the Christian community on Cape Verde grew and it became clear that it was necessary and more efficient to create a separate diocese for the area. Thus, in 1533 the diocese of Santiago was separated from the diocese of Funchal. Its territory consisted of Cape Verde and the African mainland from the river Senegal to Cape Palmas. The island of Santiago served as seat of the bishop, while the town of Cacheu on the mainland of the West African coast became the seat for the archdeacon.²

As time went by, the Cape Verde islands became the base for further activity on the Upper Guinea Coast, both for trade and for mission. Portuguese and Cape Verdian traders had good contacts in the Cacheu region, St. Louis, Gorée Island and the *Petite Côte* of Senegal: Rufisque, Portudal and Joal. In The Gambia the towns of Juffureh, Geregia and Tankular were regularly visited. Soon Cape Verdian and private Portuguese traders, known under the name *lançados*, established settlements along the coast and the main rivers of the Guinea Coast: Senegal, Gambia, Cacheu, San Domingo and Rio Grande. This was contrary to the wishes and instructions of the Portuguese crown. The crown wanted to maintain a monopoly on trade on the mainland, but had no means to enforce this legislation. These *lançados* spearheaded further spread of Christianity on the mainland of West Africa. Though there is little material on this topic available, this chapter endeavours to trace some characteristics of this early type of Senegambian Christianity.³

¹ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 61.

² W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 74. Cacheu is located in what in nowadays called Guinea-Bissau.

³ The Dominican priest Joseph Kenny points out that very little is published on this 'middle period' of African Christianity, which he dates from 1445 until 1850, though archival material

It is often stated that the Portuguese attempts to establish Christianity in West Africa failed. The lack of inculturation of the gospel and indigenisation of the ministry and the counter witness given by the close association of mission and the slave trade, is said to have contributed to the failure of the Portuguese to bring Christianity to Africa. Though it is fair to state that Christianity might not have found an overwhelming response during this period, it is possible to speak of a continued Christian presence in the Senegambia from the late 15th century onwards, because the Mulatto community used Christianity as the decisive criterion for its cultural identity.

This chapter starts in 1456 when the first Portuguese set foot ashore in The Gambia. Paragraph 5.2 will look at some of Senegambia's initial contacts with Christianity. Thereafter, in paragraph 5.3 the *lançados* and Mulatto community will be discussed. Paragraph 5.4 will pay attention to the foundation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) in 1622 and the changes this implied for the strategy of mission work. The aim of *Propaganda Fide* for the Upper Guinea Coast was to break open the Portuguese monopoly on Guinea with its intermingled interests of trade and mission and to move the mission work beyond chaplaincy to the Mulatto community by focussing on the 'evangelisation of the pagans and Muslims in Nigritia'. In The Gambia this was concretised by the Spanish Capuchin mission in 1646/47, which will be used as example. Paragraph 5.5 pays attention to Christian presence at the trading forts, which is exemplified by the Courland mission from 1651 until 1661. This is followed by some concluding remarks about Christianity in this period in paragraph 5.6. The chapter ends in 1820, at the doorstep of what Kenny calls the 'modern African Christianity'.⁴ This 'modern African Christianity' in The Gambia began in the year 1821, which became known in Gambian history books as 'the year of the missionaries'. It was the time that Methodists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Quakers targeted the British Colony of Bathurst as a starting point for mission work in the 19th century. It formed the beginning of a new phase in Christianity in The Gambia.

5.2 Initial contacts on the Upper Guinea Coast: trade and mission

Exploring the Guinea Coast

The first Portuguese ships reached Arguin Island in 1444. Soon afterwards the river Senegal was explored. The river Gambia, known to the Portuguese as the river Gambia followed around the year 1455. While the date of the official 'discovery' of the Cape Verde archipelago is much disputed, it seems clear that in 1462, about fourteen years after the arrival of the first Portuguese ships at the Upper Guinea Coast, a mission station was established on the isle of Santiago. From 1533 onwards Santiago became the official and recognised headquarter for all Christian mission activity on the mainland.⁵ From there contacts began with what became known as 'the Upper Guinea Coast', a region that stretched from the Cape Verde islands to Sierra Leone.⁶

is available. J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, preface (no page number).

⁴ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, preface (no page number).

⁵ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 9, 10. Kenny gives an overview of the first bishops of the diocese of Santiago: 'The first bishop, Braz Neto (d. 1538) was a Franciscan, but he never

One person was crucial in the initiation of most of this activity: Prince Henry the Navigator, the third son of King João I of Portugal. Interested in exploration, zealous in religion and having heard of the gold of Africa while conquering Ceuta in Morocco in 1415, Prince Henry decided to send out ships to explore the region beyond the Canary Islands. Henry had fought Muslims during the Reconquista and saw them as political as well as religious opponents. The aftermath of the Crusades and the Reconquista therefore served as the context for the explorations, which J.W. Blake summarised, with the words 'the quest for god and gold'. It generally believed that religious antagonism with Islam was a key reason for the Portuguese exploration of West Africa.⁷ Starting with the conquest of Ceuta the Portuguese hoped to move further south in an attempt to establish Christian kingdoms in Africa, behind the 'Islamic Mediterranean forces', in order to stop the expansion of Islam. Through their travels in Africa they also hoped to contact the legendary Prester John, of whom rumours said that he was a Christian king living somewhere behind the Muslim forces. In the Portuguese plans to conquer Islam, Prester John played a crucial role. The Portuguese hoped that with Prester John as an ally, they would be able to attack the Muslim forces from both the North and the South, thus conquering or at least weakening the Islamic empire.⁸ The Portuguese explorer Antionotto Usodimare who sailed on the Gambia in 1455 reported that from The Gambia 'to the country of Prester John is less than 300 leagues, not, I mean to Prester John himself, but to the boundary of his territory.'⁹ But Prester John was never found, so the focus shifted to evangelisation of African chiefs in order to 'create' a Prester John.

Andrew F. Walls suggests that because the Portuguese didn't have the power to enforce the conversion of Africans by conquest, they developed a strategy in which persuasion played a crucial role. It was a role to be played by missionaries.¹⁰ This strategy is reflected in the initial contacts of the Portuguese with the African leadership. The trader-explorers that visited Africa not only had a cartographical and commercial interest but, as will be shown below, they also attempted to persuade African chiefs and kings to accept Christianity. Thus they hoped to establish the Christian kingdoms, so important and strategic in the battle against Islam. The fact that many of the African chiefs they encountered were Muslims did not discourage the Portuguese. They were convinced that West Africans were only loosely attached to Islam and that sound

went there. He was succeeded by a diocesan, João Pravi (to 1545), an Augustinian, Francisco da Cruz (to 1571), two Carmelites, Bartolomeu Leitão (to 1587) and Pedro Bandão (to 1608), another diocesan, Luiz Pereira da Miranda (1609), and a Dominican, Sebastião da Ascensão (1610-14).' J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 61.

⁶ J.W. Blake, *West Africa: quest for god and gold*, 6. Blake suggests that the name Guinea might have been derived via Gheueoa from Ghana.

⁷ J.W. Blake, *West Africa and Christianity*, 4/5.

⁸ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 215. For the wish to contact Prester John see: J. de Barros, 'The Asia of João de Barros' in C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 133.

⁹ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'Antionotto Usodimare' in *The discovery of the river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 257. Gamble and Hair comment in a footnote: 'At the time the Portuguese were anxious to reach 'Prester John', that is, Christian Ethiopia', which was believed to extend across Africa and hence closer to Guinea than in actuality.'

¹⁰ A.F. Walls, 'Africa in Christian history', 5.

argumentation would soon lead to their conversion to Christianity.¹¹ But they were wrong. Not only did the mission work among the Muslims prove extremely difficult, but also the people adhering to the traditional religions didn't welcome the Christian message wholeheartedly. The Portuguese missionaries laboured on hard soil.

Traders and missionaries: Cadamosto, Gomes and the conversion of Prince Bemoy

Commerce as well as Christianity instigated the Portuguese exploration of the West Coast of Africa. Therefore the beginnings of Christianity in the Upper Guinea Coast were closely linked with trade. Traders were the first ones who engaged in 'mission work' and most ships had a chaplain on board.¹² In later years priests were sent out to serve the settlers, but - and here again we see the link with commerce - contractors who traded in Guinea on behalf of the Portuguese crown were supposed to maintain the clergy with a stipend.¹³ The Jesuit Balthasar Barreira, a senior missionary on the Upper Guinea Coast and superior of the Cape Verde mission at the beginning of the 17th century, described the difficult circumstances under which the clergy had to work. He indicated that the stipend, which the priests received from the contractors, was minimal. In order to have some funds to work with and to live from, the priests themselves had to engage in trade, sometimes even in slave trade, just in order to survive.¹⁴

The close connection between trade and religion was also reflected in the Papal Bull of January 8 1455, *Romanus Pontifex*. In this bull the Pope granted Portugal not just a monopoly on trade with the inhabitants of Guinea but also the religious monopoly to undertake the evangelisation of the region and appoint its clergy.¹⁵ Several others papal bulls, confirming this so-called *Padroado* followed this decree, dividing the new world between the Portugal and Spain. It is therefore not surprising that the first priest to reach Guinea was a Portuguese. He was called Polono and was appointed by the crown to accompany the trader-colonists to Arguin Island where Prince Henry had a fort built in 1445. There, in the fort, in the year 1445 Polono celebrated the first Christian divine service known of in Guinea¹⁶. Whether Polono remained on Arguin Island or whether he left soon afterwards, is unclear, for there are no records about his activities. But the fact that the first Roman Catholic mass in Guinea was celebrated in a trading fort, is exemplary of what Christianity stood for in the early days: being a Christian, was being a trader and being a 'Portuguese', whether by blood or by association.

¹¹ C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 18, 19 and 31.

¹² According to Sundkler and Steed, many of these chaplains belonged to the Order of Christ. Both the Portuguese king and Prince Henry were Grand Master in the Order of Christ. B. Sundkler; C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 44.

¹³ W. Rodney, *The history of the Guinea Coast*, 123. J.M. Gray mentions in a footnote that the establishment in Cape Verde was maintained at the expense of the Queen of Portugal to supply missionaries for adjacent coast of Africa. He suggests that this arrangement was still in force in the eighteenth century. J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 11 footnote 3.

¹⁴ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 10/11.

¹⁵ T. Hendriksen, 'Portugal in Africa: a non-economic interpretation' *African Studies Review* 16/3 (1973), 406 and R. Gray, *Black Christians and white missionaries*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1990, 85.

¹⁶ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 10

About a decade after Polono had visited Arguin Island, the two traders who left for the Upper Guinea Coast: Alviso Cadamosto and Diogo Gomes. The two men were explorers in the service of Prince Henry and reached The Gambia in 1455 and 1456 respectively. Both seem to have had the instruction not only to explore the lands and commercial possibilities but also establish friendly relations with African kings and chiefs and expose them to Christianity.

Cadamosto was a Venetian by birth but sailed under the Portuguese crown. Before exploring the river Gambia, he went ashore in Senegal. There he met a hospitable Muslim Wolof chief, whom he calls Budomel, with whom he - in line with his missionary assignment - exchanged thoughts on religion:

As he [Budomel] was anxious to hear the articles of our faith recited, he frequently asked me if I would consent to repeat some of them for him. Finally I told him that his faith was false, and that those who had instructed him in such things were ignorant of the truth. On many grounds I proved his faith to be false and our faith to be true and holy - thus getting the better of his learned men in argument. The lord laughed at this, saying that our faith appeared to him to be good; for it could be no other than God that had bestowed so many goods and rich gifts and so much skill and knowledge upon us [but that he had not given us good laws]. He, on the contrary, had given them good laws, and he considered it reasonable that they would be better able to gain salvation than we Christians for God was a just lord, who had granted us in this world many benefits of various kinds, but to the Negroes, in comparison, almost nothing. Since he had not given them paradise here, he would give it to them hereafter.¹⁷

At least Cadamosto, whose missionary endeavours can hardly be qualified as subtle when reading expressions like 'ignorant of the truth' and 'I proved his faith to be false', had the grace to admit that Budomel 'had good powers of reasoning and a deep understanding of men'. For though Budomel displayed the typical African hospitality and was pleased to hear about Christianity and converse about it, he didn't consider conversion.

Far less sympathetic and hospitable was Cadamosto's first encounter with the inhabitants of the Gambia estuary region. Sailing through the mouth of the river, men in canoes attacked the ship. When Cadamosto's interpreters enquired why they were so hostile, they replied that they had heard that Christians 'ate human flesh, and that they only bought Negroes to eat them'.¹⁸ One could wonder whether this reply, which at this very early date already indicates that the Portuguese had a reputation as slave traders, reflects just the usual suspicion of strangers being 'cannibals'. Or is it possible that somehow somewhere the attackers had heard about the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist and should this response be read as a reference to 'eating and drinking of the body and blood of the Lord'? The discussion that followed seems not to have cleared the dispute. Due to the hostility of the people they met, Cadamosto's sailors voted against making further attempts to sail up river and the ship returned to Portugal. A second attempt to explore the Gambia River made a year later was more successful. It was during that voyage of 1456 that - as far as human memory recalls - for the first time in history a Christian ceremony was performed in The Gambia. When one of

¹⁷ C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 40, 41.

¹⁸ C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 60.

Cadamosto's sailors - called Andrew - died, a funeral service was held. The sailor was buried on a small island in the river Gambia that received his name: Andrew's Island. The British later renamed this island as James Island.¹⁹

Shortly after Cadamosto's voyage, probably still in the year 1456²⁰ another Portuguese, called Diogo Gomes, travelled up the river Gambia. Gomes was slightly more successful in establishing relationships in The Gambia than Cadamosto. Among others, Diogo Gomes met with the important Niumi *Mansa*, the king of the North Bank territory and overseer of the Gambia estuary. Gomes exchanged ideas with him and his Muslim adviser about the differences between their faiths:

And there was a certain bishop of his church, who originated from Mali who questioned me about the Christians. And I replied to him according to the intellect that God has given me. And after that, I questioned him, about Muhammad and what people in that land believe. And my words pleased the king to the point that he ordered that bishop to leave the kingdom within three days. And getting up, he decreed that under penalty of death no one should dare to pronounce the name of Muhammad, because he only believed in God, unique and one, and he didn't believe in any other god than the God in which the Infant Henry, his brother, believed; and he called Infant Henry his brother, and wanted to be baptised by me, something which also all the nobility of his house and even his wives said, and the king said that he didn't want to be called any other name than that of Henry. And the gentility also took names like ours: Jacobus, Nunus etc. ... And I spent the night there on the mainland with the king and his barons, but I didn't dare to baptise them because I was a lay person. (...) And later, back on land, he wanted me to baptise him. And I responded that His sovereign the Pope hadn't granted me that authority. But, if he wanted to, I could tell it to Infant Henry who could send a priest to baptise them. And he immediately wrote a letter to Infant Henry to send him a priest and a man of noble birth to instruct him in the faith.²¹

The king, probably a Mandinka and a traditionalist rather than a Muslim, in the same letter requested also some small cattle such as geese, sheep and pigs and 2 masons who could help him fortify the walls of the village. This might be an indication that the king's interests might at least have been as ambiguous as those of Diogo Gomes. Nevertheless, Gomes travelled home with good news for Prince Henry that an African chief had requested baptism. As a result of this, a priest, the abbot of Soto de Cassa, and a young man named John Delgado were sent out to teach the *Mansa* about the Christian faith.²² Some sources say that the two men arrived in The Gambia in 1460 and were personally sent by Prince Henry. Others believe that the mission was delayed by Henry's death in November 1460 and that the abbot didn't leave for The Gambia until

¹⁹ C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 66.

²⁰ There is some uncertainty about the dates of the journey of Diogo Gomes to The Gambia. Th. Monod mentions the year 1456 whereas F. Mahoney refers to a date about two years later. See: Th. Monod, R. Maunny, G. Duval, *De la première découverte de la Guinée* [s.n.] Bissau 1959, 7 and F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 11. There is also a difference of opinion about the date on which the abbot of Soto de Cassa travelled to The Gambia. Mahoney dates it in about 1462, i.e. two years after the death of Prince Henry, whereas according to the text quoted by Monod c.s. the Abbot left around 1460, before the death of Henry in November 1460. See Th. Monod, *De la première découverte de la Guinée*, 48 and F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 13.

²¹ Th. Monod, *De la première découverte de la Guinée*, 42-44.

²² Th. Monod, *De la première découverte de la Guinée*, 48.

1462.²³ While the exact date of their arrival is uncertain, the records are clear on what they found on arrival: the *Mansa* had meanwhile changed his mind about Christianity and no longer wished to be baptised. Nevertheless the missionaries settled on the North Bank and started their work. The abbot of Soto de Cassa and John Delgado are, as far as is known, the first Christian missionaries who actually settled in The Gambia. But it remains unclear, how long they stayed and what they did while living in The Gambia.

Later in the 15th century, Kenny dates the incident around 1488²⁴, another attempt was made to convert one of the African chiefs. In the late 1480s the Portuguese had established good relationships with one of the Wolof princes in Senegal, named Bemoy. It seems Bemoy ruled over one of the Wolof states on behalf of his brother. João de Barros, who relates the story, doesn't tell us over which Wolof states Bemoy ruled nor does he elaborate on the Wolof state structure at the time. However since the contacts were established via trade on the river Senegal we can safely assume that it must have been one of the northern chieftaincies, possibly Walo. No doubt the conversion to Christianity of a governing Wolof prince would have gone a long way towards realising the Portuguese dream of establishing a Christian kingdom in Guinea. But again, history took a different turn.

De Barros relates that Bemoy had established good contacts with the Portuguese and had a reputation of being an honest trade partner. He had also developed an interest in Christianity. This close association with the Portuguese and their religion gave rise to feelings of enmity and unrest in the state and two brothers 'Cybitah and Camba' staged a *coup d'état*. Bemoy's brother, the actual ruler, was killed and Bemoy was deposed from the throne. In the war that followed the coup, Bemoy and the people loyal to him were not able to suppress the rebellion. He therefore requested help from his friends, the Portuguese. But the friendship and support turned out to have a price: King João did send him help in the form of some horses and harnesses but stated that proper military assistance would only be dispatched if Bemoy was willing to receive baptism.

No doubt desperate, Bemoy, together with some of his nobles, travelled to Portugal. On the 3rd of November 1489, after having received some basic instruction on the Christian faith, Bemoy and his men were baptised. Bemoy was renamed after his godfather King João and was knighted the next day. As Don João Bemoy he travelled back to his homeland, together with Portuguese soldiers, clergy and craftsmen. King João hoped that through Bemoy he might be able to make an inroad into Africa and would eventually be able to contact Prester John. These hopes stranded on arrival of the ship in Senegal. For reason not quite known, the captain of the ship, Pero Vaz da Cunha, stabbed Bemoy to death. Some say the murder happened because Da Cunha suspected treason from Bemoy. Others assume he assassinated Bemoy because he feared mutiny from his own people who were unwilling to stay in such an unhealthy climate.²⁵ Thus the ambitions of both King João and Bemoy were stopped short by the elimination of Bemoy. No doubt Bemoy first of all had political reasons for consenting to be baptised. This can hardly be evaluated as a step forward for Christianity. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to see what would have happened to

²³ Compare the discussion about the date of Gomes' journey in footnote 20.

²⁴ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 61.

²⁵ The story of Bemoy is told in C.R. Crone, *The voyages of Cadamosto*, 130-141.

Christianity, had Bemoy indeed been installed as king. But history took a different turn. It can safely be assumed that the murder of Bemoy by the Portuguese did not promote the popularity of Christianity among the Wolof for quite some time De Barros doesn't relate what happened to the nobles who were baptised together with Bemoy. But one can imagine that - provided Da Cunha and his men didn't kill them as well - their enthusiasm for Christianity must have wavered to say the least.

The three examples of Cadamosto (1455/56), Gomes (1456) and Bemoy (1489) show that in the initial encounters between the Portuguese and the Senegambians interest in religion was mixed with interests in trade and political influence on both sides. All three stories clearly relate of Portuguese attempts to convert African chiefs to Christianity in order to establish Christian kingdoms on the West coast of Africa. All three attempts failed. The efforts to establish good relations for intercontinental trade were more successful. No doubt this was because the interest for trade was mutual. Budomel was quite willing to entertain Cadamosto and talk about religion. He respected Cadamosto's opinion though not agreeing with him, because it brought him a promising trading partner. The Niimi *Mansa* was going even one step further. He sent away his Muslim counsellor and requested Diogo Gomes for baptism. No doubt he considered relations with the Portuguese traders to be advantageous for his region and was willing to be baptised in order to strengthen the ties. Bemoy went as far as being baptised in order to succeed politically.

The evangelisation of the chiefs did not have a lasting effect in any of the three cases. Neither is there any indication that the work of the abbot of Soto de Cassa and John Delgado had any enduring impact. It would seem that the Portuguese after 50 odd years of endeavours in trade and mission with the Africans in Guinea had failed in their missionary calling. But enthusiasm for Christianity came from another, unexpected side: it was the Mulatto community who openly and wholeheartedly embraced Christianity. Christianity became a distinctive mark of Mulatto identity. The Mulattos took Christianity along with them wherever they settled on the Guinea Coast. And thus they spread Christianity.

5.3 *Lançados* and Mulattos: Christianity as cultural identity

Lançados and Mulattos as traders

The story of the *lançados* and the Mulattos on the Upper Guinea Coast starts with the Portuguese settlements on the Cape Verde Islands. The official discovery of the Cape Verde Islands is attributed to Diogo Gomes and Antoni Noli around 1459/1460, but Diniz Dias had already sighted the islands in 1444. Probably Cadamosto also spotted them in 1456/7. After the death of Prince Henry in 1460 the islands were passed on to his cousin Ferdinand of Braganza by royal decree. Part of the territories came under Ferdinand's supervision in 1460, the other part became his in 1462. The islands were owned by his family until 1484 after which they were reverted to the Portuguese crown.²⁶

²⁶ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 71.

Prince Ferdinand had observed the success of Portuguese colonies on the Madeira Archipel and decided to pursue a similar policy of colonisation for the Cape Verde islands. Portuguese settlers, headed by Antonio Noli who had been appointed as one of the captains for Santiago, settled on the main island. Soon settlements followed on the other islands and by the early 16th century all Cape Verde islands were inhabited.

The islands were mainly used for trading and agricultural purposes. Salt was obtained from the Isle of Sal and cotton and indigo were cultivated on Fogo.²⁷ These products were exported to Portugal. The labour force that worked at the islands came from the mainland of West Africa. Large numbers of slaves were transported from the mainland to work on the islands, to the extent that in 1582 the slaves outnumbered the Portuguese on the basis of roughly seven to one.²⁸ By the end of the 16th century slaves were not just brought to Cape Verde for labour but also to Portugal and to America. From that time on slave trade became the main source of income for the Cape Verdians. But the settlers did not just engage in slave trade. Cape Verde was also an intermediary station in what was called the legitimate trade between Portugal and the Upper Guinea Coast, being the export of hides, wax, ivory, gold, pepper, camwood, civet, palm oil etc.

The Cape Verdians soon developed themselves as middlemen in the commerce between Europe and West Africa. Two developments took place that qualified the Cape Verdians for this position. First of all, on Cape Verde itself, Portuguese men married African women. Thus these couples and their offspring had good relations with both Portugal and the mainland. Through this type of intercultural marriages the traders acquired an intimate familiarity with the languages and customs on the mainland. Secondly, a development began to take place on the African mainland, which was considered to be very disturbing by the crown: private traders started to settle on the West African mainland, something that the crown had explicitly forbidden. For though Portugal had encouraged settlement on the Cape Verde islands, establishment on the mainland in Guinea was not allowed. In this way Portugal had endeavoured to keep control over their trade monopoly on the Upper Guinea Coast. But since the Portuguese crown had no means of enforcing their monopoly, private traders ignored the rules and settled along the coast and the main rivers of Guinea.

These private traders, some of them Portuguese, others Cape Verdians, were known under the term *lançados*, coming from the verb *lançar* 'to throw'²⁹, because these people were considered to have 'thrown themselves' among the Africans on the mainland. Some of them pioneered in establishing new settlements, as happened in the Cacheu area but most of them went to live in existing African villages. There seems to have been an important advantage to settling in African villages. The *lançados* that settled in the villages, received the protection of the head of the village: he was treated as a guest and enjoyed the hospitality, even to the extent of being offered hot baths and a wife.³⁰ Possibly the 'guest' was expected to compliment his host on regularly basis

²⁷ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 72.

²⁸ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 72.

²⁹ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 74.

³⁰ G.E. Brooks, *Luso African commerce and settlement in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau region*, Africa Study Centre series no. 24 (1980) Boston, 2; W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 84.

with some gifts. And though Spanish Capuchins complained about this 'concubinage celebrated as if it were true marriage'³¹, the advantages of these relations for trade were considerable. The African wife became the trader's indispensable interpreter in language and culture and often even a partner and collaborator in commerce and the *lançados* received protection from his African relatives.³² Most of the *lançados* held on to their Portuguese identity, including their religion. The few that did not were known as *tangomaos* (renegades), people who adapted completely to African culture, customs and traditional religion, to the extent of receiving tribal tattoos and circumcision as signs of initiation.³³

It was this Portuguese identity that became the trademark for the offspring of the *lançados*: the Mulattos, sometimes also called Luso Africans. Neither totally belonging to the Portuguese community, nor being a true part of the African community, the Mulattos developed certain characteristics that marked their own cultural identity as a separate group. The Mulattos distinguished themselves from their surrounding African relatives in clothing, style of houses, in language and also in religion. Walter Rodney describes that most Mulattos attempted to wear a complete European dress including sword and musket.³⁴ Pierre Cultru portrays the square whitewashed houses with verandas of the Mulattos in De la Courbe's visit to the Bellinguère in Albreda in 1685.³⁵ Richard Jobson in 1623 says that the Mulattos are 'still reserving carefully the use of the Portingall tongue and with a kind of affectionate zeal, the name of Christian.'³⁶ G.E. Brooks suggests that during their journeys this specific type of clothing served as an identification and protection of the Mulattos, because rulers granted special protection to traders whatever their ethnic group or religion.³⁷

Whatever reasons the Mulattos might have had to distinguish themselves from their surroundings, it is clear that they formed a special group among the peoples living on the Upper Guinea Coast. Mulatto settlements were mainly found along the coast and the river estuaries. There were communities in St. Louis, Gorée, Portudal, Rufisque, Joal in Northern Senegal. In The Gambia there were Mulatto communities³⁸ in Juffureh, Tankular, Geregia, Kuntaur, Barra, Tighkunda, Pisinia, Doomasansang, Mansibaer, Kasang and Bintang and along Bintang Creek and the Sangrougou river. But there might have been more settlements, because the Mulattos lived all along the river Gambia, in groups of two or three families, and the river constantly changed its course. There were also Mulatto communities along the River Casamance, Rio Grande, San

³¹ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 201.

³² For more information on the *lançados* and their African wives see G.E. Brooks, 'The *Signares* of Saint-Louis and Gorée: women entrepreneurs in eighteenth century Senegal', 19, 20.

³³ W. Rodney *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 74 and G.R. Brooks, *Luso African commerce and settlement in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau region*, 2.

³⁴ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 203.

³⁵ P. Cultru, *Premier voyage du sieur De la Courbe fait a la coste d'Afrique en 1685*, Champion, Paris 1913, 198.

³⁶ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, *The discovery of river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 98.

³⁷ G.E. Brooks, *Luso African commerce and settlement in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau region*, 10.

³⁸ Initially the Mulattos were of Portuguese descent but from the 17th century onwards there were also Mulattos in The Gambia from French, English etc. descent.

Domingo etc. The largest settlement of Mulattos was in Cacheu, which had a cathedral and was the seat of the archdeacon who represented the bishop of Santiago on the mainland. Jean Barbot, who visited Cacheu in the second half of the 17th century, described the town as follows:

The town of Cacho comprises about 400 huts or shacks, known however as 'houses'. They are made of clap-boards, in the Portuguese style. The town has a palisade around it and is defended on the West side by a front with earth walls containing 14 iron cannons, the fort covering the approach to the town from the sea. I have already told you about the small fort at the North entry of the river. This had earth walls, with a palisade around it, and is close to a native village. It has six cannon. Cacho has four churches, the main one being dedicated to Our Lady and the parish church to St. Francis. Of the others, one is a Capuchin convent, and the other is a Jesuit convent. The inhabitants of Cacho, who are almost all Portuguese mulattoes, are entirely supported by the trade which they have with these regions. They all live in Portuguese style, and are dependants of the king of Portugal.³⁹

The Gambian Mulattos traded along two main trade routes: the first was the inland trade route along the river Gambia with the Mandinka as trade partners, the other was Southern trade through Casamance to Cacheu. Here the Bagnun were partners to the Mulattos. This southern trade route broke down towards the end of the 16th century. The relations between the Mulattos and the Bagnun seem to have deteriorated, because of competition by the Dutch, French and English.⁴⁰ The trade along the Gambia river and co-operation with the Mandinka lasted much longer. It was only during the second half of the 18th century that the Mandinka bypassed the Mulattos completely by dealing directly with the British and French traders, thereby making the Mulatto intermediaries superfluous.⁴¹ From that time on, the Mulattos seem to disappear from the Gambian scene: some of them moved away from The Gambia, others intermarried with neighbouring tribes, ceasing to stress their European origins, whereas the remaining ones seemed to have moved to Banjul, when this town was established in 1816. There they settled in what is still called 'Portuguese Town', the final trace of what once was an important people group.⁴²

Mulatto Christianity

It is clear from historical documents that the Mulattos adhered to their Christianity with great persistence, though as traders, specialised in slave trade, they might not have been

³⁹ P.E.H. Hair ed., *Barbot on Guinea: the writing of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678-1712* Vol 1, The Hakluyt Society, London 1992, 161, 162. Note: Hair comments in a footnote that Barbot was possibly wrong about the Jesuit Convent in Cacheu. Comparison with other sources on Cacheu speak of a Dominican convent, a parish church St. Francis, a chapel of St. Anthony of Padua and a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. Barbot mentions that there was an overland journey from Cacheu to The Gambia which lasted about six days but this route seems not to have been used before the 17th century. See. P.E.H. Hair, *Barbot on Guinea*, 167.

⁴⁰ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 88, 89.

⁴¹ G.E. Brooks, *Luso African commerce and settlement in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau region*, 13, 14.

⁴² G.E. Brooks, *Luso African commerce and settlement in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau region*, 15; W. Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 215.

the most credible witnesses to the Christian faith. Cultru describes them 'as always having a large rosary around their necks and naming themselves after a saint, even if most of them aren't baptised and have no idea of the Christian religion.'⁴³ Olfred Dapper, visiting The Gambia in the mid 17th century, described seeing a cross standing in one of the villages.⁴⁴ Both Richard Jobson who visited Gambia in 1620 and Francis Moore who came almost a century later around 1720 stressed that Mulattos referred to themselves as 'Portuguese and Christian', even though they were as black as the Africans they lived with. Francis Moore is most detailed in his information about Mulatto Christianity. He mentions that there was a church in Seaca, near San Domingo, the twin village of what was later called Juffureh, and a church in Tancrowall (Tankular).⁴⁵ Tankular also had a residence for the priest, who occasionally visited from Cape Verde, which might be an indication that Tankular was conceived as the 'centre' of the Gambian Christian community at the time. Some sources also make mention of a church in Geregia.⁴⁶

The Mulatto community in The Gambia was served by priests from Cape Verde or Cacheu who, according to Moore, visited about twice a year to do baptisms, celebrate mass and take confessions. But this might have been rather an ideal situation. Francisco de Lemon Coelho, a Cape Verdian trader who lived for four years in Kasang, along the Gambia river in the early 1660s complained about 'the wickedly long intervals' between the visits of the priests. He observed that because of this negligence of the area by the clergy the Mulatto Christians in The Gambia were ignorant of even the most basic teachings and observances of the Christian faith.⁴⁷

It seems that the diocese of Santiago interpreted its mission to the Senegambia as chaplaincy to the Mulatto community. Very little evangelistic work was done and, with the exception of St. Louis and Rufisque, there were hardly any residential priests. Even Senegambian priests were not sent back to their own area. A Wolof, called João Pinto, who was trained as a priest by the Jesuits in Portugal in the 1580s, was appointed canon at São Tome rather than being sent back to Senegal.⁴⁸ Since the mortality rate was high, also in Cape Verde, and also among clergy, the six monthly visits to the Mulatto communities were more theory than practice. Some times many years passed by without a priest visiting the area.⁴⁹ Loyer, paying a visit to the Senegambia in 1714, mentioned that the Mulattos baptised and instructed their own children, no doubt from sheer necessity.⁵⁰ South of the Gambia river people were visited by priests from Cacheu. When the Spiritan priest H.T. Warlop and Fr. Arragon visited the Casamance

⁴³ P. Cultru, *Premier voyage du sieur De la Courbe fait a la coste d'Afrique en 1685*, 192/193.

⁴⁴ O. Dapper, *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewesten*, 415.

⁴⁵ F. Moore, *Travels into the inland parts of Africa*, 51, 55.

⁴⁶ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 13.

⁴⁷ D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'Francisco de Lemos Coelho' in *The discovery of the river Gambia (1623) by Richard Jobson*, 310.

⁴⁸ J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 62.

⁴⁹ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 15. Between 1634 and 1636 two French Capuchin priests, Alexis de Saint Lô et Bernardin De Rénouart, worked on the *Petite Côte* for about three years and discovered that the people hadn't been visited by a priest for about eight(!) years. See P. Lintingre, 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine de Léon', *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971), 97.

⁵⁰ Cited as in J. Delcourt, *Histoire religieuse du Sénégal*, 10.

in 1847 they found indigenous Cape Verdian priests working in Ziguinchor and Farring and observed that there were churches in the surrounding villages.⁵¹ Except for Coehlo's report there are no records that priests from the Cacheu region or the Casamance travelled to The Gambia to conduct services and deliver the sacraments, even though the journey from Cacheu to The Gambia took only about six days.

It is hard to evaluate the Mulatto Christianity. Rodney describes it as 'syncretistic' and 'not authentic'.⁵² His judgement of Mulatto Christianity as 'syncretistic' is based on the fact that the Mulattos fervently believed in 'greegrees' (amulets) and celebrated saints' days by paying homage to the ancestors. But one could wonder where syncretism starts and inculturation stops. In many places in contemporary Africa saints' medals have replaced the amulets, but - with the knowledge and sometimes even blessing of the clergy - still have the same function and All Saints Day is celebrated as day to remember and to pay respect to the ancestors.

Peter Mark has described the evolution of the Mulatto identity. He has argued that gradually distinctives such as clothing and descent declined in importance. Skin colour became the criterion for distinction between Europeans and Africans. Thus, with their skins gradually becoming darker due to intermarriage, the adherence to the Christian religion became the distinctive mark with which Mulattos could distinguish themselves from other Africans.⁵³ To be a Christian implied being a trader and being 'white', be it by skin colour or by identification with Portuguese culture, religion and customs. Peter Clarke has pointedly observed that many Mulattos regarded Christianity as a status symbol, giving them a higher prestige than Muslims or traditionalists. A prestige, he comments, that should not be spread too widely lest it would erode their status. From this, he concluded that evangelism was therefore not of a key interest to Mulatto Christians.⁵⁴ And that was no doubt putting things mildly.

It is possible make many critical remarks about Mulatto Christianity, their involvement in the slave trade being the most serious one. But it must be admitted that the persistent adherence of Mulattos - for more than 300 years - to the faith of their Portuguese forefathers, whether for reasons of identity, commerce or for religious motives, is in itself significant. For it meant that the Christian presence continued in The Gambia. And though Christianity might still have been associated with trade and have been considered 'foreign' and 'European' by the Africans among whom the Mulattos lived, yet, quoting Loyer who visited the Mulatto community in 1714, they might have been more African than they realised themselves. He said: 'because they follow the religion of their ancestors they are still Christians.'⁵⁵

⁵¹ R.P. Du Patquet, *Notes sur la mission des Deux Guinées*, 1865, Vol. 12, 11-13, Boite 146/B, File 6.

⁵² W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 203.

⁵³ P. Mark, 'The evolution of 'Portuguese' identity: Luso Africans on the Upper Guinea coast from the 16th to early 19th century', *Journal of African History*, Vol. 40/ 2 (1999), 188.

⁵⁴ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 14/15.

⁵⁵ Cited as in J. Delcourt, *Histoire religieuse du Sénégal*, 10.

5.4 Society for the Propagation of the Faith: evangelisation of the heathen and Muslims

The foundation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith

In paragraph 5.3 the Christian mission on the Upper Guinea coast was mainly described as a chaplaincy to the Mulatto community, which was heavily involved in the slave trade. It would be misconstruing the facts of history however, if the protests against the slave trade made by Dominicans, Capuchins, Jesuits and Franciscans were left unmentioned. Capuchins priests protested throughout the 16th century that the so called wars during which the slaves were captured, were nothing but 'robberies and manhunts'. Don Frei Pedro Brandao, one of the bishops of Santiago towards the end of the 16th century, was so disgusted with the slave trade and felt so powerless to change the situation, that he relinquished his seat and returned to Portugal. He stated clearly that he did not want to be part of 'the Portuguese traffic in human flesh' and proposed to baptise all slaves and then declare them free by virtue of their Christian faith. Some others, though protesting lightly, were less scrupulous.⁵⁶

Despite the protests sent to Rome, nothing changed. Besides, the Cape Verdian clergy was in a difficult position because the priests were chained hand and foot to commerce. The contractors paid the stipends of the priests. Clergy appointments were made by the Portuguese crown due to the rights granted to them by Romanus Pontifex. Journeys to and from the Upper Guinea Coast could only be made by ships of traders. And last but not least many priests were themselves involved in trade, even the slave trade. These facts showed the need for a total reorganisation of the mission work in which mission was no longer linked with a specific nation or mixed with national commercial and political interests. Mission was to be organised and supervised by an independent body.

The opportunity for a reorganisation of missionary activity came with the total restructuring of the Roman church body at the beginning of the 17th century. This resulted in 1622 in the foundation of the society '*Propaganda Fide*', the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which was to supervise all mission work. Portugal, who claimed monopoly in Guinea on the grounds of the papal decree of 1455 didn't take this curtailing of its rights by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith lightly and the relations between Iberian countries and Rome became strained as a result. Most of this tension however was fought out in the mission territories.

⁵⁶ W. Rodney, *The history of the Upper Guinea coast*, 105 and 120 respectively. There are records that people sold as slaves were baptised before they were shipped off to the Americas. De Almada wrote in 1594: 'It has been known here in Guinea, (especially) in this river and in the Rio Grande, for the blacks to bring certain slaves to sell to our people, and when our people refused to buy them, because this is forbidden, the blacks who brought them and offered them for sale killed them on the spot, so that (their kidnapping of them) would not be discovered. I am not sure that it would not have been better to have bought them, since this would have meant that they received baptism and became Christians.' See D.P. Gamble; P.E.H. Hair, 'André Alvares de Almada (c. 1594), *The discovery of river Gambia*, 276.

The Spanish Capuchin Mission to Nigritia

Until 1622 the mission of African overseas territories had been entrusted to the Portuguese crown. This had led, as we have seen, to the establishment of the diocese of Funchal in 1514, from which, amongst others, in 1533 of the diocese of Santiago was separated. The diocese of Santiago was headed by a Portuguese bishop, who was most of the time resident in Portugal. A Vicar General residing on Santiago represented him. The archdeacon in Cacheu represented the Vicar General on the mainland of the West Coast and was assigned to oversee and co-ordinate the mission activities in his territory. But despite the fact that there was a clear structure, there was no consistent clerical religious presence due to lack of funds, a high mortality rate among the clergy and the fact that many priests engaged in sideline activities such as trade rather than mission. Attempts in the 17th century by the Jesuits to establish a seminary to train indigenous priests in Santiago failed.⁵⁷

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith planned to change this situation. Independent clerical orders, accountable to the Society, were entrusted with certain territories and received a special assignment to focus on the 'conversion of the heathen and Muslims', rather than to cater for the already existing communities.⁵⁸ In Guinea this led to a more structure evangelisation of the mainland.⁵⁹ The first mission organised by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was a mission to Congo in 1640. A few years later this was followed by a mission to Nigritia (Senegambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone).⁶⁰ In 1634 two Capuchins from Normandy, Alexis de St. Lô and Bernardin de Renouard left on an exploratory tour to West Africa which lasted six months. During their visit to Portudal and Joal they discovered that the people hadn't been visited by a priest for about eight(!) years.⁶¹ Before returning to France they baptised a large group of children. The same two men, accompanied by two others, returned to the *Petite Côte* a few years later. One of them died soon after arrival, the others worked there from 1636 until 1639. Sick, they returned home.⁶²

After an interval of 7 years, Propaganda Fide was able to find a new people willing to go to the Guinea Coast. The mission to Nigritia was entrusted to the Spanish Capuchins from the Andalusian province. The group consisted of fourteen men, twelve from Andalusia and two from Castillia.⁶³ Fr. Manuel de Granada was in charge of the mission.⁶⁴ The group received a mandate to work among the 'heathen and the Muslims

⁵⁷ The school was opened in 1604 and closed in 1642 when the Jesuits left the Guinea Coast. Very little is known about its results. J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 63, 64.

⁵⁸ P. Lintingre, 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine de Léon', *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971), 97, 98.

⁵⁹ There were Portuguese Jesuits working in Guinea under the Portuguese crown from 1604-1642, while Propaganda Fide sent Capuchins to the Guinea Coast in the period 1634-1700 and Franciscans from 1657 to the mid 18th century. See J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 62-66.

⁶⁰ P. Lintingre, 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine', 87-91.

⁶¹ P. Lintingre 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine' 97.

⁶² J. Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, 64.

⁶³ P. Lintingre, 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine', 90, 91

⁶⁴ N.I. De Moraes, 'La mission des Capucins Espagnols en Senegambie au XVII^e siècle (1646/1647)', *Afrika Zamani*, febr. 1986, 62.

in Nigritia'. Remembering this mandate can help to understand some of the decisions the group made while in the Senegambia.

The Capuchins arrived in the Senegambia in 1646, but there is some discussion whether this was their actual destination. De Anguiano, a Capuchin historian of the 18th century, sees Sierra Leone as the goal of the mission,⁶⁵ which would explain why one of them, Fr. Séraphin later moved on to Sierra Leone. Carrocea agrees with him but thinks that either because the captain lost his route or because of other unforeseen circumstances, they ended up in The Gambia.⁶⁶ P. Lintingre and P.B. Clarke have a different view. They both maintain that the mission was heading for The Gambia 'to preach to the "Mandingo people, followers of Muhammad"' and that by accident they first landed on the Senegalese coast.⁶⁷ A fact is that the fourteen missionaries arrived in Portudal, Senegal on Christmas' Eve 1646, where they met with the Christian community and celebrated mass on Christmas Day. When they discovered that no priests had visited the community since the French Capuchins of Alexis de Saint Lô had left in 1639, they realized that the Portudal community was in need of clergy. The group therefore decided to split into two. Four of them, Frs. Serafin de Léon, Francisco de Vallecás, Diego de Guadalcanal and brother Alonze de Velez remained on the *Petite Côte* to look after the Christian community there. In order to fulfil their mission to the 'heathen and Muslims' they decided to attempt the evangelisation the kings in the area.

The others continued to The Gambia the day after Christmas. Arriving in The Gambia, they anchored near James Island (then still called Andrew's Island) with the intention to visit 'Gelufer' (Juffureh).⁶⁸ After having waited for about ten days for the registration of the ship, they were informed that permission to work and trade in Gelufer could only be granted by the King of Barra. Thus they left for Barra. No doubt they did receive the permission because in 1847 they were at work in 'Sanguirigu' (Bintang Creek), 'Tancarole' (Tankular) and 'Jelufer' 'where many Christians of the neighbouring localities came who had never said confession.' There were also Christian communities in Barra and Combo 'where I [Fr. Gaspar de Sevilla] took confessions and baptised eight boys on the day of St. Sebastian.'⁶⁹ But Fr. Gaspar was not so generous in the baptism of adults. He postponed the baptism of several people, because he wasn't too sure whether they would not be persuaded by 'the mean doctrines' of the 'bequerins [marabouts] maures' who persistently 'taught their falsities and sorceries.'⁷⁰ The letter of Fr. Gaspar of 1847 also mentions work at Bichangor [Ziguinchor?] where they evangelised and baptised many and were called 'bequerins des chretiens'.

Meanwhile the superior of the mission Fr. Manuel de Granada and two of the other priests, travelled to Cacheu where both the ecclesiastical and the secular tribunals were located. The intention of the journey was to hand in his letters of credence, issued to him by Propaganda Fide. However, at their arrival they found out that the relations between Portugal and Spain had deteriorated. The three men were put in prison,

⁶⁵ P. Lintingre, 'Le vénérable Père Séraphine', 96 footnote 15.

⁶⁶ Quoted from the translation of N.I. de Moraes, *La mission des Capucins*, 67.

⁶⁷ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 13.

⁶⁸ Gelufer: Jilifree, later called Juffureh.

⁶⁹ Letter of Fr. Gaspar de Sevilla to his provincial superior as in: N.I de Moraes, 'La mission des Capucins', 81-83.

⁷⁰ See N.I. de Moraes, *La mission des Capucins*, 83.

accused of espionage⁷¹ and later deported to Lissabon.⁷² No doubt the initiative of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith to work in an explicitly 'Portuguese' area contributed to the incident.

Meanwhile the party from Senegal had worked among the Mulatto communities of the *Petite Côte* and travelled inland, evangelising the various Muslim chiefs in the area. But having found that the Muslim chiefs 'were persistent in error and in the sect of Mohammad', they decided to join the others in The Gambia. This decision was much deplored by the Christians in Rufisque, but can be understood when remembering that the mandate of the Capuchins was to 'heathen and Muslims' rather than to the Mulatto community of the *Petite Côte*. When the four arrived in Tankular on Ascension Day 1647, they found most of the others sick. Hearing of the unfortunate fate that had met Fr. Manuel and his companions, and assessing the problems ahead with the Portuguese, nine of the missionaries decided to seize the opportunity of a ship sailing to Carthagène. They left The Gambia on June 24 1647 for America.⁷³ Only two of them Frs. Séraphin de Léon and Antonio de Jimena stayed behind. The reasons given for this decision were partly practical - they were too weak to make a long journey by boat (both men were elderly: Fr. Séraphine was in his sixties and Fr. Antonio in his seventies) - partly theological. It is said that the two men wanted to give evangelisation of the Senegambia another attempt. Instead of working side by side, which one would expect, the two decided to divide the territory between them: Fr. Séraphin went back to the Senegal area where he had worked before. Fr. Antonio continued to work in The Gambia, making pastoral calls to the villages where Christians were living.⁷⁴ It seems that quite soon afterwards 1647 Fr. Séraphin left for Sierra Leone, leaving the whole of the Senegambia to Fr. Antonio. Fr. Antonio de Jimena seems to have died around November 1653 in a village called Guida. After his death his parishioners transported his body to Cacheu where he was buried in a church dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua. It seems that his tomb was a destination of pilgrimage for a long period.⁷⁵ Fr. Séraphin, after having worked in Sierra Leone and feeling he was about to die, also moved to Cacheu. He died there and was buried in May 1657.⁷⁶ His grave as well seems to have become a place for pilgrimage.

With the death of Frs. Antonio and Séraphine the mission to Nigritia had, as far as The Gambia was concerned, come to end. No impact on the 'heathen and Muslims' is recorded and it appears that in the end, both Fr. Séraphine and Fr. Antonio turned to the pastoral supervision of the Mulatto communities. Other missionaries were sent out by

⁷¹ Clarke suggests that this might have had something to do with the fact that they were disguised as soldiers, in order to convert English and Dutch Protestants engaged in trade, to Catholicism. According to a footnote he bases himself on work of Lintingre in the Holy Ghost Fathers' Archives Boite 147, p. 96 and 101 ff, but I have not been able to find this material in the archives. P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 13.

⁷² Carrocea also mentions an attempt to imprison the four people at Rufisque but due to intervention of the Catholics of Rufisque the Portuguese envoy was appeased and sent home empty handed. See N.I. de Moraes, *La mission des Capucin*, 72.

⁷³ N.I. De Moraes, *La mission des Capucin*, 73.

⁷⁴ P. Lintingre, *Le vénérable Père Séraphine*, 119

⁷⁵ P. Lintingre, *Le vénérable Père Séraphine*, 121.

⁷⁶ N.I. de Moraes, *La mission des Capucin*, 64.

the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, but all seem to have bypassed the Senegambia for the more promising Sierra Leone area. The Gambia region had once again become a chaplaincy to the Santiago diocese supervised by Portugal, with all the complications that accompanied it.

Jean Barbot, travelling in the Upper Guinea Coast around 1678/79 noticed the difficulty encountered by the missionaries and shared his own views on how to evangelise the peoples in The Gambia in a such a way that they would remain in the church:

As for missions in this country, they have been so little pursued that today hardly any blacks are adherents of the Roman church, for they display a natural dislike for dogma. They will only agree to be baptised because it is customary to promise them some earthly advantage ... But as soon as they have received the reward, they return to their earlier superstitions and so mock those who convert them. Perhaps if the missionaries had been able to back up their arguments with dragoons (dragons), then these poor Nigritians would have had such a fright that they would have concealed their real views and would have made a show of going to mass....⁷⁷

Whether that would have been the most adequate solution for the problems missionaries encountered in The Gambia can be doubted very much but it indicates the difficulties. Exposing people to the gospel and baptising them was one thing. People converting to Christianity for genuine reasons was quite another. And most difficult of all was nurturing the people in the Christian faith. For the period under discussion the Senegambian situation - due to the high mortality rate among priests and the unhealthy climate - was mainly a case of flocks without a shepherd.

The French chaplaincies to The Gambia in the 18th century

In the 18th century, when the influence of Portugal had declined,⁷⁸ the chaplaincy to the Gambian Christians was gradually taken over by the French missionaries who resided at Gorée or St. Louis. In the 1760s and 1770s a Fr. Demanet headed a mission of seven Redemptionists to the Senegambia. Demanet himself was appointed priest in charge at Gorée. In that capacity he visited The Gambia on several occasions. In a statement on The Gambia written in 1764, he described it as: 'That kingdom where Christianity, since many centuries, has been firmly established. Even today (1764) one can still find seven villages where nearly all the inhabitants are Christians.'⁷⁹ It seems Demanet visited different Gambian villages and especially Albreda is mentioned. Demanet seems

⁷⁷ P. Hair ed., *Barbot on Guinea: the writing of Jean Barbot on West Africa*, 150.

⁷⁸ In 1834 all religious orders were suppressed in Portugal. As a result, the resource of personnel dried up and the last Portuguese mission stations had to be closed. See H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth: a general history of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, 1983, 176.

⁷⁹ 'C'est le royaume ou le Christianisme a été depuis plusieurs siècles, la plus solidement établi. On y trouve encore aujourd'hui (1764) sept villages où les habitants sont presque tous chrétiens.' Quoted as in *Annales religieuses de la Gambie: 1849-1930*, 1. Note: The author of *Annales religieuses* is not mentioned in the manuscript but is said to have been Fr. Abiven, who was archivist for the Vicariate of Dakar from 1926 until his death in 1935. The *Annales religieuses* are kept in the CSSp Archives in Chevilly Larue, Paris.

to have taken his assignment as a missionary seriously. He not only supervised the existing Christian communities but also is said to have preached 'between the rivers Saloum and The Gambia' which, according to his own records, resulted in mass conversions.⁸⁰ Demanet seems to have been the first priest for more than twenty years to visit the Gambian churches. One of Demanet's companions, Fr. Pierre de Manel, visited Albreda around 1775.⁸¹ In that same year the mission work came to an end when the governor of Gorée expelled Demanet and some of his colleagues.⁸² There seems to have been another visit to The Gambia in 1777 by a priest called Sévéno, but it is not clear what order he belonged to.⁸³ Possibly Sévéno was already resident in Gorée before 1774 because when Britain conquered St. Louis and Gorée in 1774 and 1775 respectively, they did not allow new Roman Catholic missionaries to settle in the area.

It was in that same period of the 1760s and 1770s that the attitude of the French government towards its colonies changed. This led in 1763 to the decision that the French trading colonies would no longer be governed by trading companies. The colonies were to reside directly under the crown. A governor was appointed to represent the French government in each of the colonies. His assignment was to promote the French political and commercial interests but he also had authority in religious matters. This brought the missionaries in the delicate position. As government employees, they were to give account of their decisions and activities to the French government and were to be obedient to the governor's instructions. As missionary clergy they were accountable to their own congregation and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Many struggled with this double lordship, especially when the anti-clerical sentiment among the colonial officers increased. Several missionaries, such as Demanet and his confreres openly clashed with the colonial authorities and were subsequently deported to France.⁸⁴

This situation, that the French government had the final say in religious matters, continued until August 1852. Then the French government officially entrusted the religious oversight of the Senegambia colony to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost.⁸⁵ The choice for the Holy Ghost Fathers was not surprising. Already in 1779 an agreement between the French government and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith had been reached that the mission work in the Senegambia would be entrusted to French priests trained by the Congregation of Holy Ghost.

⁸⁰ P. Brasseur, 'Les religions traditionnelles et l'Islam vus par les premiers missionnaires français à la côte d'Afrique: 1815-1880, 2. Manuscript at the CSSp Archives at Chevilly Larue, Box 153, dossier A, file III.

⁸¹ *Annales religieuses de la Gambie*, 1.

⁸² J. Delcourts, *L'Histoire religieuse de Sénégal*, 21ff.

⁸³ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 28. There is some confusion in the sources. Boilat mentions that Sévéno visited The Gambia in 1777 whereas Koren mentions that when the first two Spiritians arrived in Senegal, there had been no clerical administration of the sacraments since the British occupation of St. Louis and Gorée in 1774 and 1775. Possibly Sévéno was not stationed in St. Louis or Gorée but in Joal or Portudal. See H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 106-110.

⁸⁴ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 16.

⁸⁵ P. Brasseur, 'Mission Catholique et administration française sur la côte d'Afrique de 1815 à 1870', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre mer*, LXII, no. 228/3 (1975), 422.

The first Holy Ghost fathers arrived in the Senegambia by accident. In 1778 the Frs. Dominic de Glicourt and James Bertout set off for their journey to Guiana. But the ship, on which they travelled, was shipwrecked at a sandbank near the coast of Mauritania. Having survived the ordeal, a new surprise awaited the two missionaries. When they set foot ashore, they were caught by Mauretanian slave traders and marched to St. Louis. There the British governor reluctantly ransomed them.⁸⁶ Because the British government did not want French Roman Catholic missionaries working in their territory, the two Spiritans were sent back home with the first ship leaving. In the three days between their ransom and departure, they preached, baptised and gave communion to the congregation at St. Louis, which had been deprived of clerical administrations since the beginning of the British occupation of St. Louis and Gorée in 1774 and 1775. On their return in France they had an interview with the Minister of Marines. It is sometimes implied that this interview had some influence on the French decision to recapture St. Louis and Gorée a year later.

Fr. De Glicourt returned to Senegal in 1779 and is usually considered to be the first CSSp Prefect Apostolic.⁸⁷ Due to conflicts with the French government, he left for France in 1781.⁸⁸ His successor, Fr. De Maffrand stayed less than a year. Fr. Anthony Coste, arriving in 1783, died within a year while trying to establish a mission on the mainland. The last Prefect Apostolic before the French Revolution seems to have been Fr. Le Rendu. The last visit to The Gambia seems to have been in 1784, but there is some discussion about the name of the priest.⁸⁹ After that all mission work stopped until 1816.

5.5 Christian presence at the forts

Chaplaincies at the forts

By the beginning of the 17th century Portugal's heyday was over and its power and influence in Africa began to decline. Though the Portuguese and the Mulattos still resided and traded on the Guinea Coast, their monopoly slowly began to crumble away. As time passed, more and more foreign ships appeared at the Coast. French-

⁸⁶ The British occupied St. Louis and Gorée from 1774 till 1783 and again from 1800 until 1817.

⁸⁷ It seems there is some discussion as to whether the 4 priests serving as Prefect Apostolic in the Senegambia, were officially appointed in this function or whether it was just the intention to appoint them. Due to the double authority of the French government and Propaganda Fide in the area, the facts seems somewhat confuses. For a discussion see H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 109, footnote, 19.

⁸⁸ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 106-110. Delcourt and Clarke both mention 1783 as the official date at which Britain released possession over the French colonies. It is correct that in 1783 the Treaty of Versailles was signed in which the British agreed to return the French possessions to the French government. See. F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 52. The actual re-occupation of St. Louis and Gorée however dates from 1779.

⁸⁹ *Annales religieuses de la Gambie*, 1 mentions a Fr. Chevalier, but according to Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 110, footnote 20, Chevalier was Prefect Apostolic of Gorée in 1776 and died in 1777 on the mainland. The last priest working in the Senegambia seems to have been Fr. Charbonnier, who took a schismatic oath when the French Revolution started and abandoned priesthood in 1794 to become a colonial clerk.

English-, Spanish-, Courland- and Dutch trading companies sought to get a foothold on the African mainland and factories and forts were built along the coast and the main rivers. In most cases these forts and factories were occupied by men only, because the mortality among the settlers was high and women and children were deemed to be even more vulnerable to the climate than men. The few cases where an attempt was made to start a colony - as was the case with the British Royal African Company in 1721 - turned out to be a disaster. Of the 22 women and their children who came out to live on James Island, only 3 women and 1 child survived long enough to catch the next boat back to England five months later.⁹⁰

Soldiers, traders and their assistants, artisans and an African support staff, often slaves, who served as translators and navigators, generally manned the forts. Most of the larger forts also had a chapel, as was the case on James Island.⁹¹ Usually the trading company provided for a chaplain. The name of a British chaplain called James Hacket has survived for example. Hackett who lived at James Island around 1702 complained to the trading company that employed him, that the lives of their employees were hardly a testimony to the Christian faith. They were drinking, gambling and co-habiting with local women.⁹²

The chaplain's main duty was no doubt burying the dead - there is a small graveyard next to the chapel at James Island - until such time when the chaplain followed the fate of his flock and died as well. Not much is known about the activities of the chaplains in The Gambia, apart from burying people and keeping an eye on the moral lives of the trading community. But it seems that the chaplains mainly focussed on their own flock and were not really interested in evangelising the Africans. At least no records of such activities are known.

The Courlander Lutheran mission to James Island

A rare and fairly well documented exception was formed by the work of Courlander chaplains on James Island. Around 1651 the small Baltic state of Courland⁹³ received permission from the king of Barra to occupy Andrew's Island in the river Gambia in exchange for a small financial remuneration.⁹⁴ This island, which was renamed Neu-Mittau and Friedrichshafen, is best known by its later name: James Island. There, at Andrew's Island the Courlanders made an attempt to establish a Courlander colony. The Courland Colony lasted from 1651 until 1661.

Right from the start a Lutheran chaplain was a member of the colonist party. Pastor Gottschalk Eberling who lived on Andrew's Island from 1651 until his death in 1654, can possibly be credited with the building of the chapel with its bell-tower at James Island and he cleared the ground for the graveyard. His successor was Pastor Joachim Dannenfeldt. His work is slightly better documented because the letter of his appointment as chaplain has survived. The letter states explicitly that Dannenfeldt had

⁹⁰ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 28.

⁹¹ J. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 42.

⁹² J. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 131.

⁹³ Courland was formerly a Baltic province in Rusland. Nowadays its territory can be found in the countries Letland and Litauen.

⁹⁴ J. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 40ff.

a twofold task. First of all he was appointed to care, in word and sacrament, for the Courlander settlers in the colony, so that they would live an exemplary life, which would bring the Africans to the knowledge of the true God. Secondly Dannenfeldt was to study the vernacular so that he could teach the focal points of the Christian faith to the 'unchristian and heathen people' who lived on the island. But – in reminiscence of Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 3: 15 who asks his people always to give testimony of the hope that lives within them but to do it in all gentleness and respect - he should not cause annoyance or bitterness among them or any of the other denominations. No doubt the instructions had less to do with the instructions of the apostle Peter than with the trading spirit of Duke James of Courland, who was convinced that though faith was important, it should never obstruct the trade. An edict issued in 1652 stated that all Christian converts should move to Banjona,⁹⁵ so that freedom of religion could be guaranteed. This seems to imply that Eberling had a commission similar to that of Dannenfeldt. What came of Dannenfeldt's instruction is not known, but there are no indications that the Lutheran mission led to conversions. In 1658 Dannenfeldt was appointed to Raden in Courland. His successor Pastor William Zacharias Müller stayed on James Island until 1661 when the Dutch expelled the Courlanders from the island.⁹⁶

The first and only mission of the Lutheran Courlanders to establish a religious foothold in The Gambia has remained without visible and palpable success; yet it is worth mentioning. It represents an attempt to combine chaplaincy to the settlers with the evangelisation of Africans. In an era in which other chaplains and their companies only focussed on trade, this should not pass unnoticed.

5.6 Conclusion

The initial attempts in the 15th century to establish Christianity on the Upper Guinea Coast were instigated by an antagonism with Islam and undergirded by the newly acquired rights granted by the *Padroado*. With the Crusades and the Reconquista fresh in their minds, the Portuguese hoped to convert African chiefs and kings to Christianity to have allies against Islam and guides in their search for the mysterious Prester John. At first they were relatively optimistic about their chances of success. Believing that those Africans, who were Muslims, were only superficially attached to their religion and convinced that traditionalists would immediately become Christians when hearing the message, they hoped that a sound exposition of the Christian faith would be enough to convert people to Christianity.

This optimism proved unfounded during the 15th and 16th centuries. Few African chiefs, whether traditionalists or Muslims, had the intention of becoming Christians.

⁹⁵ Banjona is mentioned as an island somewhere near the Gambian coast. Whether Banjul or another island is meant is not clear, but Gray states that the Courlanders had built another small fort on Banjol Island at Banyon Point, later known as Half Die. J. Gray, *A History of The Gambia*, 41.

⁹⁶ The story of the Courlanders in The Gambia can be found in E. Dammann, 'Die ersten Lutherischen Geistlichen in Africa (Gambia)', in G. Müller and W. Zeller (eds.), *Festschrift für Ernst Benz zum 60. Geburtstag am 17. Nov. 1967*, Brill, Leiden 1967, 525-531.

Trade was their first and main interest. This set-back, in combination with a diminishing Muslim threat in the Mediterranean and a high mortality rate among missionaries, reduced the work in Guinea in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries to an occasional chaplaincy visit to the Mulatto community on the mainland of West Africa.

The Mulattos, tracing their origin to Portuguese ancestors, had adopted Christianity as their 'ethnic' religion. It aided them in defining their identity as 'whites' and 'traders'. Due to their involvement in the slave trade, the Mulatto communities that had settled along the coastal and riverain regions, could hardly be called 'witnessing communities'. Nevertheless it remains a fact that there were Christian communities on the Guinea Coast from the late 15th century onwards. Though the influence of the Mulattos in the Senegambian trade declined in the 18th century, their Christian heritage in the upriver Gambian villages continued. In 1764 the French Redemptionist Demanet still called The Gambia 'a kingdom where Christianity has been firmly established since many centuries' and visited seven villages, which were predominantly Christian. It seems that after the Mulattos had lost their intermediary position in trade, their distinctness as a group declined: some intermingled with the local population, some moved to the Cacheu area while others settled on St. Mary's Island, after the foundation of Bathurst in 1816. With the decline of the distinct Mulatto settlements, the Christian communities along the river Gambia disappeared for some time and Christianity was concentrated in the coastal region.

The tensions created between mission and trade, especially the slave trade, hadn't passed by unnoticed to Rome. In 1622 a new era of in the Roman Catholic mission work started. Mission territories were no longer entrusted to a specific nation, as had been the case with the *Padroado*. A new organisation, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, was founded with the aim to co-ordinate and to supervise all overseas mission work. For the Upper Guinea Coast it meant that the evangelisation of Nigritia was assigned to the Capuchins of the provinces of Normandy and Andalusia. There were visits to the Senegambia in the 1630s and a larger mission to the Senegambia was organised in 1646/47. These seem to have been the only missions to the area by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for a considerable period of time. Whether this neglect of the Senegambia region was due to the tensions between the Portuguese and Society for the Propagation of the Faith or whether the Society counted on the Cape Verdian priests to look after the Senegambia or whether the Senegambia proved to be 'too difficult' a mission field and there were greener pastures elsewhere, is not clear. In the mid 18th century French missionaries, such as the Redemptionists and the Holy Ghost Fathers were stationed in St. Louis and Gorée. Records of their work prove that Christianity in The Gambia continued despite a minimum of pastoral oversight. There is also proof that the Diocese of Santiago continued to supply priests for the West African mainland up till the 1840s. The Spiritans Warlopp and Arragon found Cape Verdian priests at work in the Casamance when they visited this area in the 1840s. But there is no record that these priests were also active in The Gambia. All in all The Gambia seems to have been a neglected area.

Apart from the Mulatto Christianity there was another type of Christian community in The Gambia: the chaplaincies at the forts. Most trading companies provided chaplains for their staff and usually the forts, such as those on James Island, had a chapel or a church. The most elaborately documented case of these chaplaincies

in The Gambia is the Courlander Colony at James Island in the 1650s. It seems that the chaplains were mainly concerned with their own people and did very little missionary work. There are no records that African support staff or African slaves serving at the forts, converted to Christianity. Though the Courlander chaplain Dannenfeldt had an explicit missionary assignment next to his chaplaincy, there is no indication that he undertook any missionary activity. It seems therefore fair to say that the Christian presence at the forts did not contribute much to the evangelisation of the indigenous people in The Gambia.

Considering the circumstances and considering the neglect of the Gambia river in mission and chaplaincy work - only incidentally were priests visiting the region -, it is nothing less than a miracle that Christianity, however meagre, survived in the region. Only thanks to the Mulattos who, though not without spot or stain, persistently 'abided with the traditions of their ancestors' it is possible to speak of a continued presence of Christianity in The Gambia from the late 15th century onwards

The predominant model of relating to people of other faiths in this period under discussion was no doubt the model of expansion. The Portuguese attempts to search for Prester John and to convert African chiefs to Christianity in order to combat the Muslim forces are clearly examples of an attempt to numerically and geographically extend Christianity. Missionaries were paid by the government and explorers, missionaries and government worked hand in hand to spread Christianity as well as the Portuguese sphere of influence. Here the model of expansion took the form of expansionism. The work, supervised by Propaganda Fide, is also an example of the model of expansion, but the Spanish Capuchin mission was geared towards spreading Christianity rather than towards territorial expansion. Their work consisted in endeavouring to convert Africans to Christianity and to plant churches.

The Christian communities at the forts and the Mulatto Christianity are less easy to qualify. To state that these groups were examples of the model of presence would be eroding the concept of presence, because these groups had no intention to be witnessing communities. It is probably more correct to state that they chose to live in isolation, rather than that they made an attempt to relate religiously to their environment. Possibly they were afraid that any form of evangelisation would interfere with trade, which was their first priority. Hence none the proposed models, which are all relational, fits these groups.

Similarly, the conversation between Diogo Gomes and the *Niumi Mansa* cannot be qualified as an example of the model of dialogue. The conversation was an attempt to convince the other person that his religious perception was wrong, rather than to understand and respect him in his religious tradition. Though it is possible that some of the missionary labours on the Upper Guinea Coast took the form of diakonia, there is no actual record of any such activities in The Gambia for the period under discussion.

6. ROMAN CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT MISSIONS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY (1821-1848)

6.1 Introduction

The Mulatto Christian communities along the river Gambia had been self-sufficient for a long time. There had been no resident priests in The Gambia since 1653 and sometimes decades passed by without even so much as a visiting priest. The nearest residences for clergy were Gorée Island and Cacheu. It seems that the Gambian Christian community was mainly oriented towards Gorée. But there clerical life was far from easy due to the climate, the difficult co-operation with the French trading companies and the anti-clerical attitude of government employees. Therefore the majority of the priests, provided they had survived, left after a year's service. The priest serving at Gorée had an elaborate job description: he had to divide his time and attention between Gorée, St. Louis, Joal and St. Mary's. And since St. Mary's was the most remote of the four stations, the visits to St. Mary's must have been short and rare. But the Mulattos had found their own way to cope with the situation: they conducted their own services, instructed their children in Christian doctrine and at times of dire need even resorted to baptising their children themselves.

In the period between 1784 and 1815, Senegal was completely without resident clergy. A combination of the French revolution and the British occupation of French possessions in Senegal caused this. For a period of more than thirty years, the faithful were dependent on the occasional visits from the Cape Verde mission for their pastoral oversight.¹ Small wonder that gradually Mulatto Christianity eroded and consisted of little more than some outward practices, such as the wearing of crosses and the use of Christian names. The Methodist missionary William Moister who met a Mulatto family at Badamy in the 1830s, concluded: 'Here I met with a family whose ancestors were of the Christian religion, but they have for many years been so intermixed with Mahometans, that there is nothing left about them like Christianity except that they are rather more obliging than the natives.'²

In 1814 the situation began to improve. That year the Treaty of Paris restored the St. Louis and Gorée to France and Roman Catholic priests were again welcomed in Gorée and St. Louis. In 1816 the British purchased the island Banjulo in the river Gambia and began to build the town of Bathurst. The town became the new centre of British activities in The Gambia. Both events led to renewed missionary activities in Senegal and The Gambia respectively. When Sir Charles MacCarthy, Governor of Sierra Leone and administrator of the newly founded Colony of Bathurst, went on furlough to England in 1819 and 1820, he visited various missionary societies. There he pleaded for personnel to be sent out to The Gambia. The Society of Friends, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Anglican Church Missionary Society responded to his appeal. Because MacCarthy was a Roman Catholic and of mixed

¹ D. Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 28.

² Journal of William Moister, entry May 16 1831, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832.

French and British descent he did not limit himself to British missionary societies. Also the French Cluny Sisters were invited to The Gambia. MacCarthy, known for his 'Parish-scheme' in Sierra Leone, believed in civilisation through Christianisation. Hence his interest in Christian missions for The Gambia. The year 1821 is often called 'the year of the arrival of the missionaries'. Quaker-, Methodist-, Anglican- and Roman Catholic missionaries all arrived in The Gambia in that same year. Arriving and staying however proved to be two different things.

This chapter starts in paragraph 6.2 an overview of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia in the period 1821-1848. Special attention is given to Anne Mary Javouhey and her Cluny Sisters who worked in The Gambia in the 1820s. Paragraph 6.3 gives an overview of Quaker attempts to start vernacular schools in The Gambia. This is followed by an outline of the Methodist endeavours to establish Christianity on the banks of the Gambia river in paragraph 6.4. Special attention is given to the involvement of the Methodist Church with the liberated and recaptive slaves. The first generation of 'native assistant missionaries' within the Gambian Methodist Church is discussed in a separate paragraph (6.5). Paragraph 6.6 describes the Anglican chaplaincy to the army and to government officials in the early 19th century. In paragraph 6.7 some concluding remarks are made.

This chapter ends in the year 1848. The year 1848 was in more than one way an important year. It was the year in which the Methodist Church, after nearly 25 years, 'lost' its monopoly position on the Gambian mission field. On January 18, 1849 two Roman Catholic Spiritan priests arrived to take up residence in Bathurst. In less than one and a half year a Roman Catholic church had been erected in Hagan Street. A few years later, in 1851, it had to be replaced by an even larger one, because it had become too small.³ This caused the Methodist Superintendent Henry Badger to exclaim: 'The Roman Catholics are storming the place, sometimes we have had a dozen priests wandering about in long cassocks.'⁴ For the Methodists it meant that for the first time in their Gambian history they had to seriously reflect on their mission strategy: a healthy competition awoke them from their mild lethargy.

Also within the Methodist Church considerable changes took place. In 1848 the last three veterans of the first generation of the native ministry were sent on retirement. John Cupidon was retired because of 'insanity'. Pierre Sallah was fired because of disobedience. As for John Gum, his eyesight had diminished to such an extent that he was honourably discharged of his duties and received a pension as chapel keeper in New Town. Their vacancies were not filled by Gambians, but by Sierra Leoneans, who in the latter half of the 19th century were the main African agents in the Gambian Methodist Church. The year 1848 also signalled the end of an era of great optimism and partnership between black and white. The mentality of colonialism and its disdain for Africans had begun to seep through in missionary circles.

³ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 9-11.

⁴ Badger to WMMS, Bathurst, August 10 1850, Box 295 H2709 mf. 885.

6.2 The Roman Catholic Mission: Anne Marie Javouhey and the Cluny Sisters

The missionary activities of the Cluny Sisters in Senegal

In 1814 the Treaty of Paris arranged the restoration of the French possessions in Senegal to France. With the British no longer in charge of Gorée and St. Louis, their embargo on Roman Catholic clergy in British occupied French territories was no longer valid. This opened the way for the Congregation of the Holy Ghost to appoint priests to the Senegambia. But there was no real improvement to the state of affairs before 1784. Most priests served less than a year, either because they clashed with the governor or because they succumbed to tropical diseases. In 1817 the Spiritan Fr. Guidicelli was appointed as Apostolic Prefect. He went to live in St. Louis, but found life there so difficult that he fled the horrors of the country after eight months. His successor Fr. Terrasse, appointed in 1819, did not stay long either. He left for France two months after his arrival in St. Louis.⁵ Fr. Henry Baradère proved more persistent. He was appointed Apostolic Prefect in 1820 and continued to fulfil the position until his death in 1822. Baradère was concerned about the fragmentation of the pastoral oversight in the Senegambia, due to deaths and short terms of service. He designed a scheme to amend this situation by starting a seminary for indigenous priests in Senegal. Unfortunately he failed due to illness. He died in 1822. However, his vision to train indigenous people for the priesthood, was taken up by Anne-Marie Javouhey.

Anne Marie Javouhey was the founder of the Roman Catholic congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny⁶ established in 1807 in France. The order was dedicated to 'the service of people in different kind of needs anywhere in the world'. The Cluny Sisters drew the attention of the French government because of their performances in education and health care in France itself. Thus, in 1818 the French government invited Javouhey and her sisters to extend their work to the French colonies. In 1819 six Cluny sisters, headed by Javouhey's sister Mother Rosalie arrived in Senegal.⁷ The arrival of the Cluny Sisters started a new period in Senegalese Catholicism.

The Cluny Sisters proved to be more persevering and better resistant to climate and diseases than the priests. The initial settlement of the Cluny sisters was Gorée Island. There they worked in the hospital, established a school and did pastoral work. Later they also moved to the mainland of Senegal. They established an agricultural project at Dagana and schools, clinics and dispensaries in St. Louis and Joal and environment. For their charity work they received the local nickname 'filles du ciel'.⁸ When Anne Marie Javouhey visited Senegal in 1822, she insisted that a group of young children be sent to France to be trained as religious workers. This way she hoped to prevent the future dependence of the Senegalese Roman Catholic Church on expatriate missionaries. In 1825 a group of 11 boys and girls left Senegal for study in France.⁹ Three of the boys returned in the 1840s to serve as priests: Asene Fridoil,

⁵ G. Goyau, *Un grand "homme", Mère Javouhey, apôtre des noirs*, Les Petits-fils de Plon et Nourrit, Paris 1929, 49 and 55.

⁶ Henceforth cited as 'the Cluny Sisters'.

⁷ G. Goyau, *Un grand "homme", Mère Javouhey, apôtre des noirs*, 49.

⁸ G. Goyau, *Un grand "homme", Mère Javouhey, apôtre des noirs*, 54.

⁹ B. Sundkler; C. Steed, *A history of the church in Africa*, 171.

David Boilat and Jean Pierre Moussa.¹⁰ What happened to the others and whether some of the girls entered the Cluny Order is not known.

The Cluny Sisters at St. Mary's Island

Governor MacCarthy had invited Anne Marie Javouhey to visit The Gambia and Sierra Leone to see what could be done there.¹¹ Anne Marie Javouhey accepted the invitation¹² and arrived in St. Mary's either towards the end of December 1822 or the beginning of January 1823.¹³ One sister and a novice accompanied her. A Senegalese girl named Florence was also part of the group. The Cluny Sisters had ransomed her for the sum of 300 francs. No doubt she served the sisters as a translator and personal attendant.¹⁴

In The Gambia Javouhey stayed at the hospital in Bathurst and helped to re-organise it. She also made plans for a school for Liberated African children. According to her letter there were many Liberated African children in town: she mentioned the figures of 500 girls and 1000 boys. Fifty of them, between the ages of eight and ten, were entrusted to the Cluny Sisters. The governor's rest house at Cape St. Mary's in Combo, intended as a house for people to recuperate from unhealthy Bathurst, was offered as a school and a future place of residence for the sisters.¹⁵ Whether the sisters actually moved into the building in Bakau, is unclear but it appears to have been the same place that was offered and later occupied by the Quakers.

¹⁰ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 178-180. The native priests returned to Senegal in 1842 and 1843 respectively, but were recalled to France in 1851 when it became clear that they had been insufficiently prepared for their task. Boilat remained in France and became a teacher at the seminary, Moussa went to Haiti and Fridoil went back to Senegal and served there until he died in a shipwreck. See also B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 172. NB. Sundkler mentions that Fridoil and Boilat were Mulattos whereas Moussa was 'black'.

¹¹ When exactly MacCarthy invited Anne Marie Javouhey is unclear. It might have been in 1822 when she was in Senegal, but her letter seems to imply that it was much earlier, as she states 'pour commence l'établissement projeté depuis si longtemps'. It remains somewhat unclear what is meant by 'l'établissement', but probably a convent is meant. This would mean that MacCarthy contacted Anne Marie Javouhey in France on his journey to England in 1820/21 as he did with the other missions, but that the actual visit and establishment of the order had to wait until 1822/1823. J. Hébert, M.C. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, 143.

¹² In her letter from The Gambia she states that establishing a convent in The Gambia, an English colony, was 'un grand bien' as it would serve as 'une garantie pour les autres d'Afrique, en cas de rupture entre le gouvernement francais et anglais.' J. Hébert, M.C. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, 143.

¹³ Sources mention different dates as to when exactly Anne Marie Javouhey visited The Gambia. A letter written by Anne Marie Javouhey from St. Mary's Island, dated 28 January 1823 (letter no. 71), states that she has been at St. Mary's for about a month, which could mean that she either arrived in late December 1822 or early January 1823. See: J. Hébert, M.C. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, 143.

¹⁴ G. Goyau, *Un grand "homme", Mère Javouhey, apôtre des noirs*, 74. The centennial pamphlet of the Cluny Sisters *100 Years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*, 11 mentions one sister, whereas Cleary mentions two sisters. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 6. Note: Cleary also mentions that Anne Marie Javouhey arrived in The Gambia in 1821, which, according to her own letters, is not correct.

¹⁵ J. Hébert, M.C. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, 144.

Anne Marie Javouhey also visited Albreda, which she described as an extremely fertile place. Possibly she expected or hoped to find some reminiscences of a Christian Mulatto community there. But alas, there was none. The French possessions at Albreda had dilapidated to such an extent, that she called them an embarrassment to France.

Anne Marie Javouhey left The Gambia after about ten weeks, accompanied by Florence. Her next letter, dated 22nd of March 1823 was written from Sierra Leone, stating that she had arrived there about eight days ago.¹⁶ The two other sisters, probably Sr. Adèle and Sr. Marcelline, stayed behind in The Gambia but very little is known about what they did. Possibly they worked in the hospital and started a school. Some reports say that there were two attempts to start a community in The Gambia, but both failed, probably because of health reasons.¹⁷ Details and dates of a second attempt are not known. Hannah Kilham in her diary mentions the funeral of the French Sr. Adèle on the 23th of December 1823.¹⁸ The name of a Sr. Marcelline is mentioned by Mrs. Bowdich who visited The Gambia in the autumn of 1823.¹⁹ Gray suggests that the death of Sr. Adèle meant the temporarily halt of the mission of the Cluny Sisters in The Gambia, barely a year after its commencement. He assumes that with the death of Sr. Adèle, her companion left The Gambia.²⁰ But according to the *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, another sister arrived soon after the death of Sr. Adèle.²¹ John Morgan also mentioned 'some sisters in the hospital' in his diary of January 1824. He related that they were visited by a French priest from Senegal from time to time who came to celebrate mass and 'baptised many who asked for it'. Though Morgan obviously did not agree with the slack policy of baptising all whom requested it, he and the priest seem to have been on friendly terms. The two of them had breakfast together in 1824.²² What happened to the sisters after the year 1824, remains uncertain. There are no more references to the Cluny Sisters after the year 1824. It seems most Roman Catholic mission work in The Gambia came to a halt though there are some records that priests stationed in Senegal, visited The Gambia: Tabaud in 1820, Fournier in 1822 and Fridoil, Moussa and Boilat in the 1840s.²³

The Cluny Sisters returned to The Gambia on the 7th of April 1883.²⁴ Early that year the government decided that all education in The Gambia should be in English

¹⁶ J. Hébert, M.C. de Segonzac, *Anne Marie Javouhey Correspondance*, 147, letter no. 72.

¹⁷ *100 Years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*, 12.

¹⁸ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 188/189.

¹⁹ T.E. Bowdich, *Excursions dans les isles de Madère et de Porto-Santo, faites dans l'automne de 1823, pendant son troisième voyage en Afrique*, Levrault, Paris 1826, 319/320. Mrs. Bowdich in the same passage also mentions that the sisters only made vows for periods of five years after which they were free to either put down the veil or renew their vows. I have found no other evidence of this temporary character of the vows of the Cluny Sisters and can only guess that Sr. Marcelline about whom Mrs. Bowdich speaks was not a sister in the true sense of the word who had taken her vows but a candidate, as Goyay mentions that there was one sister and a candidate. Possibly specially regulations applied to them.

²⁰ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 315.

²¹ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 189.

²² Journal of John Morgan, January 29 1824, Box 293 H2709 mf. 827.

²³ *Annales religieuses de la Gambie*, 1.

²⁴ *100 Years of missionary service by the Cluny Sisters in The Gambia*, 41. Clarke says that the

and in accordance with the British educational system. This caused a problem for the Roman Catholic schools, which were mainly run with francophone personnel. The French sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary had been in charge of the Roman Catholic girls' schools since their arrival in The Gambia in 1849. But though they were capable educationalists, British education was something, which the sisters of the Immaculate Heart could not provide. Therefore the help of the Cluny Sisters who since 1864 had an Irish branch, was called in. The Irish Cluny sisters arrived in The Gambia in April that same year. This time they had returned to stay.

The Vicariate of the Two Guineas and of the Senegambia

An event that was to have far reaching consequences for the Roman Catholic Church in the Senegambia occurred in 1842. In the 1830s Bishop England of Charleston, South Carolina had launched an appeal to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to provide priests for some of his parishioners who were re-settling in Liberia. The Society referred the matter to the Second Council of Baltimore, which approached different congregations to take up the work. But to no avail. No congregation proved willing to go. England thereupon asked for volunteers in his own diocese. Two priests and one layman stepped forward: Fr. Edward Barron, Fr. John Kelly and the layman Denis Pindar. The three men travelled to Liberia. After their arrival in Liberia they discovered that there were very few Roman Catholics among the settlers. Thereupon they decided to extend their work to include the evangelisation of the nearby villages.

In 1842 Barron went to report on the situation in Rome. The result of this report was the creation of the immense Vicariate of the Two Guineas, stretching from Senegal in the north to Namibia in the south. Barron himself was consecrated as its Vicar Apostolic.²⁵ In order to staff this enormous region, Barron contacted the founder of the newly formed Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, Francis Libermann. In Sept. 1842 a party of 10 – seven priests and three brothers - left for the Vicariate. Two of the priests were intended for Senegal: Louis Maurice and Louis Audebert. But due to a mistake in communication all the men travelled to Cape Palmas. Within two weeks seven of them were ill. Three of them died and one returned home. The survivors were re-located by Barron to Assinia, Grand Bassam and Gabon. In 1845 only three of them were still alive. Discouraged by the disaster Barron tendered his resignation to the Holy See and returned to the United States.²⁶

In 1845 Jean Tisserant was appointed Vicar Apostolic in Barron's place, but unfortunately he died in a shipwreck on his way to the Vicariate.²⁷ In 1846 Jerome Gravière left for Dakar in 1846 with two priests and two brothers. He functioned as

Cluny Sisters returned to The Gambia in the 1840 together with the Holy Ghost Fathers. This however is not correct. The congregation, which came to assist the Holy Ghost Fathers, was the French congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart. P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 79. Also Gailey mentions that the Cluny Sisters returned in 1849. H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 69.

²⁵ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 180. The area was demarcated by the Senegal river in the North and the Orange river in the South. For details about Barron see H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 181-190.

²⁶ H. Koren, *Spiritans West Africa Memorial: 1842-1996*, Spiritus Press, Bethel Park 1997, 31.

²⁷ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 186-190.

Apostolic Prefect until Benedict Truffet was appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1847.²⁸ Libermann meanwhile pleaded with the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to divide the Vicariate in four pro-vicariates and proposed the seat of the Vicariate to be Dakar. The actual implementation of this suggestion took another 20 years: in 1863 the Senegambia became a separate Apostolic Vicariate. Having observed the high death rate of his missionaries in West Africa, Libermann also made plans to evangelise Africa with Africans. Thus he developed ideas on the same lines as Baradère and Anne-Marie Javouhey. As early as 1844 there are statements of Libermann on the need of the indigenisation of clergy. Especially Aloysius Kobès, Vicar Apostolic for the northern part of the Two Guineas from 1848 until 1872, implemented this policy.²⁹

In April 1847, Benedict Truffet sailed with six people for Dakar.³⁰ Truffet ordered a severe and simple life on his companions, living the same life and eating the same food as the indigenous people. Soon all fell ill. Truffet, refusing the attendance of a doctor and any type medication, was the first to die. On the 23rd of November 1847, half a year after his arrival in Senegal, he passed away. The others soon recovered after taking some medicine and proper food and continued the mission.³¹ While Libermann discussed with the Society for the Propagation of the Faith what to do next, two of the Libermann fathers undertook an exploration of the country. The Frs. Arragon and Warlop, visited the Casamance in 1847. In various towns they found indigenous Cape Verdian priests still active. In 'Zechinchor' there was a church and a presbytery, while 'Cacheo', 'Farring', 'Dibra' and Bissad' had chapels. But they had little regard for their Cape Verdian colleagues. Appalled with the life-style of these 'Portuguese fathers', they decided to stay with the 'infidels' rather than with the Christians. One of the Cape Verdian priests had married up to four wives and had many children. The priest in Farring was even worse: it was said that 'it would be better if he had not been there.'³² It was this same Libermann father Warlop, who together with his colleague Ronarch arrived in Bathurst on Jan. 19 1849.

Libermann's negotiations with the Society for Propagation of the Faith resulted in the appointment of two people to head the Vicariate of the Two Guineas: Jean-Remi Bessieux (1803-1876) and Aloysius Kobès (1820-1872). Bessieux had been part of the first group of Libermann fathers to assist Barron in Liberia and had been working in Gabon since September 1844. He was appointed Vicar Apostolic. Kobès, who was new to the area and to be stationed in Dakar, was to serve as his coadjutor. The appointment of two people was meant to safeguard the continuity of the work, in the case of two died. The precaution however proved to be unnecessary. Both Bessieux and Kobès remained in function till the 1870s, thus providing continuity and stability to the work in the region.³³

²⁸ J. Delcourts, *Histoire religieuse du Sénégal*, 30, 31.

²⁹ For more information on indigenous clergy and indigenous agents, see paragraph 7.2.

³⁰ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 191, 192.

³¹ R.P. Cabon, *Monseigneur Truffet: Premier Vicaire Apostolique des Deux Guinées*, 21ff, Boite 165/A, file III.

³² R.P. Du Patquet, *Notes sur la Mission des Deux Guinées*, 1865, Vol. 12, 11-13. (NB 13 volumes in all), Boite 146/B, File 6.

³³ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 194, 195.

6.2 The Quaker initiative: Hannah Kilham and vernacular education

Hannah Kilham and the Quaker involvement in the abolition of slavery

The Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers, was among the first to respond to MacCarthy's appeal for missionaries for The Gambia. MacCarthy's request tied in with the Quakers' interest in the fate of the Liberated Africans. Early in the year 1821 the British Quakers sent out a delegate, called William Singleton, to explore the possibilities of a Quaker mission to The Gambia and to Sierra Leone. Singleton arrived in The Gambia in the February 1821.

The context of the Quaker mission to The Gambia (and Sierra Leone) was the abolition of the slave trade. Since the second half of the 18th century the Quakers had formed the avant-garde in the advocacy for the abolition of the slave trade. From 1774 onwards no Quaker was allowed to have dealings with slave traders and from 1776 onwards none of the Friends was allowed to own slaves. The first anti-slavery committee, formed in 1783, consisted mainly of Quakers.³⁴ But the Quaker abolition lobby didn't end when in 1807 the British parliament voted for the abolition of the slave trade. Through the medium of the African Institution the Quakers were involved in the re-settlement and education of Liberated Slaves in Sierra Leone. It was against this background that the educationalist Hannah Kilham (1774-1832), who had a special affinity for the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone, became involved in the development of vernacular education materials for Africa.

Hannah Kilham was born an Anglican, by marriage a Kilhamite Methodist³⁵ and after the death of her husband in 1803 a Quaker. Due to her interest in the fate and education of Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone, Hannah Kilham had developed an interest in the Lancasterian system of education. Started by Joseph Lancaster, this method of education was based on the principle that a student was at the same time both a learner and a teacher. Pupils, who had received some education, passed on what they had learned to students who were in a lower grade. In this way a large number of children could be effectively educated with a fairly small number of qualified teachers.³⁶

According to Kilham, the Lancasterian system of education offered a solution to the question of how to educate the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone, where there were only a few qualified teachers. She even took the method one step further than Joseph Lancaster had done. She insisted that education should be done in the vernacular³⁷, for she was convinced that children learned most easily and effectively in their native language. English, according to Kilham, should only be taught to the children once they had become literate in their own vernacular. According to Kilham this vernacular teaching material could be best prepared in England, because the living conditions in England were so much better than those in West Africa. Thus, when Kilham heard of a vessel coming from West Africa in 1820, she engaged two African

³⁴ M. Dickson, *The powerful bond*, 89, 90.

³⁵ Hannah's husband Alexander Kilham was a Methodist preacher who had been expelled by the Methodist Connection in 1797. See: M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, p. 28/29.

³⁶ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 78ff.

³⁷ S. Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 169, 170.

sailors, Mahmadee and Sandanee to assist her in the production of vernacular material. The two men were employed by the Society of Friends to aid with the reduction of vernaculars to written language while at the same time William Singleton trained them as teachers.³⁸ Within a few months, with the help of these two Africans, Kilham had produced her first primer in Wolof called *First lessons in Jaloof*.³⁹ Many other booklets, reading charts and pamphlets were to follow. Soon she discovered that the two languages she was working on, Wolof and Mandinka, were languages of The Gambia rather than Sierra Leone. Therefore, when MacCarthy requested missionaries for The Gambia, the Quakers were willing to consider his request. Singleton was sent to The Gambia in order to prepare for the return of Mahmadee and Sandanee as teachers to their homeland. Singleton's task was to make contacts in The Gambia for the establishment of a Wolof vernacular school and to find four more Wolof young people, two boys and two girls, who were willing to be trained as teachers in England.⁴⁰

When Singleton arrived in The Gambia in early 1821, he discovered that Mandinka rather than Wolof was the main language in The Gambia. His attempts to get to Wolof speaking areas to secure some people to come to England failed. The plan to take Africans to England was strongly discouraged by the Europeans he met in Bathurst.⁴¹ However, his mission was not a complete failure. He gathered a wealth of information on agriculture, tribes, customs etc. and could report that a Quaker settlement in The Gambia would be welcomed. A site at Cape Point had even been allocated as a possible place of residence. Journeying back via Sierra Leone - and finding the conditions in Sierra Leone much more appealing than those in The Gambia - he returned to England in July 1821.

The Quaker expedition to The Gambia

About two years passed after the return of Singleton from The Gambia. In this period considerable work was done on the production of vernacular reading material. Then the English Quakers decided to undertake a second journey to The Gambia. It appears as if the aim of the mission was not the same for all parties involved. Hannah Kilham's primary concern was to check the effectiveness of the material she had so far produced. She stated several times in her diary that she had no intention to stay in Africa as a missionary.⁴² But the African Committee of the Society of Friends seems to have had the wish of establishing a permanent settlement for education and agriculture.⁴³ Meanwhile it had become clear that the two Gambians would only be able to function under close supervision. Thus, a party of six was formed. Hannah Kilham was considered the leader of the group; other members were Richard Smith, a Quaker who had worked among runaway slaves in America, John and Ann Thompson, brother and sister and both in their twenties, and Mahmadee and Sandanee. The group

³⁸ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 169.

³⁹ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 116.

⁴⁰ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 119.

⁴¹ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 122.

⁴² S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 122.

⁴³ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 169, 170.

left England on the 26th of October 1823 and arrived at St. Mary's in December of the same year.⁴⁴ On the boat to The Gambia, the Quakers made acquaintance with James Horton, the Anglican chaplain to The Gambia. When Horton heard of their plans, he granted them his full support and offered them the chapel room – a room in his private house – as a schoolroom.⁴⁵

The Quakers had been offered the government rest house at Cape Point as a residence. But the first encounters with the *alkalo*⁴⁶ of Bakau were not very encouraging. People in Bathurst on the other hand were eager to receive education. Therefore, it was decided to split the party into two. Ann Thompson and Hannah Kilham were to settle in Bathurst with Mahmadee, whereas Richard Smith would attempt to start up an agricultural station in Bakau, assisted by John Thompson and Sandanee. In January 1824 the Quakers opened two schools in St. Mary's. Ann Thompson led a girls' school, which met in the mornings and Mahmadee headed a school for men in the evenings. The participants in this evening school were the King's Boys, Liberated African men brought from Sierra Leone do to construction work. Hannah Kilham supervised both schools and at the same time continued her work on vernacular materials. To her joy she had discovered that the method she had used, was effective.

The men in Bakau, occupied with making the house habitable, found that the *alkalo's* attitude gradually changed for the better. Therewith the hopes to have a permanent Quaker industrial mission at Bakau grew. The Bakau party focussed on agriculture, the provision of clean drinking water and construction work, while gradually developing a vernacular school on the side.⁴⁷

In March 1824 Hannah Kilham decided to visit Freetown. Her love for Sierra Leone was still fervent and she wanted to see what could and should be done in Sierra Leone in the field of education. A ship sailing in March took her and John Thompson to Freetown.⁴⁸ The visit to Sierra Leone convinced Kilham more then ever before that her vernacular education methods were the answer to Africa's quest for education. Hence she made plans to leave The Gambia in order to continue her work under better circumstances in England. Thus the party broke up. John and Ann Thompson also opted for England but Richard Smith decided to stay behind and develop the Bakau settlement. Mahmadee left for his home village Perang⁴⁹ and the Methodist missionary John Morgan was asked to supervise Sandanee. It seems that for some time Sandanee

⁴⁴ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 170.

⁴⁵ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 185, 186.

⁴⁶ More or less the local name for a mayor.

⁴⁷ The school in Bakau was opened on June 13 1823. S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 252.

⁴⁸ It seems that during Kilham's absence there were disciplinary problems with Sandanee and Mahmadee. The two men only accepted orders from Kilham. This might have been one of the reasons why the Thompsons opted for returning to England with Kilham, rather than staying in The Gambia.

⁴⁹ Moister describes having met Mahmadee in the interior in 1832: "He had then become a Mohammedan, and was attired in his native dress, and decorated with greegrees, the same as the rest of his sable brethren. He retired at my approach, as if conscious of his ingratitude and sin; but I followed him into the bush and remonstrated him, and implored him to turn to the Lord." W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 207.

was employed as a teacher at the Methodist school.⁵⁰ The girls' school is generally thought to have been handed over to Mrs. Hawkins, the wife of the Methodist missionary Robert Hawkins, who had arrived in April 1824.⁵¹ Possibly the men's evening school was continued by the Anglican chaplain but there are no definite records about that.

The boat taking the Quakers home left in late June.⁵² Then tragedy struck: on July 7 1824 John Thompson died at sea and in October of that same year news reached the survivors that Richard Smith had died in the hospital in Bathurst on July 30th, aged 39.⁵³ Many people blamed Hannah Kilham for the death of Richard Smith, because she, the leader of the party, had left the younger man behind on his own. Appeals for new workers to continue the agricultural mission in The Gambia remained unanswered.

Seven years after the Gambian experiment, Hannah Kilham left England to follow her heart's call to work in Sierra Leone among Liberated Africans, using her vernacular version of the Lancasterian system.⁵⁴ A year later, in 1832, she died at sea. She had been to Liberia to look into the possibilities of vernacular education there. On her return to her home in Sierra Leone, the ship on which she travelled, was wrecked in a storm.⁵⁵

Thus the work of the Quakers in The Gambia came to an end after about seven months. The vernacular initiative in education, so well prepared and well received, didn't survive much longer. It is doubtful whether the Methodists continued teaching in the vernacular, although the books written by Hannah Kilham remained in circulation.⁵⁶ Kilham herself seems to have kept in touch with The Gambia. Just before her death in 1832, she had sent copies of *African lessons* to the Methodist missionary Moister to be used in Georgetown.⁵⁷ Possibly this was Krio material, which had been developed in Sierra Leone. But the Methodists emphasised the importance of education in English.

Sandaneer seems to have worked with the Methodists as a teacher for a while, after which he disappeared from the scene. William Moister reported in 1830 that both Sandaneer and Mahmadee had returned 'to all the heathenish practices to which they had been formerly addicted; proving to a demonstration that nothing but the grace of God can change the heart.'⁵⁸ The house at Bakau remained empty⁵⁹ until it became

⁵⁰ Morgan to WMMS, June 23 1824, Box 293 H2709 mf. 827.

⁵¹ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 182; B. Prickett, *Island base*, 33. I have found no evidence of this in the WMMS archives or in the *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*. But because the relations between the Quakers and the Methodists were friendly, it is not unlikely that this has indeed happened. Fact is that Mrs. Hawkins led a girls' school at St. Mary's.

⁵² M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 182.

⁵³ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 252-258.

⁵⁴ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 220ff.

⁵⁵ M. Dixon, *The powerful bond*, 240.

⁵⁶ Apart from textbooks in Wolof, Hannah Kilham made reading cards in thirty African languages, among which Mandinka and Fula. See D.P. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 27.

⁵⁷ Moister to WMMS, Bathurst, April 14 1832, Box 293, H2709 mf. 833.

⁵⁸ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 207.

⁵⁹ Moister mentions that in 1832 the remains of the agricultural implements were still laying around. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labour*, 206

Methodist property. The main concern of the Quakers, i.e. caring for and educating the Liberated Africans, remained on the agenda of missionaries and was provided for by the Methodists. Their mission work became closely linked with this community. Also the Methodists were convinced that 'it is not philosophy, it is not policy that can change Africa and make her happy. It is the prevalence of Christian influence and Christian feeling.'⁶⁰ Civilisation and Christianity were considered to be two sides of the same coin.

Indirectly the English Quakers continued their interest in The Gambia for some time. The names of Elisabeth Fry and other prominent Quakers appear as members of the Southampton Committee, which supported the Methodist Fula settlement project on MacCarthy Island in the 1830s.

6.3 The beginnings of Methodism

Rural or urban beginnings: Tendaba, Mandanaree or Bathurst?

In his tour around the mission agencies, Sir Charles MacCarthy had also passed by at the newly founded Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1818) in London. He had invited the Wesleyans to come and work in The Gambia.⁶¹ According to MacCarthy the spot most suited for Methodist mission work was Tendaba, a trading town about a hundred miles up river.⁶² Possibly, MacCarthy had opted for Tendaba because there was a merchant community residing there.⁶³ The merchants could give some form of protection to the missionaries and, at the same time, form the initial congregation. Possibly MacCarthy also suggested Tendaba to the Methodists, hoping that this way there would be a mission station in the rural areas as well.

On March 8 1821 John Morgan arrived in St. Mary's as the first Methodist missionary to The Gambia.⁶⁴ Morgan spent the first few weeks of his time in The Gambia in Bathurst, waiting for his colleague John Baker who was to join him from Sierra Leone. The two men were planning to proceed to Tendaba together, to start a mission station there. Morgan spent this time waiting by going round Bathurst, preaching and making contacts. His initial idea was to focus on the expatriate Bathurst community of merchants, soldiers and government officers. But this was thwarted by the arrival of an Anglican chaplain from Sierra Leone a few days after Morgan had set foot in Bathurst. The chaplain was officially appointed by the government to serve the

⁶⁰ S. Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 139.

⁶¹ B. Salvaign compares the recruitment and formation of missionaries sent out by the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the SMA order. He states that the Wesleyan missionaries were first of all selected because of their personal piety and that theological training was not a requirement. B. Salvaign, *Les missionnaires à la reconte de l'Afrique au XIX siecle: Côte des esclaves et pays Yoruba, 1840-1891*, l'Harmattan, Paris 1994, 94.

⁶² W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 114, 115.

⁶³ It is unclear whether there were Mulatto traders living in Tendaba in the 1820s.

⁶⁴ Morgan to WMMS, St Mary's April 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823. According to the historian Gailey the first Methodist missionaries came to The Gambia in 1823, but this is a mistake. See H. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 68.

expatriate community and the Liberated Africans. Morgan therefore turned to the indigenous population. He describes his 'congregation' with some sense of humour, as leisurely reclining on their mats under a mango tree, listening to his sermons as long as he would want them to and responding to his zealous calls for repentance by asking him to make amulets and to interpret their dreams.⁶⁵ Little did he realise the compliment the people paid to him. They took him for what he claimed to be: a genuine religious leader who had access to *baraka*. And thus they treated him in the same way as they were used to treat the *marabouts*: by asking him 'to work for them'.

The arrival of John Baker caused some disarray with regards to the planned proceedings. Baker had worked with Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. Some of them had – either voluntarily or enforced by the government – moved to The Gambia. When Baker was walking in the streets of Bathurst, some people recognised him as their former pastor from Sierra Leone. They invited him to come and preach at their homes. Conversant with their Creole English, Baker was able to gather an attentive congregation and a provisional chapel of branches was erected.⁶⁶ Thus, quite accidentally and unintended, the first links between the Gambian Methodist Church and the Krio community were made. It formed the beginning of a Krio orientated Methodist Church in The Gambia.

This development threw both men in doubt as to where their main mission station should be. In Morgan's words:

The thought occurred to the Missionaries that such success might indicate the will of God respecting the place of their settlement more clearly than the recommendation of Sir Charles MacCarthy, by which the Committee at home was induced to fix on Tentabar. They could not remove an impression that duty required them to remain where they were, and *for a while at least*, follow up on the good work begun here.⁶⁷

But because they did not want to appear cowardice by settling under British protection in St. Mary's, Morgan took the first opportunity that presented itself to travel to Tendaba. In Tendaba he discovered that the chief was not disinclined to grant the mission land. But he would or could not give any protection with regard to their safety when settling in Tendaba.⁶⁸ In his *Reminiscences* Morgan relates: 'The King said ... Take the land, as much as you want, and where you please; but I advise you to build your house near the river, that if my people attempt to injure you, you may jump in a canoe and get out of their reach.'⁶⁹

Consultation with people in Bathurst and the king of Combo eventually led to the decision to settle in Mandanaree, a town about six miles from St. Mary's on the main land.⁷⁰ Because Mandanaree was located at the south bank of the river, St. Mary's

⁶⁵ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 6, 7.

⁶⁶ Morgan to WMMS, St. Mary's April 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823; J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 11.

⁶⁷ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 11.

⁶⁸ Morgan to WMMS, St. Mary's April 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁶⁹ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 15.

⁷⁰ The first place offered to the missionaries by the king of Combo was a village on the ocean side, but the inhabitants were so hostile, that Morgan and Baker requested another spot. See: Morgan to WMMS, St. Mary's April 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

could fairly easily be reached by canoe. Thus Morgan and Baker could live and work in the rural areas and at the same time keep in regular touch with the congregation in Bathurst. Especially Baker was concerned about the spiritual and social fate of the Liberated Africans: 'for though they have a chaplain at St. Mary's, he is by no means disposed to reduce himself to the simplicity of the Recaptives and consequently can be of no service to them.'⁷¹

Life in Mandanaree proved far from easy. Apart from being a convenient location to travel to Banjul, the option for Mandanaree was remarkable. Mandanaree was a Muslim settlement rather than a traditional village and it is unclear why the king of Combo recommended it to them. The inhabitants were hostile to both the missionaries as persons – not in the least because they made the mistake of cutting down some fruit trees while building the house – and to the cause of their mission. Most of the inhabitants of Mandanaree were staunch Muslims. It made John Morgan after a while exclaim that 'Mohammedans seemed to be shielded against Christianity as perfectly as the crocodiles in the river were against the spear and the bullet. Preaching and school teaching were alike unsuccessful.'⁷² Baker talked about 'the invincible obstinacy of the Mahometans' as 'an insurmountable obstacle.'⁷³ It was thanks to the protection and regular intervention of the king of Combo, that they eventually managed to finish the buildings. Together with three couples from St. Mary's, who assisted them in their daily duties and domestic matters, a small Christian community was formed, called Bethesda.⁷⁴ A chapel was opened in August 1821⁷⁵ but the plans to start a school never materialised. There were no volunteer scholars.⁷⁶ Bethesda as a Christian community only lasted a few months. Ill health, bad water, consistent robberies and continuous opposition eventually forced Morgan and Baker to return to Bathurst. The Liberated Africans who had come with them, remained in Mandanaree to look after the property for some time, but later seem to have returned to Bathurst as well.

For a while the missionaries stayed in the house of the Methodist merchant Charles Grant. Later in the year 1822, Morgan rented a house in Jolof Town. In 1824/25 the present mission house at no. 1 Dobson Street, Bathurst was built.⁷⁷ It served as house, school and chapel at the same time. In the first years after the move to Bathurst, Mandanaree was still occasionally visited but gradually it disappeared from the Methodist scene.

The Bathurst Methodist community of Wolof slaves and Liberated Africans

John Baker left The Gambia early 1822. He was worn out by three years of working in a tropical climate. His successor William Bell, who arrived in January 1822 died after two months. Also George Lane, who in 1822 was sent from Sierra Leone to assist

⁷¹ Baker to WMMS, May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁷² J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 46.

⁷³ Baker to WMMS, Mandanaree May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁷⁴ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 26.

⁷⁵ Baker/Morgan to WMMS, Bethesda June 30 1821, Box 293 H2907 mf. 824.

⁷⁶ Baker had developed an idea of a school tailored after the idea of a Quranic school where students lived with their teachers and earned their cost of living by farming. Baker to WMMS, Bethesda May 26 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 823.

⁷⁷ Hawkins to WMMS, St. Mary's December 14 1824, Box 293 H2709 mf. 828.

Morgan, only stayed for a few months. He went home invalid. It took until the middle of 1824 before another volunteer for The Gambia could be found. In April 1824 Robert Hawkins and his wife arrived.

With no colleague around and virtually no correspondence arriving from WMMS,⁷⁸ Morgan was left on his own to make decisions at his own discretion. In a way the choices he made, laid down the structure of the Methodist Church for the next century. His plans for the mission were twofold: to have the mission centre at St. Mary's island and an up-river station - he chose MacCarthy Island - which could serve as a centre for evangelisation of the country side. He managed to set out the pattern for both.

In St. Mary, the nucleus community consisted of a mixture of Wolof and English speaking members: soldiers, Liberated Africans, Wolof artisans and a few merchants⁷⁹ and their Wolof slaves formed the initial congregation. Though there was a wide based interest in Morgan's undertaking, the actual congregation was by no means large. This was due to the fact that Morgan seems to have been a strict disciplinarian. The membership varied between 20 and 30 people.⁸⁰ At the end of his tour he stated:

The number of church members might have been greatly increased, had not the missionaries acted upon the determination that not the smallest compromise should be made with the evil customs or superstitions of the natives. Neither men nor women were received into the Church, while living in a state of polygamy or cohabiting without Christian marriage.⁸¹

Polygamy and cohabitation, together with domestic slavery and slave trade, seem to have the major pastoral issues of the early Methodist Church. Morgan relates a touching scene of a man who asked to be received as a member on trial but was refused on the grounds of his cohabitation with a woman.

In some case the Missionaries had to do violence to their own feelings; as when a man came desiring to be admitted to the Church, and at the same time was, by his master's appointment, living with a woman in the country custom. To hear him say in reply to a

⁷⁸ Morgan to WMMS, St. Mary's February 4 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 825. Morgan complained of having had no correspondence from the Missionary Committee for over 12 months.

⁷⁹ Especially the name of Charles Grant needs to be mentioned here. Grant had a long record in Africa and served as a councilor and patron for the first generation of Methodist missionaries. He was an active member of the congregation but by no means pro-Methodist or pro-European biased. In 1843 he suspected the Methodist missionary Swallow of slave trading and brought him to court. The case proved to be a misunderstanding: Swallow had emancipated a slave but neglected to follow the official procedures of registering the emancipation. Nevertheless, Swallow felt that his reputation had been damaged and left the country soon afterwards. The incident seems to have cooled the relations between the missionaries and Grant considerably. Swallow to WMMS, Georgetown June 21 1843, Box 295 H2709 mf. 873.

⁸⁰ Extract from the journal of John Morgan, Entry October 29 1822, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824; entry July 21 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 825. W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 218, 219.

⁸¹ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 60.

refusal, "Now Massa, that be very hard; me never wanted that woman: my master make me take her: - suppose me marry her Christian fashion, next week, perhaps, master will send her to Goree or Senegal, and sell her; I shall then see her no more; then white man's law say, I must not marry another, while she is alive." This appeal to the feelings was strong, and was felt as such; but the only reply was, "We will do you all the good we can out of the Church, but for example's sake we cannot receive you."⁸²

One of his later colleagues, Richard Marshall, was more lenient. When Marshall visited the small Methodist community at Gorée Island, which was started by the Methodist local preacher Pierre Sallah, he too was approached by a cohabiting slave couple. The couple wanted to become full members of the Methodist Church, but was unable to get permission from their master for a church wedding. Marshall accepted them into membership anyhow.⁸³

The care for liberated slaves and the topic of domestic slavery was the other major issue in the Methodist Church. Already before the arrival of Methodism in The Gambia, there were Liberated Africans resident on the island of St. Mary. They had already been declared free and had been brought to The Gambia to work as artisans. Though free, they were bereft of everything. They belonged to the poorest of the poor. Many of them were attracted to the Methodist Church in The Gambia because of Baker's link to the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. In the early 1829s there was a small chapel in Goderich Village, a Liberated African village on St. Mary's. Later both the community and the chapel moved to a healthier site on the island named Melville Town. The chapel in Melville Town was opened in 1834.⁸⁴ Later the community and the chapel moved again and settled at New Town.

In the 1830s there was another influx of Liberated Africans into The Gambia. Some were settled across the river on the North Bank in Berwick Town, but the majority of them was taken to MacCarthy Island. Due to this arrival of Liberated Africans the Methodist Church increased by several hundred members.⁸⁵ It also meant an increase in activities. A chapel annex school was built in Berwick Town, nowadays better known as Barra and Amadi Gum, a redeemed Wolof slave was employed as an assistant missionary in charge of Berwick Town.⁸⁶ The church also got involved with the Liberated Africans who were brought to MacCarthy Island. The MacCarthy Island activities of the Methodist Church are discussed later on in this paragraph.

The Wolof slaves formed another group of Methodist members in Bathurst. The men and women were still enslaved and were sent down by their owners from Gorée and St. Louis to work in Bathurst. Some of these slaves came into contact with the Methodist Church because they accompanied their employers to the church. William Fox complained that also several of the church members owned slaves, even though

⁸² J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 60.

⁸³ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831. This would imply that there was no hard and fast rule of how to deal with these situations.

⁸⁴ Fox to WMMS, St. Mary's January 21 1834, Box 293 H2709 mf. 835. See also Fox to 'my dear brother', June 10 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 841.

⁸⁵ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 195.

⁸⁶ Fox to WMMS, St. Mary's January 21 1834, Box 293 H2709 mf. 835; Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's December 30 1836, Box 293 H2709 mf. 838.

slavery had officially been abolished.⁸⁷ Others had been attracted by Morgan's (outdoor) preaching. Men like Amadi Gum, John Gum, William Jouf and Pierre Sallah, who were emancipated with the help of the Methodist Church were already members during Morgan's time and acted as exhorters and translators.

There are no records that Morgan himself was engaged in the emancipation of slaves. But missionaries who worked in The Gambia in the late 1820s and the 1830s, such as Richard Marshall, William Moister, Thomas Dove, William Swallow, Henry Wilkinson, Robert MacBrair and especially William Fox were actively engaged in the struggle against the slave trade and domestic slavery. They pressured government and slaveholders alike to release the slaves. When pressure alone was not enough, the missionaries endeavoured to find money to buy the freedom of their members. It was this practice which brought men like Swallow and Fox into court several times. Slave owners, annoyed by the interference of Methodist missionaries, brought up court cases against them, accusing them of slave trading.⁸⁸ The church employed several of the men who were emancipated through the intervention of the Methodist Church as teachers and assistant missionaries. Pierre Sallah, Amadi and John Gum and William Jouf were among them. The first person redeemed and employed seems to have been Robert McDonough who assisted Richard Marshall in the translation of materials into Wolof and served as a schoolteacher at St. Mary's for a period of two years. In 1830 he left the mission for a better paid job.⁸⁹

Fox and MacBrair did not just protest in The Gambia, but also brought the issue of slavery to the attention of the greater public in Britain. They wrote treatises on slavery and had them published in the newspapers, hoping that this would increase the pressure on the government to enforce the rules.⁹⁰ The most common interpretation of the 1807 act of parliament seems to have been that it only forbade the slave trade. The possession of slaves was condoned by the British government for another two decades. The general rule seems to have been that after the death of their masters, slaves were to receive their freedom and could not be inherited by family members. Thus slowly, slavery was to disappear. After 1833 when domestic slavery became illegal, the rules were enforced more strictly.⁹¹ But it seems that Gambian slave-owners found their own lope holes to by-pass this law: they went to Senegal – where slave-trade was still condoned – to buy slaves. Back in St. Mary's they bound these slaves to them through the system of apprenticeship, thus guaranteeing cheap labour for another couple of years.⁹² The missionaries publicly protested against this practice.

⁸⁷ Fox to Beecham, Document on slavery, 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 842.

⁸⁸ Because the missionaries bought the slave before they released them, slave owners accused the missionaries of slave trade.

⁸⁹ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's August 16 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832.

⁹⁰ Fox to Beecham on slavery, 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 842. MacBrair, Statement on slavery, Box 295 H2709 mf.906.

⁹¹ MacBrair to WMMS, Georgetown February 15 1836, Box 294 H2709 mf. 844.

⁹² Memo to MacBrair and Dove (possibly by Fox), no date, Box 295 H2709 mf. 906. The apprenticeship system implied that young people, often Liberated Africans, were apprenticed to a trader or artisan for a number of years, who would train them in the job in exchange for food and housing. See also: B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 40.

Slaves and liberated slaves thus formed the majority of the Bathurst congregation. There seems to have been no common language among the faithful. Therefore, services were conducted both in English and in Wolof. On Sunday mornings, English was the main language with a translation into Wolof. In the evening services the main address was given in Wolof by one of the Wolof Local Preachers such as John Cupidon or John Gum.⁹³ Also during the week services were held in both languages. Krio does not seem to have been an official language in the church at any time.

The large number of Wolof induced the missionaries to the study of Wolof and the translation of religious materials. Marshall compiled a Wolof vocabulary of 2000 words and translated the Conference Catechism and parts of the gospel of John in Wolof.⁹⁴ Also later missionaries such as James Fieldhouse (1876-1879) and Robert Dixon (1880-1882 and 1903-1909) have put much effort in translating the liturgy, hymns and the gospels into Wolof.⁹⁵ It seems that at least until the 1920s the Wolof formed a considerable part of the Methodist Bathurst congregation and services continued to be conducted in both English and Wolof.⁹⁶ Evangelisation and outdoor preaching within the various parts of St. Mary, such as Jola Town and Jolof Town, also continued, but did not seem to have made much impact.⁹⁷

Morgan also started a school in St. Mary's. It formed the beginning of what was to become the Methodists' most important contribution to the Gambian society: education. Only very gradually the numbers of the scholars increased. It seems that parents were not too happy with Morgan's conduct towards their children. His diary entry for October 9, 1822 mentions that his house in Jolof town was set on fire as a revenge for the fact that Morgan burned the amulets (*greegrees*) of the schoolchildren.⁹⁸ Slowly the interest in education grew. Hawkins (1824-1827) mentions that there were approximately 70 children in the school. Two decades later Synod of 1843 could report that the number had increased to 326 children who were receiving education in Methodist schools.⁹⁹ Mrs. Hawkins, like many of the wives of missionaries after her, ran a girls' school, giving the girls sewing classes.

Clothing formed an obsession for the missionaries. Hawkins commented that 'many more [children] might be got if we could give them some kind of clothing,'¹⁰⁰ - teaching naked children would have been inconceivable in the Victorian age! - and Mrs. Moister seems to have caused general hilarity when she taught dress making. Moister wrote in his diary:

⁹³ For more details about these Wolof exhorters and assistant missionaries see paragraph 6.5.

⁹⁴ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's August 16 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832.

⁹⁵ Fieldhouse to WMMS, Bathurst February 6 1877, Box 296 H2707 mf. 909; Synod minutes 1882, Box 297 H2708 mf. 16 and Synod minutes 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

⁹⁶ Nowadays most Wolof are members of the Roman Catholic Church that adopted Wolof as the liturgical language straight from the beginning.

⁹⁷ Extracts from the journal of John Morgan, Entry August 17 1822 onwards, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

⁹⁸ Extracts from the journal of John Morgan, Entry October 9 1822, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

⁹⁹ Synod 1843, Box 297 H2708 mf. 1. The report mentions 207 students at St. Mary's and 119 at Georgetown.

¹⁰⁰ Hawkins to WMMS, St. Mary's May 20th 1826, Box 293 H2709 mf. 828.

The native females at the Gambia were highly amused when they first saw the Missionary's wife cutting out dresses, and instructing negro girls how to make garments. They laughed heartily; declaring English ladies the most foolish people in the world "for cutting the cloth into little pieces, and then taking the trouble to sew them together again."¹⁰¹

One wonders who should have taught whom in this case! Initially the resident missionary supervised the schools, but quite early on African teachers were employed on the staff as well. Robert McDonough was employed as the schoolmaster in 1828 and later John and Mary Cupidon, Pierre and Mary Sallah, Abraham Goddard and Amadi Gum were also serving as teachers in the Methodist schools. As the number of children increased, also the number of African teachers grew.

The Fula mission of MacCarthy Island

A second important decision made by Morgan, was designating MacCarthy Island as the location for an upcountry mission station. MacCarthy was situated in the centre of the river, about 200 miles up stream from St. Mary's. Morgan had visited MacCarthy in 1823, when he accompanied Captain Grant in a tour up country. After the trip he approached the government permission for permission to build a mission station. He considered MacCarthy a suitable and fertile spot for an agricultural mission, which could help people up country to survive the hungry season. At the same time the mission could provide education and other services for the Liberated Africans from Sierra Leone whom the Government intended to settle there.¹⁰² When Robert Hawkins and his wife arrived in April 1824, Morgan took the opportunity of leaving them in charge of the Bathurst parish and travelled up river. During his short stay there he built a temporary residence in the main town Fort George (later called Georgetown) and initiated a small school for some of the Liberated African children.¹⁰³

During this visit Morgan came in contact with the Fula people. He observed that the Fula were a nomadic people with – what he believed to be – a Semitic descent and believed that they might be interested in Christianity. He also saw that the Mandinka oppressed the Fula. Thereupon, he developed a plan to grant the Fula land to settle so that they would be free from Mandinka oppression.¹⁰⁴ Morgan began to work on his plan to 'settle the Fula' after he had returned to England in 1825. On his return he was stationed in Southampton. There he set up the 'Southampton Committee of the Institution for benefiting of the Foulah tribes', headed by philanthropist Dr. Robert Lindoe. The Committee managed to get a grant of 600 acres of land from the Government and raised the annual amount of £350 for a period of five years to implement Morgan's plans for a Fula mission.¹⁰⁵

The actual realisation of the mission to the Fula took another eight years. Meanwhile – due to lack of personnel and continuous illness - nothing was done to

¹⁰¹ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 41.

¹⁰² Morgan to WMMS, Bathurst April 24 1823 and Bathurst June 6 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 826.

¹⁰³ Journal of John Morgan, Entry April 1824 onwards, Box 293 H2709 mf. 827.

¹⁰⁴ See chapter 2.4.

¹⁰⁵ W. Moister, *Missionary stories: narratives, scenes and incidents*, 17.

develop MacCarthy Island as a station until William Moister visited it in May 1831. Moister found people willing and interested in education and Christianity. In 1832 he sent John Cupidon, assistant missionary, and his wife Mary to MacCarthy to start a mission there.¹⁰⁶ A plot of land was acquired, a house and a school were built and soon both the school and the congregation of Liberated Africans flourished.¹⁰⁷

Morgan's dream of a mission to the Fula became a reality in 1833 when the British missionary Thomas Dove and his wife Mary were appointed to Georgetown.¹⁰⁸ Dove and two Gambian assistant missionaries, John Cupidon and Pierre Sallah, were paid by the Southampton Committee to extend the foundations of the Georgetown mission laid by John Cupidon and to work among the Fula. The men divided the tasks among them. Pierre Sallah was put in charge of Fatoto, a village of Liberated Africans which had developed at the south side of the island.¹⁰⁹ A chapel and church were built to provide for the Fatoto community. Dove and Cupidon focused on work among the Fula. They supervised the building of a small village for the Fula. Liberated Africans were the main artisans while the money for the village came from the Southampton funds. The village was called Lindoe village after its main benefactor Dr. Robert Lindoe. The idea of Lindoe village was to provide housing for those Fula, who were willing to settle. But when none of the Fula was prepared to settle down, Liberated Africans were invited to occupy the village.¹¹⁰ The men also had contacts with the Fula villages of Broco and Nyabantang¹¹¹ and with the Mandinka village of Jamale but the results were disappointing. For a while services were held, but gradually the villagers lost interest and the missionaries stopped visiting.¹¹²

Robert MacBrair, a linguist who worked in The Gambia in 1835 and 1836, was another person who worked for the Civilisation Department, as the Fula mission was officially called. He produced a grammar and vocabulary of both Mandinka and Fula and translated the gospels into Mandinka.¹¹³ The Civilisation Department also employed an agriculturist, a certain Mr. Spencer.¹¹⁴ Spencer however fell ill before he was able to do any work and returned to England invalid. Despite all the efforts made

¹⁰⁶ Journal of W. Moister, entry May 16 1831, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832. Because a war with Barra ensued shortly after Moister returned, it took up till 1832 before he went again to Georgetown to install John Cupidon as assistant missionary there.

¹⁰⁷ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 187.

¹⁰⁸ W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan Missions to the Western Coast of Africa*, 343, 344.

¹⁰⁹ Fox to WMMS, At sea June 16 1839, Box 294 H2709 mf. 855 and Fox to WMMS, MacCarthy April 13 1843, Box 295 H2709 mf. 871.

¹¹⁰ Report of Fox to the Southampton Committee, London Dec. 10 1839, Box 294 H2709 mf. 855.

¹¹¹ Pierre Sallah lived for two years in Nyabantang as the resident assistant missionary. Journal of H. Badger, entry February 10 1845 onwards, Box 295 H2709 mf. 877.

¹¹² Dove to WMMS, MacCarthy March 14 1834, Box 293 H2709 mf. 835.

¹¹³ Annual report of the Institution for benefitting the Foulah Tribes, Southampton January 20 1837, Box 295 H2709 mf. 906. MacBrair's gospel of Matthew was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society and can still be found in the Gambia Public Library. What happened to the other gospels is not known. It seems they were not printed. MacBrair's Mandinka grammar however was used for many years by out-coming missionaries to study Mandinka.

¹¹⁴ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 197.

by the Methodists in the 1830s, the Fula, being a nomadic people, never settled. The mission to the Fula proved nothing but a dream.

The Methodist Relief Services among Liberated Africans in Georgetown

The Methodists had been active in the 1830s to establish a mission among the Fula at MacCarthy Island but failed. In the same period however, large groups of Liberated Africans were stationed at MacCarthy Island. Governor Rendall had chosen MacCarthy Island as the centre of resettlement for the shiploads of Liberated Africans who arrived in The Gambia between 1831 and 1838. Hundreds of often very young Liberated Africans were taken to MacCarthy Island to start a new life. Though the government provided some services through the Department for Liberated Africans which was located in Georgetown, many of them also benefited from the Methodist provision of work, housing, education and fellowship. As a result many of the Liberated Africans in MacCarthy Island joined the Methodist Church and the Methodist Church decided not to withdraw its personnel from MacCarthy despite the fact that the Fula mission had failed.

Nowadays the Krio belong to the elite of The Gambia. And it is easily forgotten that their ancestors once, about one hundred and seventy years ago, came to the country, bereft of everything: land, possessions, family and tribal identity. They had only just regained their freedom, only just escaped the fate of slavery or death on board of the slave ships. Many arrived more dead than alive.¹¹⁵ Dove, who worked at MacCarthy Island in the 1830s mentioned that half way the rainy season of 1835 already 120 Liberated Africans had died.¹¹⁶ The care for these homeless refugees was one of the diaconal challenges the early Methodist Church met on its way. And they took the task very serious. In the early 19th century most of the efforts and resources of the Methodist Church in The Gambia went towards the Liberated and Recaptive Africans. Therewith, the Methodist Church became a sort of Liberated African Refugee and Development Organisation. This one-sidedness had its strong points, but also its weaknesses. Most of the manpower and resources – both then and in later times - were consumed by caring for the Krio community.

In the 1830s and 1840s various attempts were made to take the gospel to other ethnic groups. The mission to the Fula was the first large endeavour. But after five years – the time guaranteed financially by the Southampton Committee - it had become clear that the Civilisation Department was a failure. The Fula had no intention to settle at MacCarthy. Soon afterwards another project was launched. It was an effort to spread the Christianity and civilisation in the MacCarthy area through education in the form of an institution for the sons of chiefs. Again the money came from the Southampton Committee.¹¹⁷ Four sons of chiefs were enrolled in 1843. Among them were the two sons of the King of Kattaba and one of the sons of the King of Nyabantang. Also two promising Liberated African boys joined the school. The boys, ages 8 to 14, were supervised and taught by Samuel Symons. A girl, a 'princess' from

¹¹⁵ Dove to WMMS, Georgetown March 30 1835, Box 293 H2709 mf. 836.

¹¹⁶ Dove to WMMS, MacCarthy/Lindoe, August 21 1835, Box 294 H2709 mf. 843.

¹¹⁷ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 218, 219.

Dobokunda, joined the girls' school of Mary Sallah.¹¹⁸ Soon disaster struck. One of the royal children died of measles.¹¹⁹ Shortly afterwards Symons died himself.¹²⁰ George Parsonson, who took over from Symons, also had his share of problems: two boys had to be expelled because of misbehaviour and the King of Kataba recalled his two sons for circumcision. The boys did not return after the ceremony.¹²¹ No doubt the misfortune which haunted the Institution might have contributed to this decision. After their departure there was only one student left: the son of a trader. The Synod of 1846 had to conclude that this venture as well had ended in a failure and the institution needed to be closed.¹²² And again the MacCarthy Island mission shifted its full attention to the Liberated African community.

British missionaries and racism

After the departure of William Fox and William Swallow in 1843¹²³ the attitude of the British missionaries towards their African colleagues and parishioners gradually began to change. In 1846 the African leaders of the Leaders Meeting of the Bathurst church wrote several letters to Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to complain about the conduct of Benjamin Chapman and Matthew Godman. They asked WMMS to replace them – and especially Godman – with people who would make no difference 'between a black man and a white man.'¹²⁴ The British missionaries expelled one member after another and the names were taken out of the class-books.¹²⁵ The people expelled were no longer considered Methodists and could not receive a church burial, something, which was and still is considered a severe punishment.

In 1846 the two oldest African assistant missionaries, John Cupidon and Pierre Sallah were suspended. Protests of the Leaders Meeting to restore the two back to office, were not heeded to.¹²⁶ In 1847 John Gum's wife was suspended and preparations were made to send Gum himself on retirement.¹²⁷ The Synod of 1848 decided that the suspension of Cupidon and Sallah was to be changed in discharge of office. Cupidon was said to suffer from 'insanity' and Sallah was charged with disobedience.¹²⁸ The January Synod of 1849 ratified the decision, taken in the preceding year, to send also John Gum on retirement.¹²⁹ This meant that in the year 1849 none of the first generation of African assistant missionaries, who had served the church for so many years, remained. And what must have caused even deeper grief

¹¹⁸ Fox to WMMS, St. Mary's April 13 1843, Box 295 H2709 mf. 879.

¹¹⁹ Swallow to WMMS, Georgetown June 21 1834, Box 295 H2709 mf. 873.

¹²⁰ Parsonson to WMMS, Georgetown February 27 1844, Box 295 H2709 mf. 876.

¹²¹ Report on the Institution by Parsonson, January 28 1845, Box 295 H2709 mf. 876. It is quite possible that the African community suspected witchcraft or revenge from the spirits to be the cause of the disasters that struck the Institution.

¹²² Synod 1846, Box 297 H2798 mf. 2.

¹²³ Godman to WMMS, May 9 1843, Box 295 H2709 mf. 873.

¹²⁴ Leaders to WMMS, St. Mary's October 29 1846, Box 295 H2709 mf. 879 and mf. 881.

¹²⁵ Report on MacCarthy 1846 by Parsonson, Box 295 H2709 mf. 881.

¹²⁶ Synod minutes 1846, Box 297 H2708 mf. 2 and Seymour Gay to WMMS, October 30 1846, Box 295 H2709 mf. 881.

¹²⁷ Parsonson to WMMS, St. Mary's January 21 1847, Box 295 H2709 mf. 881.

¹²⁸ Special Synod minutes 1848, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

¹²⁹ Special Synod minutes 1849, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

was the fact that the vacancies were not filled with Gambians; teachers and ministers from Sierra Leone were brought in to take charge of the Gambian church.

After 27 years of missionary activity the Methodist Church in The Gambia had grown to 373 full members and 95 on trial. Many more people attended the Sunday worship and hundreds of children were being educated in Methodist schools.¹³⁰ But the partnership and the friendship between Africans and Europeans that had characterised the first two decades of the church was gone. Racism and European superiority had come to set the tone.

6.4 The indigenous Methodist ministry

African Assistant Missionaries

The Methodist archival materials - the work reports, journals and quarterly letters of missionaries to their Missionary Society - give very few details about indigenous workers. Often only the names and the stationings of the local workers are mentioned. Jack Macumba, William Jouf, Robert McDonough and William Salleh are little more than names in the archives. Only a few men emerge from the grey forgetfulness of history because some of their biographical data have been transmitted in the journals of missionaries like John Morgan, William Moister and William Fox.¹³¹ Nevertheless, though very little is known about the indigenous agents, they must have played a crucial role in the early years of the Gambian Methodist Church. During the larger part of the 19th century, the continuity of the work must have depended on the catechists, the translators, the evangelists, the local preachers, the exhorters and the teachers, shortly the native agents, because most British missionaries only served in The Gambia for short periods.¹³² The climate, diseases like yellow fever, malaria, small-pox and cholera, the problematic communication with the head-office (being either Sierra Leone, Ghana or England) and the short term contracts of two years limited the contributions the British missionaries could make. The native agents on the contrary generally served for many years, despite the low payment.¹³³ Partly this can be traced to the fact that they were converts, serving

¹³⁰ Synod 1846, Box, 297 H2798 mf. 2.

¹³¹ Morgan, Moister and Fox all published a book about their work in The Gambia. J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian Mission on The Gambia*, Wesleyan Conference Office, London 1864; W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours in West Africa*, 3rd ed. Wesleyan Conference Office, London 1866; W. Moister, *A history of Wesleyan Missions in all parts of the world, from their commencement to the present time*, Elliot Stock, London 1871 (2nd ed.); W. Moister, *Missionary stories: narratives, scenes and incidents*, Wesleyan Conference Office, London 1877; W. Fox, *A brief history of the Wesleyan Missions on the Western Coast of Africa*, Aylott and Jones, London 1851.

¹³² Moister mentions that on his arrival in The Gambia he found that the congregation in St. Mary's had carried on conscientiously with the Sunday services and prayer meetings after the death of his predecessor Mr. Marshall, led by exhorters. W. Moister, *Missionary Labours*, 128.

¹³³ John Cupidon and Pierre Sallah were employed at £40 a year, which according to Fox was not enough to maintain a family. W. Fox to 'my dear brother [someone in Sierra Leone], St. Mary's June 10 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 841.

in their 'home country' and were slightly more resistant to tropical diseases. The main reason however, must have been the fact that they felt a great loyalty towards the Methodist Church because many of these native agents had been redeemed from slavery by the church. Pierre Sallah, Robert McDonough, Amadi Gum, Jack Macumba, William Jouf and John Gum were all former slaves of Wolof descent, who were emancipated through the assistance of the Methodist Church.¹³⁴

Most of the Wolof slaves originated from Gorée and St. Louis. From 1816 onwards they were sent to Bathurst by their owners as carpenters, masons and domestic servants to assist in the construction of the city.¹³⁵ The legal status of these slaves in Bathurst was rather complicated. On the one hand they were free, because Bathurst was British territory and Great Britain had abolished the slave trade in 1807. On the other hand, France still permitted slavery and many of the owners of slaves had houses both in Gorée and in St. Mary's. It seems that despite its official stand on slavery, the British government continued to condone domestic slavery in St. Mary's for quite some time. The possession of slaves was not abolished until 1833.¹³⁶ Fox complained that many of the slaves were obliged to give half of their salary to their owners and that several of the slaveholders were members of the church.¹³⁷

The Governor was not much help either because, according to Fox, his wife also held slaves.¹³⁸ Though technically emancipation could be enforced by the rules of the Colony, this was not a viable option. An enforced emancipation would only be valid within the boundaries of the British jurisdiction, which at that time meant St. Mary's and Ceded Mile. Outside the Colony the ex-slaves would be considered outlaws and could be recaptured at any time by their former slaveholder or his/her family. Thus the policy of people like Marshall, Moister, Dove, MacBrair and Fox, was to put pressure on the owners to officially give the slaves their freedom, or – when that did not work – to ransom them. William Jouf for example was eventually given his freedom by his Mulatto owner,¹³⁹ whereas Pierre Sallah was ransomed with money from the Methodist Church in Ireland.¹⁴⁰ In some cases neither method

¹³⁴ Fox mentions William Jouf (he calls him 'Juff') in his description of the early history of the Gambian Methodist Church. He says that William Jouf is 'a local preacher, who could act as a native assistant missionary, were it not that he is a slave, as four or five of the other local preachers are.' W. Fox, *A brief history*, 351. Eventually Jouf did become a native assistant and served the church until his death in 1839. See: Fox, *A brief history*, 519. See also Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's October 30 1835, Box 393 H2709 mf. 837.

¹³⁵ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 77.

¹³⁶ It seems that the general rule was that slaves would be emancipated at the death of their owner.

¹³⁷ Fox to Beecham, Document on slavery, 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 842. In this document Fox estimated the total number of slaves in Bathurst at 200 or 300, being one ninth or tenth of the total population.

¹³⁸ Fox to WMMS, St. Mary's May 15 1835, Box 294 H2709 mf. 843. The governor Fox referred to was probably Gov. Rendall.

¹³⁹ Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's October 30 1835, Box 293 H2709 mf. 837.

¹⁴⁰ Moister to WMMS, St. Mary's August 14 1831, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832. Because of these acts of ransom several of the missionaries were brought to court on accusation of slave trade. The charges were mainly made by slave owners who wanted to discourage the

worked: Wilkinson reported that Richard Lloyd, the owner of Amadi and John Gum had asked such an exorbitant price for the men, that the mission could not afford to emancipate them.¹⁴¹

These men, who had probably been exposed to Christianity while in Gorée and St. Louis, came into contact with the Methodist Church while working in Bathurst. Many of them became Christians. The church employed several of them as catechists, assistant missionaries and teachers, after they had been freed. They generally served for many years. To give a concrete example: men like Pierre Sallah and John Gum were employed by the Methodist Church for more than seventeen consecutive years, whilst the longest serving expatriate missionary of the 19th century in The Gambia, William Fox, stayed nine years, from 1833 until 1843.

John Cupidon

The two native agents whose biographical details are best known were the first two assistant missionaries, appointed in 1830: John Cupidon and Pierre Sallah. Richard Marshall mentions them for the first time in 1828, when he proposed to WMMS that the two men be employed as native agents. He described John Cupidon as 'He is deeply pious and has sustained an unblemished character in the society ever since its commencement on the Island. I believe all my predecessors could bear the same testimony... He has very correct views of the doctrines of the gospel.' Pierre Sallah¹⁴² is also mentioned:

The other is Pierre Sallah, a Jaloff, a man whose piety and character are fully equal to the brother just mentioned. He has not been so long in the society, nor has he had the same opportunity of improving himself, so that he does not speak or write English so well as John... There is however an impediment on the way, on his being employed at present. He is a slave. His mistress asks about £30 sterling for his freedom.¹⁴³

The archival material indicates that John Cupidon was a Wolof slave from Gorée, who in his childhood years had once accompanied his master to England.¹⁴⁴ After the retirement of his master to London, Cupidon - still a youth - was assigned to work for Charles Grant, a merchant living in Bathurst and a benefactor to the Methodist Church. It was Grant who taught Cupidon to read and write. He also arranged for Cupidon to

Methodist emancipation policy.

¹⁴¹ Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's October 30 1835, Box 293 H2709 mf. 837. In the end the negotiations seems to have had success. Amadi Gum was employed by the mission in December 1836, a sign that he was emancipated, because the mission did not employ slaves who were not ransomed. Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's December 30 1836, Box 293 H2709 mf. 838.

¹⁴² Sometimes his name is spelled as 'Pear', at other times as 'Pierre'.

¹⁴³ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831.

¹⁴⁴ Moister tells how Cupidon, as a boy in England, for the first time experienced snow. Fascinated by this phenomenon of frozen water - initially he thought it was salt - Cupidon decided to take some of it home to show his friends and relatives. Halfway the journey home, checking up his treasure, he discovered that the snow had melted and that the only thing left to show his friends were soaking wet clothes.

W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 168, 169.

become an apprentice to a carpenter and later engaged him as a storekeeper. Within a few years Cupidon was able to earn enough money to ransom himself. Because Grant worshipped in the Methodist Church, Cupidon accompanied him. Cupidon converted to Christianity during Morgan's time, in 1822.¹⁴⁵ Morgan in his diary recorded a description of this event:

One evening a young man came to the lodgings of the Missionary, and seated himself in silence outside the door: seeing him a long time there, he went out to him, when he very modestly said, "Mansa, me want to speak to you; only you white gentleman and me poor black boy." "Well, young man, you know I am the black man's friend, and you can always speak freely to me." "You remember, Massa, when you preach under the tree over there?" "Yes." "Me live there that time and hear what you say; now my heart can't sit down to tell you what God do for my soul." "Say on, young man: that is what I want to hear above all things." "Me hear you speak of the great blessings what Massa Jesus can give to sinners who believe on Him. Me hungry for that blessing; but me can't catch Him. Me go again in the evening and think perhaps me catch Him there; but can't catch Him. Then me say, me sinner too big for that blessing: me better go back and live devil-fashion again. That time you go home, you go into my master's house; then me say, you can pray before you leave, and perhaps me catch Him there. Me go and sit down at the door a long time; but when my master call me, I go away; when I go back the door was shut; then me say, all over now, me go back to country fashion. But then me say, me pray all night first; and if I not get Him before morning, me then go back to country fashion. Me go in the yard and kneel down on the sand, and pray till garrison clock strike two; then come light all round me, and somebody say, 'My son thy sins be forgiven;' and me glad too much." "But what made you glad?" "Because my sins forgiven." "Are you sure that some one spoke to you?" "Not sure, -but," putting his hand to his heart, 'it make me so happy there. I know Massa Jesus pardon my sins."¹⁴⁶

This 'poor black boy' had taken evening classes to improve himself and to learn English and thereafter served the Methodist Church as a translator, as catechist and a local preacher.¹⁴⁷ In 1831 he was employed as assistant missionary,¹⁴⁸ a position which he held until 1848. His first station was as a teacher in the school in Bathurst, replacing Robert McDonough. In 1832 Cupidon and his wife Mary, who was also literate, were transferred to MacCarthy Island to care for the Georgetown congregation and to start a school on the island.¹⁴⁹ Only a few months later Cupidon requested Moister 'if possible to pay him a visit, as the work was becoming too big for him, and that several persons, both children and adults were waiting to be received into the

¹⁴⁵ W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 170. Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831.

¹⁴⁶ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 65, 66.

¹⁴⁷ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on The Gambia*, 66.

¹⁴⁸ In actual fact Cupidon was appointed as an assistant missionary by the Methodist Conference of 1830, but was only informed of this in 1831, when William Moister arrived. Marshall, who had recommended Cupidon and Sallah, had died before the letter to inform them of the appointment had arrived. Moister to WMMS, St. Mary's August 14 1831, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832.

¹⁴⁹ In several cases not only the men but also the women were employed. Couples working for the mission were John and Mary Cupidon, Pierre and Mary Sallah and John Gum and his wife.

church by Christian baptism. He moreover informed me that a number of couples were anxious to be lawfully married.¹⁵⁰ On Moister's third visit to MacCarthy barely a year after John Cupidon had started work there, Moister stated:

I could not but observe the change which had taken place in the appearance and the manners of the people since I last addressed them. They presented themselves in the house of God clean and neat in their apparel, and conducted themselves with reverence and propriety becoming the solemnity of the occasion. I read prayers, and preached with freedom and comfort to a deeply attentive congregation; after which I baptised seven adults and sixteen children. The adults had been carefully instructed and prepared for this sacred ordinance by the Native Teacher. (...) This holy Sabbath was, indeed a day long to be remembered; and, had I not actually beheld it, I could scarcely have believed that such a change could have taken place in so short a time, through the simple teaching of a converted African.¹⁵¹

Moister's conclusion was that 'the work at MacCarthy having now become too weighty for a Native Assistant, I renewed the application for a European Missionary.'¹⁵² The application for another European missionary was turned down. WMMS refused a grant to support the MacCarthy Mission and Moister had been paying Cupidon and his wife from the stipend he received as acting army chaplain. Then the Southampton Committee stepped in. It had raised funds for a mission to the Fula and the money sufficed to pay a European missionary and two native agents. Cupidon was one of the native agents employed by the Southampton Committee. Thomas Dove stated that both Cupidon and Pierre Sallah taught in the school at MacCarthy and preached in nearby Fula towns like Broco.¹⁵³ After William Jouf's emancipation, Jouf took Cupidon's place at MacCarthy Island and Cupidon was stationed at the school in St. Mary's.¹⁵⁴ Fox who worked with him at St. Mary's says about him: 'He is respected by all who know him.'¹⁵⁵ Later Cupidon worked as missionary agent at Barra until his retirement in 1848. Cupidon's retirement was not voluntarily. He was suspended and later retired after several clashes with his - much younger - European colleagues.¹⁵⁶ Their attitude towards the assistant missionaries

¹⁵⁰ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 180. This quotation also gives a good impression of what Moister considered criteria for 'Christianity': proper clothing and neatness.

¹⁵¹ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 187.

¹⁵² W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 191, 192.

¹⁵³ Dove to WMMS, MacCarthy March 14 1834, Box 293 H2709 mf. 835.

¹⁵⁴ Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's October 30 1835, Box 293 H2709 mf. 837.

¹⁵⁵ Fox to 'My dear brother [someone in Sierra Leone], St. Mary's June 10 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 841.

¹⁵⁶ Synod minutes 1846, Box 297 H2708 mf. 2 and Special Synod minutes 1848, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3. The minutes mention that in 1846 both John Cupidon and his colleague Pierre Sallah, came into conflict with Matthew Godman. The disagreement seems to have circled around the enforcement of a rule that members should not marry unbelievers. Cupidon opposed this and sent in his resignation. The Leaders' Meeting supported Cupidon, stating that Cupidon had always faithfully discharged his duties and he was asked to withdraw his resignation. Later he again clashed with Godman, this time physically, because Godman had flogged Cupidon's wife Mary, thinking she was a drunken schoolgirl. Though Godman apologized, the relation between the two men continued to be strained and Cupidon asked to be transferred to work at

differed from that of their predecessors. The first generation of British missionaries had treated the African native agents as colleagues and counterparts. The generation of missionaries that came after them, were much more condescending towards Africans and not free from racism. What happened to Cupidon after his dismissal remains unclear. He died in 1853.¹⁵⁷

Pierre Sallah

The story of the other well known assistant missionary Pierre Sallah, is similar to that of Cupidon. The same district meeting of 1848 that had sent Cupidon his resignation, also removed Pierre Sallah from office. Sallah had become an employee of Richard Lloyd at MacCarthy's Island - Lloyd was a longstanding opponent of the Mission - which was no doubt more profitable than working for the church. Yet also Sallah had given a long period of faithful service to the Methodist Church before he left the mission for greener pastures.

Pierr Sallah, his name is sometimes spelled 'Pear', came into contact with the Methodist Church in the early 1820s when he heard John Morgan preach. He was a free born Wolof from Senegal, but was captured as a child and sold as slave to a Mulatto woman in Gorée.¹⁵⁸ He was trained as a stonemason and in 1818 he was sent to work in Bathurst. He was about 22 years old at that time.¹⁵⁹ There he heard Morgan preach from Ezekiel 33:11 'turn away from your evil ways' and the word hit him to quote his own words 'like a razor'.

When I first hear the name of Jesus Christ, I ask the people who go to church what they mean; they tell me that He is the Son of God, and that He die for all the world. O, what mercy! When I know the Saviour's name, that time I no rest at night. I go to some friend every night to teach me to read, for I not able to read at the time, for every day I work; so

Nyanibantang, away from Godman. He was refused because he was needed as a teacher in the Bathurst school. Also two clashes with African colleagues are reported, one with Amadi Gum and one with Abraham Goddard, who both worked as native agents for the church. As a result of his fight with Goddard, Cupidon was suspended as a leader by the Leaders Meetings, with the argument that he suffered from a form of insanity. See also B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 72, 77.

¹⁵⁷ Meadows to WMMS, St. Mary's December 1853, Box 295 H2709 mf. 888.

¹⁵⁸ Sallah tells his story in a letter to WMMS: "Me was born in a heathen Jalloff country, called Bawald Lambey, near Senegal, West Africa; and brought up a shepherd's boy, as was my father before me. But one day my father wanted me to go from home with him on some business: I leave the flocks with one men till I come back; by my God, Who does everything for my good, not let me go home again. When my father and I get to the place, I went into the bush with some boys of that place to get some wild fruit. By and by I leave the boys in that bush, for I think my father he want me. But when me get a little way in the path, a bad man meet me in the way. O, that man have no pity for little black boy! He put something in my mouth, because I make too much cry; and then he take me to a dark bush, and he tie me there with a rope, and he leave me there alone till midnight. Many bad animals live in that bush. Then man come with two more men; they cut the rope: me then walk all night; me get no supper. Three days me walk without food, only me drink little water. Me think me must die for true that time; but at last me get to the main land near Gorée, and they sell me there for rum, tobacco, and many other things, which I see with my eyes. W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 172, 173.

¹⁵⁹ Journal of William Moister (?) (The manuscript has neither name nor date but the handwriting seems to be that of William Moister), Box 293/294 H2708 mf. 840.

then every night I get some friend to teach me in the way of the Lord Jesus. I go on little more in reading and praying to God. Every day my heart get a little nearer to God. I then ask the Minister to let me go to Class; he says yes. There I hear more about Jesus, and believe in Him with all my heart. O my God, I praise Thee! and Thee only will I love.¹⁶⁰

According to Moister, Sallah 'burned his *greegrees* and abandoned the foolish Mohammedan superstitions, in which he had been trained up from infancy'¹⁶¹ which would imply that Sallah was a convert from Islam. Marshall, whom Sallah described as 'He loved me too much, all the same as if we be born of one father and one mother' taught Sallah until his owner recalled him to Gorée around 1829. There he continued to show his zeal for Christ by preaching to fellow slaves. Both his owner and Marshall encouraged him in his evangelisation and after a short time a small congregation came into existence. Marshall visited Sallah's fellowship in February 1830 and reported that there were around 15 members on trial.¹⁶²

Because of the positive results, Marshall considered sending John Cupidon to Dakar, but Marshall's premature death and objections of the French government to the Methodist activities prevented this. Worried that Sallah's preaching would cause havoc among the slaves, some slave owners had reported Sallah to the Governor. Also the resident Roman Catholic priest was weary of the uninvited 'competition'. Sallah was arrested though not convicted, but told to stop his preaching: 'They threaten me; they tell me I must not preach again; for black man no *sabby* (know) nothing.'¹⁶³ But because Sallah had no intention of doing so, the Governor threatened with stronger measures. It was from this precarious situation that Moister was able to ransom Sallah for the sum of three hundred dollars: 'I thank the good Methodist people, who get me free from slavery and from the French Governor in Gorée.'¹⁶⁴ The money for his ransom had come from Ireland, after an appeal from The Gambia, probably made by Marshall.¹⁶⁵ The congregation started by Sallah was neither of a temporary nor superficial nature. When Thomas Dove visited Gorée in late 1833 to recuperate from illness, the members were still meeting. Dove was invited to preach but there seems to have been no follow up on this, no doubt because it was in French territory.¹⁶⁶

Back in St. Mary's Sallah was officially appointed as an assistant missionary to the Methodist Church in The Gambia and assisted Moister in St. Mary's. It seems he continued his work as a mason until the time he was appointed at MacCarthy Island.¹⁶⁷ While in Bathurst, Moister supervised his education because most of the missionaries who worked with Sallah mentioned that he had very little education.¹⁶⁸ No doubt that

¹⁶⁰ W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 173.

¹⁶¹ W. Moister, *Memorial of missionary labours*, 139. Pages 138-141 give a short biography of Pierra Sallah.

¹⁶² Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830 Box 293 H2709 mf. 831. If one calls to mind that Morgan's average congregation was about thirty, this is quite a number.

¹⁶³ W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 174.

¹⁶⁴ W. Moister, *Missionary stories*, 174.

¹⁶⁵ Moister to WMMS, St. Mary's August 14 1831, Box 293 H2709 mf. 832.

¹⁶⁶ Dove to WMMS, St. Mary's October 30 1833, Box 293 H2709 mf. 834.

¹⁶⁷ Moister to WMMS, St. Mary's May 14 1831, Box 293, H2709 mf. 832.

¹⁶⁸ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831; Fox to 'My dear brother' [someone in Sierra Leone] St. Mary's June 10 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 841.

was compensated by his zealotness. Fox mentioned that he was 'energetic' and 'very well received by the people'.¹⁶⁹ From 1833 onwards Sallah mainly served at MacCarthy, more specifically at Fatoto. The church also employed his son John Sallah, who served as a teacher at the school in Georgetown. It seems that Pierre Sallah died shortly after he was dismissed from the Methodist Church in 1848. He had been a member of the church for about 30 years and had served as a native agent for more than 17 years. His wife Mary, who had also served the Methodist Church as a teacher, died in December 1852.¹⁷⁰

John and Amadi Gum

John Gum was a third Wolof who served the Methodist Church for a long period. Initial attempts to ransom him had failed, because his owner Lloyd was not willing to sell him. But somehow Wilkinson or Fox managed to come to an agreement, because by 1835 the brothers Amadi and John Gum appeared on the payroll of the church. Amadi Gum was stationed at Berwick Town¹⁷¹ and John Gum seemed to have aided in St. Mary's.¹⁷² Both had been active in the church as local preachers long before their ransom. What happened to Amadi Gum is not known, but John Gum retired honourably from service in 1848 because of blindness.¹⁷³ He was given a pension as a chapel keeper at St. Mary's of £1 a month (compared to his salary of £50 yearly this was hardly worth mentioning!) and was still active as a local preacher in 1859. James Peet who worked with John Gum, gave him the following tribute:

Old he truly is in years, but apparently matured in grace – a father in Israël. He has lost his natural eyesight ... but spiritually he is not blind. A full proof of this was given in the earnest, practical and faithful sermon he delivered, which I am thankful to say, was blessed to many souls...¹⁷⁴

By 1859 John Gum had dedicated 35 years of his life to the service of the Methodist Church. Twenty four of these years he had been on the payroll of the church.¹⁷⁵

The archival material gives very little information on the role of female native agents in the early days of Methodism in The Gambia. The first time we hear of female assistants, is in 1836 when Henry Wilkinson wrote home that some female teachers had been engaged to assist Mrs. Wilkinson in the girls' school.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the wives of the African assistant missionaries were also helping out in the church. Mary Cupidon ran a girls' school in Georgetown and also Pierre Sallah's wife Mary taught at the Methodist schools. Whether also other wives of assistant

¹⁶⁹ Marshall to WMMS, St. Mary's February 26 1830, Box 293 H2709 mf. 831; Fox to 'My dear brother' [someone in Sierra Leone] St. Mary's June 10 1834, Box 294 H2709 mf. 841.

¹⁷⁰ May to WMMS, MacCarthy Island Febr. 27 1853, Box 295 H2709 mf. 886.

¹⁷¹ Fox to WMMS, St. Mary's Dec. 29 1835 Box 293 H2709 mf. 837.

¹⁷² Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's January 22 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 931.

¹⁷³ Special Synod minutes 1849, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's January 22 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 931.

¹⁷⁵ John Gum was 14 years in active service of the church and at least another 10 years on the pay roll as a pensioner/chapel keeper. After 1859 John Gum is no longer mentioned.

¹⁷⁶ Wilkinson to WMMS, St. Mary's December 30 1836, Box 293 H2709 mf. 838.

missionaries were active in the schools and preaching, can only be guessed. The sources remain silent on this issue.

Native agents like John Cupidon, Pierre and John Sallah, Robert McDonough, William Jouf, Amadi Gum, John Gum and William Salleh, despite their often meagre education, have each in their own way contributed considerably to the establishment of the Methodist Church in The Gambia. Gum, Cupidon and Sallah rendered long periods of service to the Methodist Church. Gum was retired honourably after 24 years of service. Sallah was able to start a flourishing congregation in Gorée. Cupidon was able to capably set-up and organise the MacCarthy Island Mission within a year's time. And in time of conflict the Leaders' Meeting of 1846 choose to support Cupidon over and against the missionary Godman. Therefore, the conclusion must be that though most details of their contribution have been lost by history, these men were crucial in the earliest period of the Methodist Church. They knew the language. They knew the people. They were exceedingly loyal to the church, despite the fact that the relationship with the missionaries who were supervising their work was not always smooth. They were appreciated by the people and - being converts - they were zealous for their Lord. They formed the nucleus of an emerging Gambian indigenous ministry and their names deserve a honourable place in the history of the Methodist Church in The Gambia.

6.5 The Anglican chaplaincy to the British garrison

While on leave in England, Sir Charles MacCarthy also called in at the Church Missionary Society headquarters. There he requesting for a chaplain to look after the pastoral needs of the garrison and the British merchants in St. Mary's. CMS granted the request and instructed Robert Hughes and his wife, who were working in Sierra Leone at the time, to sail for The Gambia. The couple arrived about a week after John Morgan.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately both Hughes and his wife died within six months after their arrival.¹⁷⁸ Most of his successors shared a similar fate. Many died while the others went home invalidated. Therefore no missionary work outside the chaplaincy was done by the Anglican Church in The Gambia.

A letter of the Anglican chaplain Rev. Blenkarne, dated 22nd June, 1824 has survived. Blenkarne wrote in the letter that his predecessor Rev. Florton had started an evening school for about 70 Liberated Africans at Cape St. Mary's.¹⁷⁹ No doubt the name should read 'Rev. Horton', the chaplain who assisted the Quakers in their educational endeavours. The school that Blerkarne referred to was probably the Quaker evening school for Liberated Africans led by Mahmadee and Hannah Kilham.

¹⁷⁷ J. Morgan, *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian Mission on The Gambia*, 5, 6.

¹⁷⁸ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 3. See also: Morgan to home St. Mary's Sept. 13 1821, Box 293 H2709 mf. 824.

¹⁷⁹ B. Southorn, *The Gambia: the story of the groundnut colony*, 225, 226. Southorn mentions the name of the chaplain as 'Florton', but this should be read as 'Horton.' No doubt the school mentioned is the Quaker School for the King's Boys.

It is possible that the Quakers handed the responsibility for the scholars to Horton when they left. Horton himself left The Gambia shortly after, in June 1824.

In the same letter Blenkarne stated his intentions to open a day school for boys in Bathurst starting "on Monday next". Hereby he meant to oppose the Methodists who in his opinion had far too much influence in education in the Colony.¹⁸⁰ It is unclear what happened to the school. Probably it vanished at the death or return of its founder. When in 1841 a certain Dr. Madden was sent out from Britain to inspect the Gambian schools, he only mentioned the Methodist Schools at St. Mary's.¹⁸¹

The relations between Methodists and Anglicans were not always as strained and competitive as with Blenkarne. His predecessor Horton had excellent relationships with the Methodists. He and Morgan regularly took services for each other when one of them was sick or absent and consulted each other on complicated pastoral matters.¹⁸² Moister and West seem to have done the same.¹⁸³ In the interludes between Anglican chaplains, the Methodists filled the vacancies. Men like Morgan, Hawkins, Marshall and Moister all served as army chaplains when the need was there. The payment they received was a welcome addition to the meagre Methodist budget.¹⁸⁴

In the period under discussion there was no Anglican church building - and there would be no Anglican church building for another 80 years (St. Mary's church was opened in 1901) - in Bathurst. Services were held in provisional buildings like Horton's house, the barracks and the officers' mess. Because the congregation was small and consisted mainly of expatriates this seemed not to have caused any problem. Though there is no documentation available that Liberated Africans joined the Anglican Church in The Gambia, it seems logical to assume they did. First of all, many of the first batches of Liberated Africans who arrived in The Gambia to help build Bathurst, had lived in Sierra Leone under the supervision of CMS chaplains. Probably some of them became Anglicans then. Secondly the care for the Liberated Africans on St. Mary's was part of the chaplain's duty. Even though Baker doubted whether the chaplain took time to care for them, it was part of his job description. Thirdly, in the 1830s there was an influx of Liberated Africans who had lived in Sierra Leone for some time. Probably there were Anglicans among them. No doubt, this is all caused some Liberated Africans to join the Anglican Church. Also in later years there was regular interaction between the Krio communities of Sierra Leone and The

¹⁸⁰ He literally says: "The Methodists have been on the alert here, they have two well-attended schools a Boys School and a Girls, but that is not to be wondered at as they have had no opposition, they have a school mistress which must give them a decided advantage as delicacy forbids intermixing the children especially in such a place as this. They have been established for some years, and their place of worship and School is much superior to ours. They bestow rewards on the children which is a great inducement for them to go to school, however I have not been deterred by all these obstacles from opposing them." B. Southorn, *The Gambia, the story of the groundnut colony*, 226.

¹⁸¹ F. Mahoney, *Stories of Senegambia*, 76.

¹⁸² Morgan to WMMS, Bathurst April 24 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 826; Morgan to WMMS, Bathurst June 6 1823, Box 293 H2709 mf. 826; Journal of John Morgan, entry 10 February 1824, Box 293 H2709 mf. 827;

¹⁸³ Journal of William Moister, entry July 14 1832, Box 293 H2709 mf. 833.

¹⁸⁴ Moister for example supported the Georgetown Mission by his chaplaincy allowance. See above.

Gambia and Anglican Krio from Sierra Leone joined the Anglican Church in The Gambia.

6.6 Conclusion

The missionary endeavours of the early 19th century took place against the background of the recent abolition of the slave trade. It was a time of great optimism. The knowledge that something like slave trade could be abolished by public pressure gave the impression that everything was possible. The motives of the missionaries to go to Africa were probably more than just religious zeal. First of all, there must have been feelings of guilt about what had been done to Africans and the African continent. Repatriation of Liberated Africans, humanitarian aid organisations and development programmes to help people settle in their new homelands, can be interpreted as form of retribution and 'Wiedergutmachung'. Secondly, there was the conviction that Christianisation and consequently civilisation of the African continent would attack the slave trade at its African roots. When African chiefs would no longer offer slaves to the slave traders, the slave trade would die a quiet death. A third motive that might have played a role was the wish to make a new beginning and to develop a new relationship with Africans, different from the racial and horrible past. A relationship based on equality and partnership.

The first decades of the 19th century signalled this new beginning: there was high appreciation of local workers and a great interest in the vernaculars. Hannah Kilham depended on her two co-workers Mamadee and Sandanee when preparing her vernacular material and hoped to establish vernacular schools with native teachers. The Methodist missionaries eagerly used their emancipated Wolof slaves such as John Cupidon, John and Amadou Gum and Pierre Sallah to establish the Methodist Church in The Gambia. Anne Marie Javouhey sent indigenous children to France to train for the priesthood and religious life, so that the African Christian community would no longer be dependent on expatriate clergy. Three of the boys returned to serve as priests in the Senegambia.¹⁸⁵ Only the Anglican community does not seem to have had a native agency. But then again, the Anglican Church in the early 19th century was not so much a mission but a chaplaincy, geared towards the expatriate community of soldiers and civil servants working in The Gambia.

Due to the climate, the first missionary efforts in The Gambia were limited in their effectiveness. Nearly all churches confined their work to Bathurst. Only the Methodists were able to establish a mission station up country at MacCarthy Island. The cost of mission work in The Gambia was high: illness and death struck many of the pioneers. The Methodist missionary Hawkins and his wife at a certain time reported home: 'We are mere skeletons fit only to sit and look at each other.'¹⁸⁶ By the middle of the 1820s only the Methodist Church was able to continue its mission work,

¹⁸⁵ Among the first batch of Cluny sisters returning to The Gambia in the 1880's was a Senegalese sister, Sr. Louise Pesnel. *100 Years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*, 100.

¹⁸⁶ Hawkins to WMMS, St. Mary's, December 14 1824, Box 293 H2709 mf. 828.

mostly due to their reliance on native staff. Very few of British missionaries served longer than the appointed two years and most did not last that long. The great optimism – maybe naivety was a more suitable word - about winning Africa for Christ gradually declined. The Civilisation Department at MacCarthy had been a failure. Also the Institution for the education of sons of chiefs at MacCarthy did not achieve its envisaged effect and had to be closed due to lack of students.

Very few indigenous Gambians became Christians in the first half of the 19th century. The Christian community consisted mainly of European traders and officials, Liberated Africans, redeemed Wolof slaves from Gorée and St. Louis and of course the Mulattos. An occasional Mulatto family might also have joined the Methodist Church, but there are no indications that the Mulattos 'en masse' became Methodists. It is more likely that they continued their relatively self-sufficient form of Christianity until the arrival of the Roman Catholic priests in The Gambia 1849.

The early 19th century mission work brought some positive achievements. The Methodist Church became intensely involved in the combat of the slave trade and slavery and with people who had been traumatised by the slave trade. By 1848 most of the 470 Methodists were Liberated Africans, whereas the majority of the remaining members were emancipated Wolof slaves. Thus, the early Methodist community consisted of people who belonged to the lowest strata of the society and had been detribalised due to the slave trade. Thanks to education and fellowship received from the Methodist Church and thanks to the enterprising spirit of the Liberated African community, these people eventually changed their social position in the second half of the 19th century. Commonly known as Akou or Krio, they developed a new culture and new sense of community and identity. Christianity and a mixture of British and African customs played a central role in this newly found Krio identity. This Krio or Akou culture has developed over the years into an authentic Gambian culture.

The optimism and the spirit of renewal, which characterised the missionary movement in The Gambia in the early 19th century, did not last. The partnership between black and white that had characterised the early years gradually disappeared. Already in the 1840s the atmosphere changed and racist remarks began to appear in the correspondence. The Gambian agents, who had served for many years, were no longer appreciated and a new generation of British missionaries fired one after the other. The protests of the Gambian Leaders Meeting of St. Mary's to WMMS against this increasing racism did not change the decisions, however unjust they might have been in some cases. WMMS never reversed the verdicts but in all cases supported its own British personnel over and against the Gambian agents. By the middle of the 19th century a new time had begun: a time, which again made distinctions in treatment 'between a black man and a white man.'

In the first half of the 19th century two models dominated the work of the Christian community: the model of expansion and the model of diakonia. All mission organisations arrived in The Gambia at the invitation of Governor Charles MacCarthy, thus indicating the close connection between the expansion of the British Empire and the expansion of Christianity. The Anglican chaplain, representative of the state church and paid by the government, was the clearest example of this alliance. The Methodist missionaries kept somewhat more distance from the government and its imperialistic ambitions. They were financially independent and at times criticised the

government for its slow implementation of the abolition of the slave trade. However, they did not object to occasionally serve as chaplains. The Methodist missionaries understood the model of expansion first of all as the spread of Christianity and the establishment of a Christian community in The Gambia. Preaching to Muslims as well traditional believers therefore formed an important part of the work of the early Methodist Church.

The Methodist combat of the slave-trade and of slavery in the 1830s is a clear example of the model of diakonia. The Methodist struggle to enforce the implementation of the abolition act in The Gambia was not seen as a means of winning converts. Rather, it was considered to be an explicit directive from the gospel itself. It is one of the earliest examples of a pure model of diakonia in The Gambia, where justice was pursued as a gospel value and a sign of the Kingdom of God, without hidden motives of conversion. The Methodist endeavours to establish a model farm, a Fula village and a school for the sons of chiefs can be seen as services, which were carried out to aid the main goal of evangelisation. Here diakonia was subservient to the model of expansion.

The work of the Cluny sisters and the Quakers in this period are more difficult to classify, because the two groups only stayed a few years in The Gambia. Both groups however seem to have first of all understood their work within the model of diakonia. The sisters of St. Joseph were involved in nursing the sick and in caring for young Liberated African children, orphaned by the slave trade. The Quakers mainly focussed on education and translation work. On the side an agricultural station was set up. There are no records that they endeavoured to establish a Gambian Quaker community.

7. THE STRUGGLE TO MOVE ON:

CHRISTIANITY IN THE HEY-DAY OF COLONIALISM (1849-1916)

7.1 Introduction

The year 1849 forms a milestone in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. In that year two priests from the Congregation of the Holy Ghost settled in Bathurst. The country had not had a resident priest for centuries. Soon the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception followed the Spiritans. The arrival of these two Congregations meant the beginning of a permanent residence of Roman Catholic clergy in The Gambia. The scattered Roman Catholics were gathered in what soon became a vibrant community. Reason enough to make this date the demarcation of a chapter.

The missionaries of the Methodist Church, who had arrived 28 years before, struggled to adapt to this new situation. They experienced the arrival of the priests as 'competition'. Their work so far had been confined to the Liberated Africans, some Wolof and expatriates on St. Mary's Island and to the Liberated African community in Georgetown. But they cherished great plans for the extension of their work among the indigenous people. Their vigour for mission however was severely hampered by the fact that all new initiatives had to be approved of by outside agencies. Either the Missionary Committee in London or the Chairman of the joint Sierra Leone-Gambia district, who resided in Freetown had to give consent before any action could be taken. Most of the chairmen were only vaguely aware and interested in what was going on in The Gambia. Because of this arrangement several opportunities were missed. All this had its impact on the progress of Methodism in The Gambia.

In 1916 the Missionary Committee decided to end the shared chairmanship between Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The Gambia became a Methodist district in its own right, directly responsible to the British Methodist conference. Thus the Methodist Church was the first church in The Gambia on its way to independence. The Roman Catholic Church followed in 1931, when it became an independent mission *sui juris*. In 1935 the Gambian Anglican Church was separated from the Sierra Leone diocese and became a diocese together with the Rio Pongas. Therefore, the year 1916, with the world plunged in the middle of the crisis of World War I, was chosen as the date for the end of this chapter. The date marks the beginning of a movement within the Gambian churches towards independence.

The second half of the 19th century in The Gambia was a time of political instability. A series of epidemics added to the hardship. Yellow fever, cholera and small pox scourged the country while the Soninke-Marabout wars caused upheaval and famine in the rural areas. There were many refugees as a result of the wars. Towards the end of the 19th century Britain gradually increased its influence in The Gambia, which resulted in the 'pacification' of the Protectorate. Under the guise of the protection of trade and British traders, British rule was extended throughout the shores of the Gambia river. In 1889 an agreement was signed between France and Britain, which led to the demarcation of the border. This again meant extension of colonial control.

Thus the period 1849 - 1916 was not conducive for missionary expansion. Islam spread rapidly due to the Soninke-Marabout wars and the churches had to struggle to maintain their established position on the coast and along the river because of the wars. In the rural areas promising new mission stations often had to be abandoned after a few years, due to the wars, the lack of personnel or the lack of funds. World War I was a period of retrenchment. People were called upon to serve in the army and funds to expand or even sustain the work, were not available. All in all the period under discussion was a time of many hardships and difficulties.

Paragraph 7.2 discusses the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. A separate paragraph (7.3) is dedicated to a description and discussion of the indigenous workers of the Roman Catholic Church. The progress of the Methodist Church is described in paragraph 7.4 while its attempts to establish an indigenous ministry are discussed in paragraph 7.5. The progress of the Anglican Church is examined in paragraph 7.6. The conclusion of this chapter can be found in paragraph 7.7.

7.2 The re-establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia: The Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

The first years of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Bathurst

The arrival of the Holy Ghost Fathers on the early morning of January 19 1849 on St. Mary's Island¹ is often seen as a new episode in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia.² And indeed, from that date onwards, there was an uninterrupted presence of priests and religious resident in the country and looking after the Roman Catholic community.

The Senegambia province had been put under the supervision of Aloysius Kobès. Kobès, only 28 years old at the time of his appointment as Vicar Apostolic, had great plans for the region. He intended to establish several chains of mission stations in the Senegambia: one was to run from Dakar to the Senegal River, one along the Senegal

¹ *Résumé historique de la Mission Catholique de St. Marie Bathurst depuis sa fondation l'an 1849*, Chapitre II/5, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878. NB This *Résumé historique* was probably written by Fr. Jean Lacombe in 1875. Lacombe a Mulatto priest who was born in Bathurst of a French father and a Senegalese mother and was raised and educated in Gorée. He served in St. Mary's from 1864 to 1876. For details about Jean Lacombe see H. Koren, *Spiritual West Africa Memorial*, 62, 63. NB according to Koren Lacombe served in The Gambia from 1864-1874. However a letter from F. Riehl who replaced Lacombe, exists, stating that Lacombe left in 1876. See Riehl to Mgr. Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's June 14 1876, Boite 160B/II (Gambie 1876-1879)

² W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 9. Cleary mentions as date of arrival 18 January 1848, but the archival material states 1849 as the correct date. Also P.B. Clarke's data are not entirely correct. He mentions the 1840s (not specified) as date of arrival of the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Cluny Sisters, but the Cluny Sisters did not return to The Gambia until 1883. In 1850 the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived in The Gambia and served in Bathurst until 1883. See P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 79.

river inland and one from Dakar to Albreda.³ He was therefore pleased to find on his arrival in Dakar in March 1849 that two of his priests had taken the initiative to establish themselves at St. Mary's⁴ and encouraged the Bathurst congregation with regular visits.

Strictly speaking the Frs. Henry Warlop and Jean Marie Ronarch were not Spiritans but Fathers of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, also known as Liberman Fathers. It was only in the year 1848 that the Congregation of the Holy Ghost merged with the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In that year Libermann was elected the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Congregation was henceforth known as the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.⁵ Both Warlop and Ronarch had made their vows before the merger and had been sent out to the Senegambia in 1847.

To the Bathurst congregation, these details did not matter. Happily surprised to find that 'out of the blue' two priests showed up in Bathurst who intended to take up residence, they couldn't have cared less about their religious affiliation. The last resident priest in The Gambia had been the Spanish Capuchin Antonio de Jimena who had died in 1653. No wonder that after two centuries the arrival of the priests took the Bathurst congregation unaware.

It seems that the priests, who arrived at the early hour of 8 o'clock in the morning, were first put up in a grass hut, provided by a Mrs. Emelia Caille. Later the two men

³ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 268. When Kobès died in 1872 only four stations had been realised, one of which was Bathurst. In his youthful enthusiasm, he had underestimated the effort and the manpower it would take to establish *and maintain* mission stations in the interior. The locations for mission stations were not always well-considered and tropical diseases and hostile neighbours contributed to the failure of the interior missions.

⁴ According to Koren it was Bessieux who sent Warlop to St. Mary's. Koren states that the Roman Catholic community of St. Mary's had sent a request to Bessieux to send them a resident priest. According to Koren this request was made in 1847. H. Koren, *Spiritans West African Memorial*, Spiritus Press, Bethel Park, 1997, 42. However, this seems somewhat unlikely. First of all, from April until Nov. 1847 Truffet was bishop of the Two Guineas and was stationed at Dakar. Truffet was therefore the most likely person to send the request to. In the interim between Barron and Truffet, the Frs. Eugene Tisserant and Jerome Gravière acted as head of the mission. Tisserant died on his way to West Africa in a shipwreck, but Gravière seems to have actually worked in Africa. After Truffet's death, Arragon acted as interim in the Senegambia until Bessieux and Kobès were appointed in 1848. Bessieux, who was part of the first group of Libermann fathers that accompanied Barron to Liberia, had been working in Gabon since September 1844 and had never visited The Gambia. It is therefore unlikely that the Gambian community would address a priest they hadn't met, who was working in Gabon and who had no authority in their region, to request for a residential priest, while there was an acting head of the mission in Dakar. According to Delcourt Bessieux did visit Senegal in 1848 when he endeavoured to release two priests who were taken hostage in Joal. J. Delcourt, *Histoire religieuse de Sénégal*, 38. If there was any contact at all between Bessieux and the Gambian community it must have been at that time.

⁵ The names changed somewhat over the years. The Congregation was first known as the Congregation of the Holy Ghost under the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin Conceived without Sin, later as Congregation of the Holy Ghost under the Invocation of the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary and abbreviated as the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In every day use it was referred to as 'The Congregation of the Holy Ghost'. See H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 202ff.

moved to an apartment belonging to a Sierra Leonean woman in Buckle Street where they stayed until June 25.⁶ By the end of January they had created a provisional chapel where they gathered for morning and evening prayers. True to the principles of their former superior Bishop Truffet, who had emphasised the importance of the vernacular as language for liturgy and education,⁷ Wolof was used during mass. Especially the Wolof songs stirred the memory of many Wolof in St. Mary's. As stated elsewhere the Bathurst Wolof had migrated from St. Louis and Gorée to Bathurst and several had already been Christians before coming to The Gambia. Some of them had joined the Methodist Church but most had remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church.⁸ Gradually the news spread that Warlop and Ronarch had come to stay and people flocked to the meeting hall.

Enthusiastic about the initiative of his priests to develop the Gambia region, Bishop Kobès visited 'Sante Marie de Gambie' a month after his arrival in Senegal. During his stay, a plot of land was obtained from a Mr. Goddard for a chapel. The first stone was laid on May 2 and the official opening took place on July 8, 1849. It seems another Spiritan, Br. Jean-Baptiste Thiersé, was sent to Bathurst to assist in the construction work. Within less than a year the chapel had already become too small. No doubt, not only Wolof but many Mulattos had joined the church as well. On March 25, 1850, Kobès laid a first stone for a larger and more permanent building. The new building project was a *tessito* affair: all parishioners were involved. The men did the construction work, supervised by the Vicar General Fr. Boulanger, whereas the women and children carried sand from the seaside and made charcoal.⁹ This type of participatory building became a trend in the 19th century Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. Also the primary schools and the extension and renovation of the church in the 1870s and 1890s were on *tessito* basis.

The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

On April 14 1850 the French congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception¹⁰ had also joined the Holy Ghost fathers in St. Mary's. Bishop Kobès had invited them to work in The Gambia. From their temporary residence at Mrs. Marie Thirion's in Ingram Road – they moved to the premises at Buckle Street in 1852¹¹ -

⁶ *Résumé historique*, II/5, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878. Cleary, possibly from oral sources, states that the name of the woman was Mam Marie Sang, a Mulatto woman and says the apartment was at Buckle Street, in the Maurel and Prom property next to the present St. Joseph's Convent. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 9.

⁷ B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 176. According to Sundkler Truffet had already made a start with the translation of the liturgy in Wolof. His translator is said to have made translations of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Ave Maria. But more than Truffet, his successor Kobès is known for his work in the vernacular. During his time the catechism, some of the gospels and the prayer book were translated and a French-Wolof dictionary and a grammar were published. Ngasobil became the printing and translation centre. See J. Delcourts, *Histoire religieuse de Sénégal*, 43ff.

⁸ *Résumé historique*, I/4, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

⁹ *Résumé historique*, III/ 7 and 8, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

¹⁰ Also known as 'Les Soeurs Bleus de Castre'.

¹¹ The Buckle Street premises that was purchased in 1852 is the present day convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and the Adult Education Centre.

the four sisters took up girls' education and hospital work.¹² Soon they had more than 50 girls under their care. The girls' school was to become one of the best on the West Coast and both Protestant and Roman Catholic girls attended.¹³ The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception supervised the school until 1883. Then the new education act prescribed that all education in The Gambia had to be in English. Being a French congregation, this caused a problem. The General Superior of the Immaculate Sisters, Sr. Séraphine suggested to Bishop François Marie Duboin, Vicar Apostolic from 1876-1882, to contact the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, who had recently opened a novitiate in Ireland.¹⁴ Thus in April 1883 the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception withdrew from The Gambia and four Cluny Sisters took over their work.¹⁵

The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception did not only focus on education, they were also engaged in pastoral work. Though the church at the time was still very much male- and clergy oriented, the contribution of the sisters was highly valued. The *Bulletin Général de la Congrégation du St. Esprit and du Sacre Coeur de Marie* of 1859 makes special mention of the work of the nuns. It states that the sisters were able to visit homes where the priests were not allowed to enter. This was particularly true for Muslim homes. The funeral of the Mother Superior Sr. Eulalie in 1859 was a sign of this broad appreciation of the sisters. Not only Roman Catholics but also Protestants and Muslims attended.¹⁶ During the yellow fever and cholera epidemics, which scourged The Gambia in the second half of the 19th century, the sisters excelled in their pastoral and physical care for the sick and dying.¹⁷ A letter from the Government to the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, dated July 9 1869 still exists. It thanks the sisters on behalf of the inhabitants of Bathurst for their extraordinary dedication and care to the sick and dying during the 1869-cholera epidemic. In the period May 15 – June 16 of that year more than 1450 people died in Bathurst due to cholera.¹⁸ Many more must have died in the rural areas, but numbers are not available.

¹² *Résumé historique*, III/9, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878. Sr. Paule was the superior.

¹³ J.F. Gleeson, *Report on the Catholic Schools, Bathurst, St. Mary's, Gambia 1885-1889*, Boite 411.1B (new numbering/ old numbering: Boite 549B) Dossier Gambie (divers), File VIII 1849-1902 (Education file was taken from old Boite 199A SL/VIII).

¹⁴ Soeur Seraphine, Superior General of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to Mrg. Duboin, Castre October 5 1882, Boite 160A/III, Lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

¹⁵ Meyer to Mrg. Duboin, St. Mary's April 11 1883, Boite 160A/III, Lettres Gambia 1880-1884. Note: the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny had worked in The Gambia before in the 1820s (see paragraph 6.2) but were obliged to withdraw due to illness. The Cluny Sisters are still involved in education in The Gambia up till the present day.

¹⁶ *Bulletin Général de la Congrégation du St. Esprit and du Sacre Coeur de Marie*, no. 12 (Oct. 1859), 608-613.

¹⁷ There was a yellow fever epidemic in 1859; the epidemic hit the country again in 1867 and 1869.

¹⁸ Part of Bathurst is still called 'Half Die'. The name originates from the 1869 cholera epidemic where in that particular part of town, half of the population died. It seems that during the epidemic in 1869 about one quarter of the inhabitants of Bathurst died.

Extension work

After the infrastructure for the Bathurst parish had been arranged, Kobès turned his attention to other areas. Albreda, key in the chain of missions Kobès wanted to establish, was the first location that received attention. Albreda had the reputation of being a Christian town of old. The Spanish Capuchins had visited Albreda in the 17th century. Démanet, writing in the middle of the 18th century, mentioned Albreda as a town where many Christians lived and also Sr. Anne Marie Javouhey visited Albreda because of its reputation. In line with this tradition, Kobès paid the village a visit in April 1849.¹⁹ He envisaged Albreda to form the end of a chain of mission stations starting in Dakar. To develop the town, Kobès intended to set up an agricultural station.²⁰

In May 1850 Fr. Claude François Morel-Lyndrel and Antoine Durand, a deacon, were sent to Albreda to implement these plans. They stayed in Albreda for about five months, after which Morel contracted yellow fever. Durand rowed him back to Bathurst to receive the sacrament of the dying and Morel died soon afterwards. Shortly afterwards, Albreda was declared too unhealthy for residence.²¹ During the early 1850s priests residing in Bathurst regularly visited Albreda, but the hope of establishing a flourishing mission station in Albreda soon declined. Albreda had gradually lost its former glory as a Christian trading town and the Mulatto community had begun to move away. Hilarie Dréano, who worked in The Gambia in 1850/51, described Albreda as a place where the people did not want to become Christians and where the Muslim opposition was strong. He suggested that instead of wasting time and personnel on Albreda, the church should focus on non-Muslim people like the Serer.²² In the 1870s there was still a Christian community in Albreda. The journal of the community mentions that Fr. Guillaume Jouga, Fr. Gabriel Sene and a Fr. Gouleud went to Albreda to give communion and to prepare people for baptism.²³ This is the last indication that there was something like a substantial Christian community in Albreda. A report from 1921 still refers to a catechist, stationed in Albreda, but it must have been the remnant of a better past.²⁴ When Joseph Wieder visited the town in 1904, he found the village in ruins and mentioned that nearly all inhabitants had become Muslim.²⁵

¹⁹ Undated document, mentioned after entries 1877 and before *Résumé historique*, in *Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878*.

²⁰ *Rapport avec le Gouvernement au sujet de la mission de Guinée*, 3rd part, Boite 146B/IV.

²¹ *Résumé historique*, IV/11, *Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878*.

²² H.H.P. Dréano, *Coup d'oeil général sur la mission d'Afrique (Senegambie-Gabon)*, Boite 146B/III, 2-4, 24 and 32.

²³ Entry May 29 1872 for Fr. Jouga and January 27 1877 for Fr. Gouleud, *Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878*. For Fr. Sene see Riehl to Mgr. Duboin, St. Mary's's, 28 February 1877, Boite 160B/II, *Gambie 1876-1879*. The letter mentions that when Sene was in Albreda to prepare people for baptism, the successor to Ma Ba Diakhou – who in the letter is called Ma Moundari – sent people to officially salute and greet the priest.

²⁴ Report 'La Gambie' October 21 1921, Boite 261A/X.

²⁵ Entry April 4 1904, *Journal Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923*.

Meanwhile another promising area had come into focus: the area, which is now known as the Casamance.²⁶ The Casamance had just like Albreda been an area of long-standing Christianity. The first contacts with Christianity were in the Portuguese period and the area had been part of the Diocese of Cape Verde. Portuguese and Cape Verdian priests had attended to its Christian community. The visit of Warlop and Arragon to the area in 1847, mentioned above, testifies to this. Despite the fact that this area was therefore a Portuguese enclave in the Spiritan Vicariate, the Spiritans continued to visit it, possibly because they disapproved of the type of Christianity they found. Arragon made another visit in 1852, Jean Lacombe, the first Senegambian Spiritan who worked in St. Mary's from 1864 till 1876, did the same in 1859 and the early 1860s.²⁷ Two other Senegambian priests, Jouga and Sene served the area from St. Mary's in the early 1870s.²⁸ All seem to have baptised and confirmed people in Sedhiou, Carabane and Ziguinchor, even though there was still a resident Portuguese priest. When the resident Cape Verdian priest of Ziguinchor died in 1872, the Bishop of Cape Verde decided to abandon the area. He motivated this decision by saying that the Christians in the Casamance were not willing to contribute to the maintenance of the priest and that they were not very interested in the gospel message.²⁹ It was then that the Congregation of the Holy Ghost officially took over.

A decision ratified by Rome in 1876 stated that in the absence of a Portuguese priest, the Christians of Ziguinchor and environment were under the care of the Bishop of Dakar.³⁰ In the early 1870s Sene was assigned to the Casamance as an itinerant priest until in 1876, after the ratification from Rome, Jean Lacombe replaced him and settled Sedhiou.³¹ From that time onwards Casamance became an independent area, directly responsible to the Bishop in Dakar and was no longer a mission station of St. Mary's. Further details about this area can be found in P.B. Clarke's *West Africa and Christianity* (1986) and in J. Delcourt's *Histoire Religieuse du Sénégal* (1975).

Another outstation of St. Mary's in the 19th century was MacCarthy Island. MacCarthy had been the rural mission station of the Methodists since the 1830s, but this does not seem to have been a reason for the Roman Catholic Church to refrain from working at MacCarthy. On the contrary, the second half of the 19th century was characterised by a fierce competition between the Methodist and the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that the former had already been established in MacCarthy for half a century was only an extra stimulant for the Roman Catholic Church to investigate the possibilities in the area. Besides, Bishop Duboin who was Vicar Apostolic from 1876 until 1882, stimulated the exploration of the rural areas in Senegal and Gambia. During his time priests surveyed the Sine Saloum, Foni, the Casamance and even the

²⁶ The Casamance is now part of Senegal, but in the 1870s the borders between The Gambia and Senegal had not yet been drawn and both The Gambia and the Casamance formed part of the Vicariate of the Senegambia.

²⁷ *Bulletin Général*, 28-30 (1863/IV and 1864/I), 96-97; *Bulletin Général* 102 (October 1874), 392/393.

²⁸ *Bulletin Général* 102 (October 1874), 392/393; W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 17.

²⁹ *Bulletin Général* 112 (October 1875), 639.

³⁰ J. Delcourts, *Histoire religieuse de Sénégal*, 123 (footnote 9).

³¹ Riehl to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's June 14 1876, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879.

area around the Rio Pongas for its mission prospectives.³² By 1875 the Roman Catholic Church seems to have had a small community in MacCarthy. In that year François Riehl travelled up to MacCarthy several times and baptised 7 children and an adult. He reported that 99 Christians were present during the mass.³³ Whether they were Mulattos, Liberated Africans or members of an indigenous ethnic group is not specified.

In 1877 the people of MacCarthy requested the Roman Catholic Mission for a school. Despite the fact that the island was not big and the Wesleyans already had a school at Georgetown and one at Fatoto, Riehl recommended Duboin to consent: 'The Wesleyans already have a school there but students are wasting their time there.' Thus a catechist – the first one mentioned in the Gambian Roman Catholic annals – went up, both to teach in the school and to prepare people for baptism.³⁴ Occasionally priests travelled up to MacCarthy to celebrate the mass.³⁵ When a Fr. Gabriel visited the island at Easter 1907 he recommended that a chapel be built.³⁶ The chapel did not materialise until 1913 or 1914 when the Gambian superior John Meehan (1905-1945), Bishop Hyacinth Jalabert and many of the Bathurst parishioners travelled up the river to celebrate the opening of the church.³⁷ MacCarthy never was a flourishing Roman Catholic outstation, because many of the Akou who lived there were Methodists and most other citizens were Muslim.³⁸ When MacCarthy became less important as a trading and administrative centre, people moved away and the number of parishioners declined steadily.

In the footsteps of the Methodists, the Roman Catholic priests explored British Combo.³⁹ In 1875 and 1876 Riehl made exploratory tours which included British

³² J. Delcourt, *Histoire religieuse de Sénégal*, 61.

³³ Riehl to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's June 14 1876, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879. François Riehl was superior of the mission in St. Mary's from 1876-1878 after which he returned to Senegal. From 1884 until his death in 1886 he was Vicar Apostolic of the Senegambia. See H. Koren, *Spiritual West African Memorial*, 82.

³⁴ Riehl to Duboin, St. Mary's May 31 1877, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879; *Bulletin Général* 125 (Jan. 1879), 336. Note: the name of the catechist is not mentioned.

³⁵ Renoux to Schwindenhammer, May 13 1878, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879 mentions that Joof went up in 1878 and according to the *Bulletin Général* 125 (Jan. 1879), 336 Riehl visited MacCarthy in June 1876.

³⁶ Entry April 4 1907, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923. NB. The name is mentioned as Fr. Gabriel and not further specified. Gabriel Sene had died the previous year on October 10th. It is therefore unclear which priest is meant.

³⁷ *Bulletin Général* 341 (October-December 1916), 414.

³⁸ MacCarthy Island, like Kaur, Kuntaur, Ballanghar, Basse and other trading villages along the river had a seasonal population. Traders went up the river during the dry season to trade and lived in Bathurst during the rains. Thus the congregations of these towns fluctuated strongly with the season and also depended on its importance in trade. E.g. Ballanghar was an important trading town for a while but when the course of the river changed, it was abandoned.

³⁹ The letter of Riehl to Schwindenhammer of June 14 1876, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879 mentions the fact that the Wesleyans had already established themselves in British Combo and Sabiji.

Combo and some posts along the river.⁴⁰ Especially Sabiji and Abuko – also known as Albert Town – are mentioned.⁴¹ Though various visits were made, the Combo mission did not come into being until the 1897. Only after the British had conquered Fode Sillah's Caliphate, a plot of land was purchased in Abuko and an orphanage annex farm was set up.⁴² Soon about 20 children were living at Abuko and priests from St. Mary's visited every Saturday.⁴³ It seems Abuko also served as a rest house for the priests and the sisters, because Bathurst was considered extremely unhealthy to live in.⁴⁴ In 1907 the Governor proposed to set up an agricultural school in Abuko.⁴⁵ The school started in 1908 and was supervised by Br. André Bernard and Fr. Gustave Guéguin. Both died in 1911 and though the school was kept going for a while by people who gave temporary assistance, eventually it had to be closed down due to lack of personnel.⁴⁶ The orphanage shared the same fate in 1922.⁴⁷ The First World War, the tragedy of 1920 in which Bishop Jalabert and 18 missionaries drowned in a shipwreck in the Bay of Biscay and the large response to Christianity in Eastern Nigeria and Kenya all contributed to scarcity of personnel for The Gambia.⁴⁸

Foni was another area that attracted the attention of the Roman Catholic missionaries. In 1885 Jakob Haas was sent up the river to see where new mission stations could be established.⁴⁹ On his return he recommended a mission among the Jola, 'those people who were still savages'. He argued that the Jola were not yet Muslims and thus were prospective candidates for conversion to Christianity. Besides, he added, there had been church in the area before, in Bintang. This was a guarantee that the people were not hostile to Christianity.⁵⁰ But Alois Meyer, the then superior of the mission in St. Mary's thought it was better to wait. The raids of Fode Kaba caused too much instability in the region.⁵¹ Haas strongly disagreed with Meyer. He argued that if the mission in Foni was left now, Foni would soon be islamised, unless the Wesleyans would take up the work in the area. Only immediate action could stop the expansion of Islam. Haas felt very strongly about the need for a mission in Foni. When Meyer had refused to move on, Haas wrote to Bishop Riehl that he hoped that the

⁴⁰ Riehl to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's August 20 1875, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1870-1875.

⁴¹ Riehl to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's June 14 1876, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879.

⁴² Entry May 9 1897, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁴³ Entry September (no day specified) 1898, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁴⁴ Entry June 24 1901, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923. Maurel and Prom had also offered a house at Cape Point as a rest house for the clergy.

⁴⁵ Entry February 6 1907, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923. For Br. Defrance and Fr. Guéguin see H. Koren, *Spiritual West Africa Memorial*, 150 and 157 respectively.

⁴⁶ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 23.

⁴⁷ *Bulletin Général*, 377 (January 1922), 387.

⁴⁸ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 25 and 27.

⁴⁹ Meyer to Emonet, St. Mary's January 19 1885, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁵⁰ Haas to Riehl, St. Mary's May 13 1885 and Mayer to Barillec, St. Mary's March 25 1886, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁵¹ Meyer to Riehl, St. Mary's July 6 1886, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1885/1886.

Wesleyans would not let this opportunity slip to 'save' the Jola.⁵² Possibly because of this disagreement with Meyer, Haas was sent on leave to France in that same year and was restationed to Sierra Leone. Neither Meyer nor the Methodists pursued the Foni mission.

In 1903 Foni became again an area of attention.⁵³ In the years between 1903 and 1905 Wieder made several orientation tours to Foni. The area seemed promising because the Jola had resisted Islam despite the *jihads* of the late 19th century and the area was now pacified. Besides, Bishop Kunemann (1901-1908) had made a tour through the Gambian Protectorate and had come to the conclusion that in the area between Foni and MacCarthy there was little prospect for mission. The people in this area were strong Muslims. The Kunemann's main objection to a mission in Foni was that mission work would be complicated by the fact that people were widely dispersed.⁵⁴ Nevertheless that same year 1904 a catechist, named Benoit Corr ea, left for Boulelai, possibly because there were few other 'promising' areas.⁵⁵ In 1906 the priest Paul Meistermann and another catechist named Samuel also settled in Boulelai.⁵⁶ A mission station, which included a chapel and a schoolroom, was built and Meistermann and Samuel worked there until Meistermann's death in 1908. After Meistermann's demise Edouard Wintz, who had worked among the Jola in Casamance, took his place, but it is not clear for how long.⁵⁷ It seems that in 1912 he was back in Senegal. Possibly the catechists continued on their own, because in 1921 there was still mission work among the Jola in Bintang and Boulelai.⁵⁸ In 1922 John Meehan closed the station due to lack of personnel.⁵⁹ The work in the Foni was picked up again in the 1930. That will be described in the next chapter. By then Haas' prediction that the area would soon be islamised, had come true.

The first contacts with the Serer community were also made in the period under discussion. Riehl visited the Saloum in 1879⁶⁰ but the evangelisation of the Serer was disturbed by local wars.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Meyer was convinced that Serer would easily be won for Christ: 'they are ready to embrace our holy religion.'⁶² From 1904 onwards

⁵² Haas to Riehl, St. Mary's December 10 1886, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1885-1886. He writes: 'Mes vœux sont pour les Wesleyans si nous devons abandonner cette race persecut e et maintenant encore facile   sauver.'

⁵³ Entry April 30 1903, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923; *Bulletin G n ral* 272 (August 1904), 668.

⁵⁴ Journal entries April 30 1903, April 4 1904, July 1 1904, Dec. 1 1904 and April 5 1905, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁵⁵ Entry October 1 1904, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁵⁶ Entry October 3 1905, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁵⁷ Entries April 22 1906, August 5 1906, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923; *Bulletin G n ral*, 271 (September 1909), 261/262.

⁵⁸ Le Hunsec to ???, Dakar July 14 1921, Boite 261 A/X.

⁵⁹ *Bulletin G n ral*, 377 (January 1922), 387.

⁶⁰ *Bulletin G n ral*, 125 (January 1879), 336.

⁶¹ Meyer to Riehl, St. Mary's July 6 1886, Boite 160B/III lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁶² *Bulletin G n ral*, 9 (October 1887), 306. NB In 1887 the *Bulletin G n ral* started afresh. It was officially called *Bulletin de la Congr gation*, but the bulletin was and is still known under its old title *Bulletin G n ral*. Nevertheless, the numbering was re-started in Jan. 1887 with no. 1.

the mission in St. Mary's fostered the outstation of Foundiougne, now Senegal which grew into a community of about 200 Christians by 1906.⁶³ But the real establishment of the Roman Catholic Church among the Serer in The Gambia did not come until much later.

Looking at the development of the mission work of the Roman Catholic Church in the rural areas in the second half of the 19th century in more general terms, two observations can be made. First of all, the initial out-stations were located in areas where people had already been in contact with Christianity. This is true for Albreda, for the Casamance and to a certain extent also for the work at MacCarthy and in Foni. As such one can conclude that the Roman Catholic Church in this way hoped to reap some fruits on a soil that had been prepared in earlier days.

The second observation one can make is that quite early on the Senegambian Roman Catholic Church changed its attitude towards Muslims. Where in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s the missionaries were still relatively optimistic about a general conversion of the Senegambia to Christianity, by the 1870s this optimism had changed into pessimism and scepticism. No doubt the Soninke-Marabout wars contributed to this. From the 1870s onwards a general consensus grew that it was virtually impossible to convert Muslims and that it was better to redirect resources. By putting all human and financial means in attempting to convert the traditional believers the church endeavoured to contain the growth of Islam.⁶⁴

Education

Education played an important role in the mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Education had a twofold purpose. It served to build up the existing Roman Catholic community and was at the same time a means of evangelisation. The philosophy behind education as an instrument of mission presupposed that children could be influenced more easily than elders who had their mind and manners set. Exposure to Christianity at an early age through education therefore was a method, which was supposed to bear fruit on the long term. Also in Abolitionist movement education played a crucial role. Abolishment of the slave trade, according to the Abolitionists was a two-sided issue, which had a European but also an African side to it. In order to abolish the slave trade, it was not sufficient to just make legislation. It was also necessary to stop the supply of slaves in Africa and change the culture that had created the atmosphere that condoned the slave trade. In this change of mentality and manners, this 'civilisation process', education was given a key role.⁶⁵ Thus also the Roman Catholic Church in The Senegambia put much effort and personnel in education. In the 19th century Roman Catholic education was mainly confined to Bathurst⁶⁶, while in the

⁶³ *Bulletin Général*, 239 (January 1907), 62; Entry March 14 1906, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁶⁴ Entry February 17 1900, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923; H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 460.

⁶⁵ For Libermann on civilization, see H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 257-259.

⁶⁶ The school in MacCarthy, started in the 1870s formed the only exception. It is unclear how long the school started in Boulelai existed, but one gets the impression that it disappeared quite quickly after the death of Meistermann. Also the school at Abuko was short-lived.

20th century schools were also built in the Protectorate. The school and the catechist together often formed the front-line of rural mission.

In St. Mary's both the boys' and the girls' school were started in 1850. The schools were necessary, as the record says, 'to combat the Wesleyan schools'⁶⁷ and 'to stop the Methodists from indoctrinating young children against Catholicism'.⁶⁸ Soon it became clear that the Roman Catholic schools also had proselytising aims: the schools were not just meant to educate Roman Catholic children, but also to attract Protestant children in order to convert them to Roman Catholicism. In the 1880s two schools were opened in Soldier Town, which specifically aimed at the proselytism of Protestant children. Though the schools were well attended, the Protestant children were not ready to embrace Catholicism.⁶⁹ In 1886 the work in Soldierstown was reduced to a minimum and the schools were closed again. Personnel was scarce and the conversion not forthcoming.⁷⁰

In the early years of Roman Catholic education there is little information about the type of students enrolled in the schools and it not clear whether or not Muslim children joined the schools. Possibly they were there. But there are also indications that Muslim parents were wary of the Christian schools for a long time and reluctant to send their children to school, afraid they would be converted to Christianity. Though the missionaries – both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant – no doubt attempted this, the schools in The Gambia were never an effective medium of conversion as they were in other areas in West Africa. Very few Gambian Muslim children became Christian through education. However, the efforts of the churches to educate the people did create a lot of goodwill for Christianity among the population.⁷¹

The boys' school in St. Mary's had a hard time getting started. Because education was to be in English, it was difficult to find a teacher. For some time in 1850 an English speaking seminarian Isodore August taught the children, but tired of teaching he left the mission soon afterwards. Another seminarian, Phillipe Vongoefft, arrived in 1857 but died within half a year.⁷² Also a local person called Pignard Delacombe taught at the boys' school: he served the Roman Catholic Church as a catechist and teacher in the late 1850s before he became a Protestant.⁷³ In the interim the priests serving in Bathurst endeavoured to keep the school going. The Senegalese priest Santa Maria, who worked in Bathurst from 1856 –1859, taught evening classes to young

⁶⁷ *Résumé historique*, V/13, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

⁶⁸ *Résumé historique*, I/3, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

⁶⁹ Meyer to Barillec, St. Mary's December 19 1883, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

⁷⁰ Meyer to Riehl, St. Mary's July 6 1886, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁷¹ A personal anecdote might serve as an example. When I arrived in The Gambia in March 1993 I had to clear my luggage from the customs in the harbour. Sent from one person to another I finally ended up with a senior customs officer who asked me where I was to work in the country. When I replied that I was going to work as a minister for the Methodist Church, he stamped the custom clearance papers, returning them to me by saying: 'This is for God. The Methodists educated me.'

⁷² W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 14.

⁷³ *Résumé historique*, VII/18, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

people. But it is unclear whether this was meant as regular education or as catechism. Countering Protestant influences seems to have been the main reason.⁷⁴

Meanwhile repeated requests were made for an English-speaking brother who could run the school. Cleary states that the Irish branch of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was started in 1859 because Bishop Kobès needed English-speaking teachers for his school in Bathurst!⁷⁵ The first Irish Spiritan to arrive in The Gambia was Br. Florentine Matthews who took up education work in 1864. He served in primary education in The Gambia until his death in 1886. Using vernacular material he taught the children both in English and in Wolof and brought the Roman Catholic boys' school up to the standard for which it became famous.⁷⁶ In the government report on the schools in Bathurst over the years 1885-1889 by J.F. Gleeson, both the Roman Catholic boys' school and the Catholic girls' school excelled. St. Joseph's School for girls took first place several years in a row, whereas the St. Augustine's Boys School took second place.⁷⁷

Various brothers came to assist Florentine, but none of them stayed or lived very long. After Florentine's death the quality of the boys' school declined. In October 1896, due to a shortage of European brothers to run the school, the decision was taken to engage lay teachers in the school. The Anglican priest Fr. George Nicol had meanwhile started a teacher training course and the Roman Catholic lay teachers were invited to enrol. Shortly afterwards the government insisted that each school, if it was to receive a subvention, was to be headed by a qualified teacher.⁷⁸ The names of the Roman Catholic teachers who sat for the first teacher training exams in the year 1905 were entered in the journal of the Spiritans: John Gomez, Stephen Porquet, John Gay, Gabriel Joof and John Fox. The exam result however seem to have been meagre⁷⁹ and the school struggled on. The girls' school, run first by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and later by the Cluny Sisters had fewer problems, even though illness and death also hampered the work at times. In the late 1880s the Sisters extended their school with an industrial department.⁸⁰ They had come a long way since the feeble beginnings in 1850. In 1918 a total of 450 children were taught at Roman Catholic schools.⁸¹

⁷⁴ *Résumé historique*, VII/18, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

⁷⁵ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 14.

⁷⁶ H. Koren, *Spiritans West Africa Memorial*, 60.

⁷⁷ J.F. Gleeson, Report on the Catholic Schools, Bathurst St. Mary's, Gambia 1885-1889, Boite 4I1.1B (old numbering Boite 549B), File VIII, Gambie Divers 1849-1902.

⁷⁸ Entry October 22 1896, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁷⁹ Entry January 24 1905, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁸⁰ J.F. Gleeson, Report on the Catholic Schools, Bathurst St. Mary's, Gambia 1885-1889, Boite 4I1.1B/VIII. In 1857 there had been an earlier attempt was made to start an industrial school. It was meant for boys and was to train people in carpentry, masonry and the like. But due to lack of personnel, it was closed again a year later. *Résumé historique*, VI/14, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878; *Bulletin Général*, 3 (July 1857), 137 and 7 (July 1858), 334.

⁸¹ *Bulletin religieux de la Senegambie*, Juin 1918, Boite 261A/X.

Membership

The Bathurst parish, quite soon after its commencement, grew speedily. The – probably somewhat optimistic – estimates for 1875 were that there were about 2000 Roman Catholics. Between 160 and 200 of them were active and communicant members.⁸² By 1918 the total membership had increased to 2500.⁸³ The majority of them were Wolof, but there were also many Mulattos and Manjago among the first Roman Catholic community. Originating from Guinea-Bissau and the Bissagos Islands, the Manjago worked as sailors and many resided in Bathurst.⁸⁴ In the archival material they are often referred to as ‘Portugais’. The Manjago were said to form the most stable Roman Catholic families. Despite this variety of ethnic groups, Wolof was used as a common language for instruction and liturgy.⁸⁵ The gradual growth of the community is reflected in the regular extension of the chapel. In 1914 the present cathedral building, named Our Lady of the Assumption, replaced the older buildings.

No doubt the long periods of service of people like Jean Lacombe (1864-1874), Leopold Joof (1875-1885), Charles Amann (1888-1900) and John Meehan (1905-1945) gave stability and continuity to the work in St. Mary’s, despite the many deaths and epidemics. The fact that two of them, Lacombe and Joof, were Senegambians and that several other Senegambian priests served the parish, must have added to the attractiveness of the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁶ Also the sodalities, which were formed, helped to knit the community closer together. In April 1849 the League of Mary was formed, in 1881 followed by the Sodality of Our Lady of Victory for men and the Sodality of the Holy Heart of Mary for women.⁸⁷ All three sodalities emphasised the need for pastoral and diaconal work. In 1901 an Association for the Young was started with the idea of encouraging young people to live a pure and Christian life.⁸⁸ Because of the large and steadily growing congregation, the pastoral work on St. Mary’s Island, the work in the rural areas and because of the educational work the 19th century Roman Catholic community of The Gambia earned the promising title of ‘the most flourishing site of the Senegambia mission.’⁸⁹

The Roman Catholic Church and Islam

In 1847 Bishop Truffet wrote that the islamisation of the Senegambian people was very superficial islamisation. He was convinced that their conversion to Christianity would be ‘no problem’.⁹⁰ A few years later in 1853, Hillaire Dréano, who showed much more perception and sense of reality, already made the observation that Islam

⁸² Lacombe to Bp. Duret, St. Mary’s November 12 1875, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1870-1875.

⁸³ *Bulletin religieux de la Senegambie* Juin 1918, Boite 261A/X.

⁸⁴ *Bulletin Général*, 186 (July 1885), 698.

⁸⁵ Meyer, Rapport du Vicariate Apostolique de la Sénégambie au Directeur de la Propagande de la Foi, 1884, Boite 411.1B/VIII Dossier Gambie divers 1849-1902; Entry August 4 1899, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁸⁶ The role of the indigenous clergy will be discussed in the next paragraph.

⁸⁷ Meyer to Duby, St. Mary’s August 17 1881, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

⁸⁸ Entry May 31 1901, Journal of Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁸⁹ *Bulletin Général*, 22 (second trimester 1862), 541.

⁹⁰ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 71.

was a strong obstacle in the course of the mission and that the cultivated Muslims of Albreda had no intention to convert to Christianity. His recommendation to focus on non-Muslim people gradually became the policy for the Senegambia.⁹¹ In the 1860s there are still references to the (imagined) fact that the *marabouts* were losing their influence.⁹² Conversion stories of Muslims were still noted down, no doubt in order to report progress to Europe and to raise funds and personnel.⁹³ In 1862 The Gambia was still cited as the most flourishing and promising mission.⁹⁴

By 1875 this attitude had changed. In that year Riehl recommended to the Superior General of the Spiritans Schwindenhammer to commence work in those areas where there were no Muslims.⁹⁵ A few years later his colleague Haas reported that many of the workers were despairing and had lost hope for the mission.⁹⁶ No doubt, he himself was one of them. He had recommended a mission among the Jola in Foni, predicting an islamisation of the area if work was not taken up now, but his advice was ignored.⁹⁷ When Bishop Buleon (1899-1900) had his shield designed, he chose for a cross above a crescent, as a sign of the triumph of Christianity over Islam. The Journal of the community in St. Mary's sceptically commented: 'May God help him realise it.'⁹⁸

His successor Kunemann (1901-1908) was less optimistic. He recommended the Gambian staff to focus on traditional believers, because in his opinion there was little prospect of Muslims becoming Christians.⁹⁹ Thus henceforth, mission work focussed on the Jola who were still traditionalists, the Manjago who were said to detest Islam and Protestantism alike¹⁰⁰ and the Serer and the Fula. But even among those ethnic groups, who were predominantly traditional believers, the missionaries had to cope, both practically and theologically, with the expansion of Islam.¹⁰¹ The influence of Islam in the Senegambia had been underestimated and it would take another fifty years before a thorough theological reflection on the relation between Islam and Christianity would start.

⁹¹ H.P. Dréano, *Coup d'oeil sur la mission d'Afrique (Senegambie, Gabon)*, 3 and 23ff.

⁹² *Bulletin Général*, 27 (October 1863), 453.

⁹³ Entry September 23 1869, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878 tells the story of a child of a Mr. Gore Ndiaye who hid in a boat to travel to the minor seminary in Ngasobil, because his father refused to give permission for baptism. The child was brought back to the family by the Roman Catholic Mission..

⁹⁴ *Bulletin Général*, 22 (April 1862), 541.

⁹⁵ Riehl to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's August 20 1875, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1870-1875.

⁹⁶ Haas to Duboin, St. Mary's November 16 1879, Boite 411.1B/VIII, Gambie divers 1949-1902.

⁹⁷ Haas to Riehl, St. Mary's December 10 1885, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

⁹⁸ Entry December 12 1899, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

⁹⁹ Entry July 1 1904, Journal of Sante Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923.

¹⁰⁰ *Bulletin Général*, 186 (June 1885), 704.

¹⁰¹ *Bulletin Général*, 239 (January 1907), 61ff.

7.7 The Roman Catholic Church and the indigenous ministry

Libermann: advocate for the indigenisation of the ministry

The Roman Catholic Church in the Senegambia in the 19th century devoted a lot of energy to the training of indigenous clergy. The efforts of Fr. Baradère and Sr. Anne Marie Javouhey in this field were already mentioned above. Also Libermann, Vicar General of the newly founded Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, stressed the need for indigenous clergy. He did this partly out of ideological reasons, partly because he was forced by the practical fact that many of his priests died shortly after arriving in Africa. Already in the 1840s he wrote that a native clergy should be formed as soon as possible, 'so that foreign priests can be dispensed with.' According to Libermann's philosophy a permanent presence of an exclusively white clergy would inevitably lead to the decay of the local church.¹⁰²

In the footsteps of Libermann, the Spiritan missionaries dedicated themselves to the training of local clergy. They did this to such extent that before 1910 all but 2 of the indigenous priests in Africa were educated at Spiritan seminaries. As early as 1847 a junior seminary was started in Dakar, followed ten years later by a senior seminary in the same town. Especially Kobès can be credited for his zeal to create an indigenous staff. During his time of service in the Senegambia (1848-1872), he ordained five indigenous candidates to the priesthood while three others received their formation under his guidance and were ordained after his death. One of these men was a Gambian: Father Samba.¹⁰³ Nearly all of the Senegambian priests raised by Kobès worked in The Gambia for some time during their ministry: Santa Maria from 1856 until 1858, Jean Lacombe, the first Senegambia Spiritan from 1864 until 1874,¹⁰⁴ William Jouga from 1870 until 1875, Gabriel Sene from 1872 until 1874, in 1877 and in 1884, Léopold Joof from 1875 until 1885, Simon Fal in 1877 and from 1907 until 1912 and Sebastian Gigue in 1897 and 1900.

These facts reveal that for the larger part of the second half of the 19th century there were Senegambian priests guiding the St. Mary's parish: people who spoke the language, knew the culture, the traditional religion and all the ins and outs of an African society. Especially Jouga, who had received the whole of his training in Africa, seems to have greatly inspired people and his example encouraged several others to opt for the religious life.¹⁰⁵ Already during his lifetime, he had the reputation of being a 'saint' and after his untimely death – he was only 34 years old - this conviction only increased.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 256.

¹⁰³ See below.

¹⁰⁴ Jean Lacombe was born in The Gambia, either Bathurst or Albreda – the sources differ on this – as a son of a French father and a Senegalese mother. Since he was educated in Senegal, he is often seen as a Senegalese but his official nationality (for what that was worth at that time), was probably Gambian. He served in The Gambia for many years. H. Koren, *Spiritans West Africa Memorial*, 62 and H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 464.

¹⁰⁵ *Bulletin Général*, 56 (September 1869-May 1870), 523. The author of the article also comments that it is difficult for Gambians to leave their country (for study).

¹⁰⁶ H. Koren, *Spiritans West Africa Memorial*, 72. There is an article about Jouga. F. Morvan, 'Le Père Guillaume Jouga Spiritain, cinquième prêtre du Sénégal', *Spiritus*, 8 (1963), 229-238.

These Senegambian priests were not just assistants to the missionaries but were considered as equals. Several of them, such as Lacombe, Joof and Sene served as superior of the mission in The Gambia. They were highly regarded, both by the missionaries and by the congregations. Nevertheless, vocations into the priesthood formed a problem during the 19th century. After the successful 'batch' of Kobès, only five others were ordained in the period up till 1930. H. Koren mentions that of the 300 candidates, who entered the seminary in a period of 60 years, only eleven became priests. The fact that the well-educated young men could find a better salaried job elsewhere was one reason for the dropout. Resistance of parents who saw themselves deprived of a source of income if their son was ordained and remained celibate was another. A third reason for the reluctance to enter the priesthood, was the high death rate among the seminarians and young priests, often from tuberculosis. This gave people the impression that there was a curse on the priesthood.¹⁰⁷

Indigenous religious orders

Kobès did not just interpret Libermann's emphasis on the indigenous clergy as being the training of indigenous priest. He also stimulated the foundation of religious orders. In 1858 the first and oldest African congregation for women was established: the Daughters of the Holy Heart of Mary. In April 1858 two young women, Louise de Saint Jean and Thérèse Sagna went on retreat with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, resulting in the foundation of the congregation later that year. Soon others joined and a noviciate was established in Ngasobil. Also in the journals of the congregation at St. Mary's there are various references to girls and women who joined this Senegambian Ccngregation.¹⁰⁸ Remarkably enough this congregation never attempted to establish itself in The Gambia. In Senegal however, this oldest African congregation is still vibrantly alive.¹⁰⁹ The congregation specialises in education and pastoral and catechetical work.

Kobès also endeavoured to start a congregation for brothers. A first attempt, made in 1860 came to nothing. A second endeavour was made in 1869 when a noviciate was started in Ngasobil. Though some of the brothers seemed to have made their final vows in 1873, the noviciate disappeared from the annual reports until 1888 when there were again some novices. What happened to them is not known. In 1925 Bishop Le Hunsec

¹⁰⁷ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 464/465.

¹⁰⁸ As early as 1867 a protestant girl named Mam Kamara offered herself as a novice. She was accepted and was known under the name of Marie Josephine, but seems to have died before making her final vows. *Bulletin Général*, 40 (1st semester 1867), 748. Another novice was the orphan Anna, who stayed as a maid with a Mulatto lady in Bathurst and who secretly escaped to Ngasobil where she entered the noviciate. What became of her is unknown. See Meyer, Report on the mission 1883, Boite 411.1B/VIII Dossier Gambie divers 1849-1902. Not all girls who entered the noviciate endured and made their final vows. In a letter of Renoux to Schwindenhammer, (St. Mary's May 13 1878, Boite 160B/II, lettres Gambie 1876-1879) he mentions a former nun who had left the convent and married a Muslim and now had two children.

¹⁰⁹ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 463.

reopened the noviciate and renamed the order 'The Little Brothers of St. Joseph'. Since then it has been in existence and is modestly successful.¹¹⁰

Lay people

Lay people, and especially catechists, played an important role in Libermann's philosophy. Lay people, in the sanctity of their Christian life, were to be witnesses to the faith and educate their neighbours about Christian living and doctrine.¹¹¹ In that sense every Roman Catholic was a missionary and a catechist.¹¹² But despite the importance attributed to lay workers by Libermann, the area of indigenous workers remained underdeveloped in the Senegambia for a long time. Compared to other areas in West Africa and compared to the Methodist Church in The Gambia, the Roman Catholic Church made little use of lay workers.

In October 1896 the first lay teachers were engaged. A few catechists are referred to in the Gambian annals. The first catechist mentioned was the catechist who was sent to MacCarthy Island in 1875. There is another reference to catechists in the early 20th century when catechists went up to Boulelai to work among the Jola. Despite Bishop Jalabert's (1909-1920) recommendation of 1910 that the number of catechists should be greatly increased in order to evangelise the traditional believers and to call a halt to the expansion of Islam, the catechist-training centre, located in Ngasobil, was not opened until 1916. Only after Ngasobil had organised the systematic training of catechists, the number steadily increased.¹¹³

Archbishop Le Roy, in an unpublished report, commented: '...the Senegambia mission could have stemmed the tide of Islam with a mighty dam of catechists. We regret very much that we must admit it has almost completely failed in this respect.'¹¹⁴ As for The Gambia, it would still take several years before the catechist became a respected and recognised worker in the church whose work, education and appreciation was taken seriously.

Father Samba: the first Gambian Roman Catholic priest

During the 19th century there was only one Gambian priest, Fr. Samba. Samba – his Christian name is unknown – was a Gambian, probably born in Bathurst but there are no details about his date of birth or his vocation. Encouraged by Kobès, he studied in Rome under the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1869 Kobès ordained Samba as a diocesan priest, while in Rome. It seems that at the time of the ordination, some people expressed their hesitations whether Samba was ready for the priesthood.

In 1870 Samba was sent to St. Mary's where he served for some time. His ministry in Bathurst was not an overwhelming success. His colleagues complained that he was negligent in his devotions and that his mother's influence over him was too strong. Somewhere between 1871 and 1873 Samba fell ill and was sent to France to

¹¹⁰ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 461/462.

¹¹¹ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 256/57.

¹¹² H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 253.

¹¹³ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 122/123.

¹¹⁴ H. Koren, *To the ends of the earth*, 460.

recuperate.¹¹⁵ Possibly he made his vows to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost during this period, because from his stay in France onwards he is mentioned as a member of the Spiritans. In 1873 Samba was sent to Sierra Leone where he served as a priest for some time. Again he had problems with his superior. It seems he left his station twice without permission of his superior. At least one of these occasions was a family matter. In 1874 Samba travelled to The Gambia to console his mother over the death of his father.¹¹⁶ Because of his repeated disobedience, Samba was expelled from the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and was sent back to his bishop in Dakar. Bishop Duret (1873-1875) re-stationed him at Joal. But also in Joal his superiors were not content with his behaviour. Bishop Duboin wrote to Cardinal Siméoni of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith that Samba's habits were getting worse and worse. Samba was said to be too liberal with the other sex, to engage in gossip and to use excessive amounts of alcohol. As a result he was suspended for a while, probably around 1875 or 1876, and sent to France to re-think his vocation.

In December 1878 Samba was re-accepted into the full ministry. It is unclear whether he stayed in France during the whole of that period. In 1879 Duboin wrote to Siméoni, suggesting that Samba should either retire in France or be defrocked, but in no case be allowed to return to the Senegambia. Siméoni was of a different opinion.¹¹⁷ He wrote to Schwindenhammer, the Superior General of the Spiritans to guide Samba in a retreat, after which he was allowed to go back to the Senegambia.¹¹⁸ Samba himself wanted to go to America, probably to make a fresh start in his ministry.¹¹⁹

In 1880 Samba was back in The Gambia. His mother's request to Schwinderhammer was possibly instrumental in his stationing in The Gambia. Mrs. Samba, who was ill, had written to Schwindenhammer that she wanted a visit from her son. Possibly this appeal had persuaded Samba's superiors to station him again in The Gambia.¹²⁰ Back in Bathurst Samba again got himself into trouble. After the death of his mother in 1880 he quarrelled with a lady over the inheritance and bought large quantities of liquor for his mother's charity. These things were used by the Protestants to discredit the reputation of the Roman Catholic mission.¹²¹ Also the fact that Samba, no longer a member of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, was not living with the other priests, was material for Protestant anti-Roman Catholic propaganda. According to Alois Meyer, the superior of the mission, the Protestants implied that Samba was starting a schism within the Roman Catholic Church. Both Meyer's desperate pleas to

¹¹⁵ Bp. Duboin to Cardinal Siméoni (Propaganda Fide), Dakar February 1 1879, Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹¹⁶ Lacombe to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's March 13 1874, Boite 160B/II, Lettres Gambia 1870-1875.

¹¹⁷ Bp. Duboin to Cardinal Siméoni (Propaganda Fide), Dakar February 1 1879, Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹¹⁸ Cardinal Siméoni to Schwindenhammer, Rome August 29 1879, Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹¹⁹ Samba to ??? (Siméoni?), Mount Saint Isidor May 11 1879. Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹²⁰ Mrs. Samba to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's April 24 1880, Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹²¹ Meyer to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's August 5 1880, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

recall Samba to France¹²² and the petition of the Roman Catholic community of St. Mary's that Samba would not be expelled from the priesthood,¹²³ proved unnecessary. On January 9 1881 Samba died of pneumonia. Just before he died, he made his confession and expressed his regrets about his disobedience. In his letter to Duboin Meyer wrote: 'Many people attended the funeral and think God did well to recall him in this situation.'¹²⁴

While most of Kobès' Senegambian batch functioned for many years and without problems, the first experiences with a Gambian priest were not smooth and easy. The exact story of what happened to and with Samba is not easy to trace¹²⁵ and it is hard to make an honest judgement after more than a century. Somehow it seems that the Bathurst congregation had more understanding for the behaviour of their priest than the different superiors. Giving priority to family matters over everything else is possibly better understood by Africans than by Europeans. Also the fact that Kobès might have been in a hurry to ordain Samba might have caused some of the friction. A longer and closer supervision and guidance might have possibly avoided some of the problems and might have helped Samba to mature. But all this is speculation. What is clear, is that Samba's example did not stimulate vocations to the priesthood in The Gambia. It would take another forty years before the next Gambian priest – Joseph Charles Mendy – was to be ordained.

7.4 The Methodist Church

The Roman Catholic Church as partner in mission

For the Methodist Church the year 1849 meant a rough awakening. During more than a quarter of a century the Methodist missionaries had had a monopoly on mission work in The Gambia. Anglican chaplains had served off and on in the Colony. But they were just what their title said they were: chaplains to the expatriate community of soldiers and government officers. Somewhere in the mid 1820s the Cluny Sisters had given up their attempts to establish a community in The Gambia and only occasionally Roman Catholic priests visited The Gambia to deliver the sacraments. Some Roman Catholics had therefore joined the Methodist Church.¹²⁶

¹²² Meyer to Duboin, St. Mary's July 1880, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1880-1884; Meyer to Schwindenhammer, St. Mary's August 5 1880, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

¹²³ People of Bathurst to Superior General (Schwindenhammer), St. Mary's May 6 1880, Boite 157A (new numbering 311.8.a11), Document Confidentiel.

¹²⁴ Meyer to Duboin, St. Mary's January 13 1881, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

¹²⁵ H. Koren in his *Spiritual West Africa Memorial*, 72 mentions Samba but makes no mention of any friction between Samba and his superiors. He just describes Samba's ill health and has some medical details about him, stating that he was near blindness towards the end of his life and that a surgeon in Paris had removed one of his eyes. W. Cleary in his booklet *Reaping a rich harvest*, 13 mentions that Kobès suspended Samba because he visited his mother without permission, before taking up his appointment at Joal, but he gives no dates or details. According to Cleary, who claims to base himself on oral tradition, Samba continued to live in Bathurst after his suspension and died there in 1881.

¹²⁶ *Résumé historique*, I/4, Journal Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

This all changed in January 1849 when two Roman Catholic priests from Senegal settled in Bathurst. Henry Badger, the Methodist missionary in charge of Bathurst exclaimed in 1850: 'The Catholics are storming the place. Sometimes we have had a dozen priests wandering about in long cassocks.'¹²⁷ Though this was slightly exaggerated, it was a fact that the Roman Catholic Church from 1849 onwards firmly re-established itself in The Gambia. To the Methodists it meant that for the first time since their arrival in The Gambia they had to reflect on what it meant to be one of the Christian denominations rather than the only mission in the country.

Especially in the 1850s the Methodists felt threatened by the Roman Catholic Church. The letters to the Missionary Committee in London in the 1850s reflect the anxiety of the missionaries over this unexpected turn of events. The letters endeavoured to reassure the Missionary Committee in London – and probably the writers as well – that few Methodist parishioners had transferred their membership to the Roman Catholic Church. The letters also underlined what the missionaries believed was the obvious superiority of the Methodist faith. Badger, writing in 1850, stated that the people who had joined the Roman Catholic Church were mainly people 'who were baptised ... in Gorée, but who have been utterly careless about their soul' in the meantime.¹²⁸ The 1854 Synod happily reported that the meeting place in Jolof town, which had been closed down 'due to Papist influence', was reopened again.¹²⁹ It was a house 'situated near the premises of the Popish missionaries' and it was hoped 'that the services held there will be the means of contradicting in some measure the errors of popery.'¹³⁰ A year later, in 1855, John Bridgart wrote about the membership in Jolof town:

Since the Romish Priests have opened their establishment here – now about five years ago – I believe not one of our members has been induced to leave us for the purpose of joining them, though vigorous efforts have been made to draw the Jaloof part of our people away from us.¹³¹

And the 1857 Synod report triumphantly stated:

The Popish priests and his assistants at Bathurst have been making extra ordinary efforts amongst our people to subvert their faith, but thank God without success. (...) Frequently a 'poor' liberated African with nothing but a Bible in his hands and just learning enough to read, has put the Popish priests to confusion.¹³²

¹²⁷ Badger to WMMS, St. Mary's August 10 1850, Box 295 H2709 mf. 885.

¹²⁸ Badger to WMMS, St. Mary's August 10 1850, Box 295 H2709 mf. 885.

¹²⁹ Synod January 2 1854, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

¹³⁰ Synod December 1858, Box 297 H2798 mf. 6. The statement continues with: 'The anger of the Popish priest will doubtless be provoked and perhaps some persecution may follow but those connected with its opening are prepared if necessary to endure persecution for the sake of Christ. We shall however endeavour to avoid any imprudent acts which might cause offence (Sic!).'

¹³¹ Bridgart to WMMS, Bathurst April 20 1855, Box 295 H2709 mf. 891.

¹³² Synod January 20 1857, Box 297 H2708 mf. 4.

The Methodist dissatisfaction with the Roman Catholic presence was not just expressed verbally. There are also incidents recorded in which Methodists endeavoured to disturb Roman Catholic processions by shouting through the litany and even by throwing stones at them.¹³³ Cleary noted down some of these incidents in his booklet *Reaping a rich harvest*. He wonders what Muslims must have thought of this brotherly love among Christians.¹³⁴

In later years, when it had become clear that the presence of the Roman Catholic Church did not diminish Methodist membership, the relationship improved somewhat. It was no longer explicitly aggressive but mainly characterised by competition, especially in the field of education. At times the churches even co-operated, such as in the year 1872 when the Christian churches together purchased a Christian burial place.¹³⁵

The example of the Roman Catholic Church in using the vernacular also stimulated the Methodist missionaries to work on the translation of material in the vernacular. Robert Dixon (1880-1882, 1903-1909) was especially sent to The Gambia for translation work. During his second term of office in the early 20th century he produced a series of pamphlets in Wolof. When he left in 1909 the gospels of Matthew and John, a hymnbook, the Wesleyan catechism and a Primer were available in Wolof and used in the church. The gospel of Mark was ready in manuscript. Meanwhile his colleague Ralph Williams (1895-1902) had produced a Mandinka version of the gospel of Matthew. George Armatage (1903-1920) had revised the gospel of John in Mandinka which had been prepared by Robert MacBrair in the 1830s and in addition to this translated the catechism in Mandinka.¹³⁶ Considering however, that the Methodists had been involved with the Wolof since the 1820s, they started working on Wolof translations rather late. By then many Wolof had already left the Krio dominated Methodist Church.

Also the Roman Catholic use of a dispensary as a missionary method appealed to the Methodists¹³⁷ and plans were made to start a medical mission in Foni among the Jola.¹³⁸ In 1910 the relations between the Roman Catholic and the Methodist Church reached an all time high when the Roman Catholic Church asked the Methodist Technical High School to build the Roman Catholic Church at MacCarthy island, once a Methodist stronghold.¹³⁹

¹³³ Entry Jan. 5 1851, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878. *Bulletin General*, 27 (October 1863), 454. It must be stated though that Badger also made the effort to seek contact with the Roman Catholic Church. He visited the church and catechism classes several times and read some books given to him by the Roman Catholic priest. As an answer he gave them a book to read on 'the errors of popery.' Entry Feb. 25 1851, August 12 1851, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

¹³⁴ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 12.

¹³⁵ Entry April 24 1872, Journal de Sante Marie de Gambie I, 1851-1878.

¹³⁶ Synod 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

¹³⁷ Fieldhouse to WMMS, St. Mary's October 20 1876, Box 297 H2708 mf. 11 and Fieldhouse to WMMS, Feb. 6 1877, Box 296 H2708 mf. 909.

¹³⁸ Pullen to WMMS, Bathurst Sept 12 1881, Box 296 H2709 mf 919.

¹³⁹ Davies to WMMS, Bathurst April 21 1910, Box 795 H2709 mf 1031.

Education

It was in the field of education, that the Methodists felt the Roman Catholic presence and competition most strongly. Education had been the fore of Methodism. The Methodist chairman Benjamin Tregaskis (1865-1874) is known to have exclaimed: 'You may sooner think of closing your chapels than of extending religion without education.'¹⁴⁰ In the Methodist philosophy education had a twofold purpose. First of all education was seen as a means of evangelism. Education was meant to expose non-Christian children at an early age to both Western culture and Christian teaching, thus countering the influences of Islam and Traditional Religions. Education was therefore an instrument of civilisation and so was Christianity. Or to use the words that John Badcock wrote in 1875: 'I am fully persuaded that the Gambia is a fine field of missionary toil and I am also fully persuaded that the educational department of our work is of paramount importance if the numerous and degraded tribes of the heathen are to be evangelised.'¹⁴¹ Secondly, education also aimed at teaching the children of Christian parents. Many of the parents were converts to Christianity and still attached to traditional practices and customs. Education hoped to teach these Christian children to lead 'a more godly life' than their parents. Thus education was meant to be instrumental in strengthening the Christian community and in raising an indigenous Christianity and an indigenous agency.¹⁴²

Right from the start of Methodism in The Gambia, schools were started. Already John Morgan gathered young people for education. His successors the Hawkinses and the Moisters continued his efforts in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Soon there were not just schools in St. Mary's, but education was also extended to the rural areas, to Georgetown and Fatoto. Apart from the day schools, the Methodists also developed the phenomenon of 'the Sunday school'. Throughout the 19th century the Sunday schools served as a regular school, which met on Sundays and provided literacy classes for adults and children who were not able to attend the day schools.¹⁴³ In the 1860s about 300 adults and about 160 children attended the Sunday Schools in Bathurst every Sunday.¹⁴⁴ In 1897 the numbers were still high: there were 577 people who attended the Methodist Sunday school. The Methodist day schools of that year had 465 children enrolled.¹⁴⁵ The figures underline the importance of the Sunday school in spreading education during the second half of the 19th century.

¹⁴⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 100.

¹⁴¹ Badcock to WMMS, St. Mary's Nov. 6 1875, Box 295 H2709 mf 903.

¹⁴² Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's's April 21 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 933; Peet states: "In Africa especially I believe the young people are the hope of the church, as many of the adults have been slaves and have received no education. Then again the Mohammedan influence has been so strong that those among the heathen who have not embraced it as a system have had their prejudices against Christianity; strengthened by constant influence with the followers of the false prophets. With many of the young people it is different; they have trained in our schools so that when they give their heart to God it is only natural to suppose that they will make much better Christians than their parents are likely to be. See also: Quilter to WMMS, St. Mary's Dec. 9 1869 Box 295 H2709 mf. 896.

¹⁴³ Only in the 20th century the Sunday school developed into an institution in which only Christian, read religious, education was given.

¹⁴⁴ Joshua Wilson (catechist) to WMMS, Combo, April 25 1860, Box 286 H2709 mf. 940.

¹⁴⁵ Synod 1898, Box 298 H2708 mf. 24.

According to a government report of 1912/1913 nearly half of all children that were receiving (day school) education, were attending Wesleyan schools.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless the Methodists experienced heavy competition from the Roman Catholic schools. George Adcock complained in 1873 that children were starting to visit Roman Catholic schools because the Methodist principal Robert Peyton had a drinking problem and appeared drunk in the class.¹⁴⁷ Also the Anglicans tried to take advantage of 'the Peyton problem'. When the Colonial Chaplain George Nicol started a school in 1869, he forced all Anglicans to withdraw their children from the Methodist Schools and to enrol them in the (Anglican) government school.¹⁴⁸ But the real competition for the Methodist educational institutions came from the Roman Catholic schools. The disciplined education for girls at the Roman Catholic Convent school appealed to many Protestant parents and many Protestant girls were enrolled. The attraction increased when in the 1880s the Convent school was extended with an industrial department.¹⁴⁹ Especially in the 1880s the Roman Catholic Schools excelled in the Government reports.¹⁵⁰ But less than a decade later, with the driving force behind the Roman Catholic schools, Brother Florentine Matthews, dead and some of the sisters either dead or too ill to teach, the tables were turned and the Methodist schools came first in results.

The Methodist Church also endeavoured to pursue its educational mission in the rural areas. At Georgetown the schools were opened off and on, depending on the personnel available. When more and more of the Liberated Africans, who had formed the core of the Georgetown congregation, moved away from the 1850s onwards, MacCarthy lost its position as the most important rural mission station. The Fatoto school was closed and the Georgetown school was left dwindling.

From the mid 19th century the focus of rural mission work shifted to Combo.¹⁵¹ From the early 1850s onwards there was a school at Cape St. Mary, but it was not regular.¹⁵² Around 1860 a school was opened at Bakkaw Konko where many Liberated Africans and discharged soldiers of the West Indian Regiment lived.¹⁵³ Following the migration of people, the schools and the chapels moved. In the late 1860s people moved from the Cape to Ebo Jeswang and Hamilton. Thus schools and chapels were opened there.¹⁵⁴ Also in the Islamic centre of Sabiji there was a Methodist school for a while, led by a catechist/teacher in the 1880s, but the school had to be closed down due to

¹⁴⁶ Synod 1912, Box 234 H2708 mf. 425.

¹⁴⁷ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's August 11 1873, Box 295 H2709 mf. 899.

¹⁴⁸ Clement to WMMS, St. Mary's August 14 1867, Box 287 H2709 mf. 781.

¹⁴⁹ *Bulletin Général*, 40 (first semester 1867), 750. It is not clear whether the separate school for girls, started by Hannah Kilham and continued by Mrs. Hawkins and Mrs. Moister still existed, but one gets the impression that somewhere in the 1840s Methodist education became co-educational.

¹⁵⁰ *Report on the Catholic Schools Bathurst, St. Mary's, Gambia (1885-1889)* Boite 411.1B file VIII.

¹⁵¹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 134. By 1883 the membership at MacCarthy had dropped to 14, whereas in the 1830s and 1840s it was as large as St. Mary's.

¹⁵² Bridgart to WMMS, St. Mary's October 16 1854, Box 295 H2709 mf. 890.

¹⁵³ Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's April 25 1860, Box 286 H2709 mf. 940.

¹⁵⁴ Synod 1866, Box 297 H2708 mf. 6.

opposition.¹⁵⁵ When from 1900 onwards Ballanghar became an important trading town, the Methodist Church stationed a district agent there who supervised both pastoral and educational work.¹⁵⁶ The work at Barra, started from St. Mary's in the 1830s continued; so did the school.

A new initiative in education was taken when in 1875 the Methodist Church opened the Wesleyan Collegiate Institution, better known under its later name the Boys High School.¹⁵⁷ The educationist James Fieldhouse supervised the school, but its principal was a Gambian, called C.R. Cross.¹⁵⁸ By 1880 the number of students had increased to 14 and the future seemed promising.¹⁵⁹ But by the turn of the century the pupils stopped coming due to lack of qualified personnel and continuity. The High School received a new impulse under the capable leadership of the Sierra Leonean Charles Leopold (1908-1920) and soon the number of students increased. By the time he returned to Sierra Leone, there were more than sixty students on the roll and a teacher training institution had been attached to the High School.¹⁶⁰

Girls' education had also been a topic of discussion. There had been requests for a High School for girls and Fieldhouse had advocated that one should be established. But the Methodist Girls' High School did not start until 1915, when Mrs. Toye, the wife of the British missionary Percival Toye, took the initiative.¹⁶¹ Though Mrs. Toye had to leave The Gambia very soon afterwards for health reasons, the initiative was taken over locally by Gambians women. Mrs. Rebecca Savage and Mrs. Ruth Carrol reopened the school in 1917.¹⁶² From that moment on the Girls High School flourished. Soon the MGHS had more pupils on the roll than the Boys High School.

The Technical High School formed a third Methodist higher educational initiative. At a request of – and with financial support of – the government the Methodist Church opened a Technical School under the guidance of George Armatage.¹⁶³ Mechanics, carpentry, masonry and other skills were taught. The school opened in March 1903 and had 21 students in less than a year after its opening.¹⁶⁴ Though there was a need for skilled workers, the institution proved expensive and did not serve the purpose for which it was established. Most of the students preferred to serve in the government after higher education rather than to do manual labour.¹⁶⁵ Thus, when Armatage left in 1920, the school was closed.

¹⁵⁵ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 17. Sabiji had been annexed into *Tubaboobanko* by the 1880s.

¹⁵⁶ Dixon to WMMS, Bingley August 11 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1024; Synod 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 34.

¹⁵⁷ Dixon to WMMS, Bingley August 11 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1024.

¹⁵⁸ Except the name there are no details known about Cross.

¹⁵⁹ Synod 1880, Box 297 H2708 mf. 14.

¹⁶⁰ Synod 1920, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427; B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 162.

¹⁶¹ Synod 1916 Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

¹⁶² Synod 1919, Box 236 H2709 mf. 427. For an overview of the staffing of the Girls High School see B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 238/239.

¹⁶³ From the new education act of 1882 onwards, schools could receive government grants to aid in the costs of education, provided qualified teachers headed them.

¹⁶⁴ Synod 1904, Box 298 H2708 mf. 26.

¹⁶⁵ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 146.

The Methodists saw education as their key method of evangelisation. However, the results in The Gambia were ambiguous. Many people were educated in Methodist schools but very few people converted because of their Methodist education. In other areas along the West Coast the school proved to be a powerful medium in spreading the gospel. Therefore, critical remarks have been made about the correctness of using education as a tool for evangelisation, calling it influencing and indoctrinating young children. In The Gambia education had no such result whatsoever. Lamin Sanneh comments: 'If conversion to Christianity as a result of missionary education is deemed a failure, then the story of missionary endeavour in the Gambia should be adjudged a complete success, one that perhaps should make the fields of failure across the fence look enviably green.'¹⁶⁶ But given the fact that there were very few converts as a result of education and given the fact that the failure gradually dawned on the missionaries, it might be a clear statement that the Methodists continued spending finances and personnel on the education of Gambian people. Their zeal for education seems to have been even greater than their desire for conversion.

Membership

In education as well as in pastoral work, St. Mary's Island continued to be the concentration area of the Methodist Church. In the 1840s the parishes at Georgetown and St. Mary's had more or less equal numbers. In 1842 of the total of 552 Methodists, 286 lived in St. Mary's and 266 at MacCarthy.¹⁶⁷ But gradually members started to move away from MacCarthy and the membership at Georgetown declined.¹⁶⁸ Membership at MacCarthy reached an all time low in 1883 when there were only 14 members left on the role.¹⁶⁹

In the late 1850s and early 1860s there was a revival in St. Mary's. Under the leadership of the missionaries Richard Cooper, James Peet and Arthur Southern, people were 'groaning on the floor in extreme mental agony' after which they found 'peace with God'.¹⁷⁰ The membership shot up. In 1858 there were 837 full members and another 214 on trial¹⁷¹ whereas in 1865 the membership was nearing the number of 1200.¹⁷² The numbers increased despite many 'backsliders' and a high death rate.¹⁷³

The Methodist Church had a very strict policy as to who was counted as a member. People, who did not attend the services or fellowships regularly and were not leading a 'Christian' life, were removed from the membership list.¹⁷⁴ Especially

¹⁶⁶ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 145.

¹⁶⁷ Synod 1842, Box 297 H2708 mf. 1. Compare also the number of students in the school: 207 in St. Mary's and 119 at MacCarthy in 1843. Synod 1843, Box 297 H2708 mf. 1.

¹⁶⁸ In 1852 there were 241 members at MacCarthy against 485 in St. Mary's. Synod 1852, Box 297 H2708 mf 3. There were also 44 members in Barra.

¹⁶⁹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 134.

¹⁷⁰ Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's April 21 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 933.

¹⁷¹ Synod 1858, Box 297 H2708 mf. 4.

¹⁷² Synod 1866, Box 297 H2708 mf. 6. There were 1026 full members and 134 on trial

¹⁷³ In 1854 for example, the membership in St. Mary's seemed to be stable on 545, but 94 members were lost due to backsliding and death and another 101 were new members. Synod 1854, Box 297 H2708 mf. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Only members could receive a church burial. Thus membership was coveted in the Gambian society.

Benjamin Tregaskis was renown for his 'weeding' of membership. During his time of service a 'crime book' was kept which gave reasons why members were expelled. These could vary from adultery, fornication, fighting and drunkenness to 'gone to the Colonial Church' or 'gone to the Catholics'.¹⁷⁵ Thus membership according to the Methodist perception could greatly vary from the impression of others. According to the Synod of 1871 there was a total membership of 705,¹⁷⁶ whereas the Government statistics of that same year indicated that 2395 people were Methodist.¹⁷⁷ The idea of Methodism to restrict membership to the elected few, was an attempt to raise a pure and witnessing community. Membership was to be coveted and people were to strive to keep their family life pure in order to receive the privilege of membership. On the one hand this enhanced Christian family life and emphasised Christian ethics. It underlined the Christian 'otherness' and the need for continuous 'conversion' in all aspects of life. Thus, by restricting membership to those who lived a Christian life, an attempt was made to protect the fragile and newly founded Christian communities from the non-Christian influences surrounding them. On the other hand, the membership was also kept restricted so that the life of the community would serve as a testimony to the Christian faith. The pureness of the Methodist community was meant to act as a witness to attract others to the Christian faith. 'By their deed, you shall know them'. But this last aspect proved a continuous struggle. William Maude complained in 1906: 'It is to be feared that the general type of Christianity exhibited is not of a kind to awaken either enthusiasm or desire in the heathen and Mohammedan world around.'¹⁷⁸ And of course another round of 'weeding' followed. Thus membership went up and down over the years. Sometimes due to a revival it was high; at other times, after a period of strict discipline the membership slumped. Around 1900 it reached the low point of 458 members only,¹⁷⁹ Ten years later the society flourished again with 814 members, 24 lay preachers, 47 class leaders and 46 Sunday school leaders.¹⁸⁰

Lay leadership

Lay participation had always been important in the Methodist Church. Lay people were trained as local preachers, class leaders and Sunday school teachers.¹⁸¹ The importance of lay leadership was recognised when in 1885 African lay representatives were invited to the District Synod meeting.¹⁸² But even before that event, the African leadership had spoken out on various occasions. Several letters of the Bathurst Leaders' Meeting to the Missionary Committee exist. In 1871 the Leaders' Meeting signed a petition to protest

¹⁷⁵ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 112.

¹⁷⁶ Synod 1871, Box 297 H2708 mf.9.

¹⁷⁷ Government statistics on religion 1871, Box 295 H2709 mf. 897.

¹⁷⁸ Maude to WMMS, Freetown Jan. 24 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1023.

¹⁷⁹ Synod 1902, Box 298 H2708 mf. 25.

¹⁸⁰ Synod 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

¹⁸¹ A local preacher is a lay person with a training and permit to lead worship and preach. A class leader in the Methodist system is someone who leads a class or fellowship. Membership in the Methodist Church is being a member of a class, rather than subscribing to a congregation. Local preachers and class leaders, together with circuit stewards form the quarterly leaders meeting in which the policy of a certain society or congregation is laid out.

¹⁸² Synod 1885, Box 298 H2708 mf. 18.

against the intention of the British government to hand The Gambia over to France.¹⁸³ In 1874 the leaders complained about problems with one of the missionaries George Adcock, who according to the letter 'does not like Akus.'¹⁸⁴ Similar letters had been sent in the 1840s to complain about the behaviour of Matthew Godman and Benjamin Chapman. Also on later occasions the leaders proved vocal. In the Joiner case they chose to support the Gambian minister John Joiner over and against the decision of the Chairman of the District W.R. Cockill and sent letters to the Missionary Committee to protest against his suspension.¹⁸⁵ When the Missionary Committee proposed to reverse the decision that made The Gambia a separate district, they again spoke out.

The joint district of Sierra Leone and The Gambia with the chairman of the district residing in Freetown proved to be a continuous handicap for The Gambia. Very few chairmen were able to visit The Gambia regularly, Benjamin Tregaskis forming the exception. Though dictatorial, he seemed to have had the gift to visit The Gambia in times of crisis.¹⁸⁶ Most of the chairmen just attended the district synods for a few days and then left again. This arrangement of a joint district meant that no action could be taken by anyone in The Gambia. Only the chairman in Freetown, who was most of the time only vaguely aware of what was going on in The Gambia or the Missionary Committee in London could give a definite 'go ahead' in matters of finance and policy. This often meant delays in decisions and missed opportunities. Even Tregaskis, who visited The Gambia regularly and had travelled up country on certain occasions, complained about the arrangement. Henry Quilter wrote to the Missionary Committee in 1872: 'Tregaskis has asked to be relieved of the Methodist District of The Gambia, as 'he will not have responsibility where he cannot have control.'¹⁸⁷

The unhappy marriage of the Gambia-Sierra Leone districts came to an end in 1916, when for the first time in its history the Gambia mission field became a district in its own right. As a sign the district received a separate letter from the Missionary Committee for its annual Synod.¹⁸⁸ An attempt to reverse the decision was made in 1922 but the Synod strongly objected.

This Pastoral Session of the Synod desires to express its opinion of the extremely undesirability of this District organically united to Sierra Leone District, or that there should be any fusion of their separate accounts. We feel that this would be a retrograde step, unacceptable to our people and likely to hinder the future development and extension of our work here.¹⁸⁹

Though the Missionary Committee respected the statement of the Gambian Synod, they insisted that for the meantime the chairman of the Sierra Leone district acted as a mentor to the staff in The Gambia and supervised the work. In practice however,

¹⁸³ Synod 1871, Box 297 H2708 mf. 9.

¹⁸⁴ Leaders of the Sunday school to the President of the Wesleyan Conference, Bathurst May 6 1874, Box 296 H2709 mf. 913.

¹⁸⁵ See below paragraph 7.5.

¹⁸⁶ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 116.

¹⁸⁷ Quilter to WMMS, Feb. 18 1872, Box 295 H2709 mf. 897.

¹⁸⁸ Synod 1916, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

¹⁸⁹ Synod 1922, Box 236 H2709 mf. 428.

accounts were kept separately and the decisions could be taken at the Gambian level. This separation from Sierra Leone also meant that the district was financially on its own. With WMMS under financial strains for several years already and the World War I going on it meant meagre years for The Gambia.¹⁹⁰ But the child had grown up and was to care for itself.

Extension work

During the period under discussion, extension work took place from the two centres of Methodism in The Gambia: St Mary and MacCarthy Island. Barra, where many retired soldiers and Liberated Africans lived, had always been an out-station of St. Mary's. In the 1850s these soldiers and families of Liberated Africans began to move to Combo. The first settlements were at Cape St. Mary's. In 1852 a small chapel was built, soon followed by a small bush school.¹⁹¹ In 1854 the school had to be closed again, because none of the surrounding Mandinka proved interested in Western education and most of the Methodist members had migrated to Jeswang and Bakkaw Konko.¹⁹²

There were now several Methodist communities in Combo. Therefore the Synod of 1854 emphasised that there was a need for a minister in Combo to supervise the work.¹⁹³ The realisation of this plan had to wait another twenty years. Meanwhile the members kept on moving. In 1860 there were small Methodist communities in New Town, Cape St. Mary, Bakkaw Konko and Jeswang,¹⁹⁴ each of which had a chapel of its own, as Arthur Southern could proudly report in 1864.¹⁹⁵ He and his Sierra Leonean colleague James Hero travelled to Combo each Sunday to preach. Though the Methodists occasionally met with opposition – ensuing from the Soninke-Marabout wars the chapels at Sabiji, Jeswang and Newcastle (grass huts) were burnt down by 'Marabouts' in 1851¹⁹⁶ – in general things were flourishing. The Synod of 1871 listed a total of 108 members in seven different outstations in Combo.¹⁹⁷ None of these congregations was very big – usually the villages consisted of a few families only – but in all these places services were held and the members were visited regularly. Occasionally longer exploration tours were undertaken from St. Mary's. In 1868 Hero visited Brufut, a fishing village on the Atlantic coast to see what the possibilities for evangelism were.¹⁹⁸ William T. Cole senior visited Christians in Carabane in the Casamance in the 1889s, where he, according to his own statement, baptised many.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁰ Synod 1916, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

¹⁹¹ Meadows to WMMS, St. Mary's May 1 1852, Box 295 H2709 mf. 886.

¹⁹² Bridgart to WMMS, St. Mary's Oct. 16 1854, Box 295 H2709 mf. 890.

¹⁹³ Synod 1854, Box 297 H2708 mf 3.

¹⁹⁴ Synod 1860, Box 297 H2708 mf. 6.

¹⁹⁵ Southern to WMMS, June 18 1864, Box 287 H2709 mf. 960.

¹⁹⁶ Meadows to WMMS, Aug. 7 1855, Box 295 H2709 mf. 891.

¹⁹⁷ Synod 1871, Box 297 H2708 mf. 9. The villages were Cape St. Mary's (15), Bakkaw Konko (27 and 6 on trial) Jeswang (11), Ebou Jeswang (13) Moro Cunda (14) Cotoo (13) and Daranka near Brikama (7 and 2 on trial).

¹⁹⁸ Synod 1868, Box 287 H2708 mf. 7.

¹⁹⁹ Cole to Osborn, St. Mary's May 31 1887, Box 288 H2709 mf. 988. For W.T. Cole senior see paragraph 7.6. NB. Carabane had been an outstation of the Catholic Church in The Gambia. Later, after 1889, due to the demarcation of the borders from 1889 onwards,

But these were incidental visits rather than a structured evangelism outreach. In 1877 the Combo Methodist churches received a minister of their own in the person of John Delmar Terry, a candidate to the ministry. He was based at Cape St. Mary and from there travelled to the different villages.²⁰⁰

In the 1870s and 1880s groups of Jola living near Albreda were evangelised. The Jola, still traditional believers, were victims of the continuous Soninke-Marabout wars. Many had fled the south bank and settled in Abreda.²⁰¹ The work among the Jola seemed promising. In 1884 William Pullen reported to the Missionary Committee that they were preparing a group of them for baptism.²⁰² Though several of the Jola were baptised in 1887, it seems that they moved away from Albreda after the pacification of the region, possibly to the Casamance.²⁰³ After that the Methodist Church lost touch with them. The encounter with the Jola in Albreda had opened the eyes of the Synod to the fact that evangelism among the Jola seemed promising. In 1881 a plan of evangelising the Jola of Foni was developed. Pullen wrote: 'Of the Jolah mission I need not speak. The king and his people (the largest tribe in the river) have asked me several times to go and open a mission in their country and as they speak Mandingo (a language which I can use) it would not be difficult to work there.'²⁰⁴ But the awaited 'go-ahead' never came, the reason being the usual: there were no funds and no personnel for extension of the work. It proved a lost opportunity, because by 1896 Ralph Williams reported that the 'Jolahs are gradually being brought under the influence of Muhammadanism (they do not like the Catholics because of their worship of images).'²⁰⁵ Another proposal to work among the Jola, written in 1910, was rejected for the same reasons: no funds.²⁰⁶ The Synod of 1917 must have had – amongst others – the work among the Jola in mind when it wrote: 'We are reaping the fruit of previous hesitation to staff this district adequately; for when the people were comparatively easy of access, a timid policy was pursued by us and Islam swept all before it.'²⁰⁷

MacCarthy Island was the other centre of Methodist outreach. MacCarthy had played a prominent role in the first half of the 19th century as a centre for colonial administration and trade, but from the 1850s onwards its importance decreased. Gradually people, among whom the Liberated Africans, began to move away. Because all the Methodist work had been focussed on the Liberated Africans and the Fula and Mandinka had resisted all attempts to be converted, a crisis threatened.²⁰⁸ What to do with the church at MacCarthy? Possibly the stationing of the Gambian minister York Clement at MacCarthy from 1866 until 1874 was a renewed and

Carabane became part of the French Protectorate of Senegal and British missionaries were no longer welcome.

²⁰⁰ Terry to WMMS, Cape St. Mary's Aug. 20 1877, Box 296 H2709 mf 909.

²⁰¹ Synod 1877, Box 297 H2708 mf. 12.

²⁰² Pullen to WMMS, St. Mary's (no date) 1884, Box 296 H2709 mf 921.

²⁰³ Cole to Osborn, St. Mary's May 31 1887, Box 288 H2709 mf. 988.

²⁰⁴ Pullen to WMMS, St. Mary's Sept. 12 1881, Box 296 H2709 mf. 919.

²⁰⁵ Williams to WMMS, Bathurst January 16 1896, Box 288 H2709 mf. 997.

²⁰⁶ Davies to WMMS, Bathurst April 21 1910, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1031.

²⁰⁷ Synod 1917, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

²⁰⁸ Bridgart to WMMS, St. Mary's April 20 1855, Box 295 H2709 mf. 891.

vigorous attempt to evangelise the area.²⁰⁹ Clement organised open air preaching in the villages surrounding MacCarthy, such as Nyabantang,²¹⁰ Seca, Dormah, Sappo, Yarbutenda, Cantilicunda, Medina and Tankuar.²¹¹ The Synod of 1877 decided to station catechists in all these villages to follow up the work. A plan to reorganise the MacCarthy mission and have the new mission headquarters in Medina at the South Bank fell through. Before the reorganisation could take shape, Medina was destroyed in the course of events in the Soninke-Marabout wars, which destabilised the region for the larger part of the late 19th century.²¹² A combination of the unrest caused by the Soninke-Marabout wars, the lack of response to the gospel and a lack of funds eventually caused all these stations to be closed down one after another and the catechists were recalled to Bathurst. By the year 1906 there was nothing left of extension work of the MacCarthy mission and the Methodist Church was reduced to the small community of Methodists on the island itself.²¹³

Not just ministers, district agents and catechists did evangelistic work. Also traders, who lived part of the year in the trading towns along the river, were involved in the work. In 1865 Vetrano Tyas reported that Methodist traders, while up river, assembled people and led worship.²¹⁴ Small mud chapels were built to serve as a place of worship. Such trading chapels appeared in Cowar,²¹⁵ at Ballanghar²¹⁶ and in Basse.²¹⁷ The main problem with these Christian trading congregations was that trading was seasonal. Trade was only done during the dry season. No attempts seemed to have been made by these trading communities to reach out to the villages. The communities at Ballanghar, Kaur and Basse consisted of traders and their families only. Though catechists were often stationed at the trading towns and surrounding villages were visited, Christianity was still perceived as the religion of the 'traders' and 'foreigners'.²¹⁸ Hence, when the trade moved away from a certain village, as was the case with Ballanghar in the 1920s, the Christian community moved away as well and left no trace of having ever been there.²¹⁹ The missionary Tudno Davies analysed the situation, stating that 'Akoos (English speaking natives) do not make good missionaries. There is too much dignity about them and they think themselves very superior to other tribes and approach them as such.'²²⁰

In evaluation one can say that there were two main factors obstructing the many attempts, which were made to extend Methodism beyond the Krio community. First of

²⁰⁹ For more details about York Clement and his work see paragraph 7.5.

²¹⁰ Synod 1868, Box 297 H2708 mf. 7.

²¹¹ Synod 1877, Box 297 H2708 mf. 12.

²¹² Adcock to WMMS, MacCarthy June 2 1877, Box 296 H2709 mf. 909.

²¹³ Dixon to WMMS, Bingley Aug. 11 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1024.

²¹⁴ Tyas to WMMS, St. Mary's June 26 1865, Box 287 H2709 mf. 966.

²¹⁵ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 18.

²¹⁶ Dixon to WMMS, March 1909, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1029.

²¹⁷ Synod 1929/1930, Box 240 H2708 mf. 430.

²¹⁸ The Synod of 1914 reported that from MacCarthy services were held at Fatoto and Basse and from Ballanghar visits were made to Kuntaur, Wassau and Nyanimar, Synod 1914, Box. 234 H2708 mf. 425.

²¹⁹ Synod 1924, Box 238 H2708 mf. 428.

²²⁰ Davies to WMMS, Bathurst Oct. 28 1910, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1032.

all, there was an external factor. The ongoing Soninke-Marabout wars made travel and settlement in the villages in the rural areas very difficult and quite dangerous; especially for Christian missionaries associated with the colonial government. There was a continuous threat of warfare and many people were constantly on the move, fleeing from one village to another. The upheaval and political instability caused by the Soninke-Marabout wars was not a conducive atmosphere for long-term mission work. Secondly, there was an internal factor. The Methodists struggled with a continuous lack of funds and personnel. The high mortality rate due to tropical illnesses and recurrent epidemics put a strain on the personnel. Not only British missionaries succumbed to illnesses. Of the nine African ministers/ministerial candidates who offered themselves for the ministry in The Gambia in the second half of the 19th century, four died an early death.²²¹ Funds were scarce and from the 1880s onwards any new work undertaken by the Gambian Methodist Church was to be paid locally. The Synod of 1898 complained that they had not received grants for many years now.²²² Even the resident missionary was paid from the funds for the native agency.²²³ Thus, it was not only impossible to undertake new work, but even impossible to sustain the existing work. Hence one outstation after another was closed. A combination of these factors led to the fact that Methodism remained captured at the coast during the period under discussion and that the real progress was made not in extension work but in education.

Methodism and Islam

The Methodist attitude towards Islam was characterised by ambivalence. Quite early on and with growing clarity over the years, the Methodists realised that Islam formed the main obstacle for the furtherance of the gospel in The Gambia. Dixon wrote in 1906:

This [Islam] is the one great barrier to progress against which successive missionaries have striven in vain (...) The Gambia for years to come will be a hard up-hill mission. It is a struggle between the crescent and the cross.²²⁴

The missionaries observed with growing anxiety that while Christianity made little headway, Islam seemed to win the vast majority of the people.²²⁵ This seemed to confirm the classical Muslim reply that. 'Jesus Christ is white man's God and Mahomet Black man's God.'²²⁶ Also polygamy, 'this woman question', proved to be an obstacle to conversion to Christianity.²²⁷

The Methodist missionaries differed considerably in their evaluation of Islam. This had often more to do with their own experiences than with a theological standpoint. John Bridgart and George Meadows were in the Gambia during the first

²²¹ See paragraph 7.5.

²²² Synod 1898 Box 298 H2708 mf. 24.

²²³ Maude to WMMS, Freetown March 28 1898, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1000.

²²⁴ Dixon to WMMS, Bingley Aug. 11 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1024

²²⁵ Williams to WMMS, Bathurst Jan 16 1896, Box 288 H2709 mf. 997; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 125/126.

²²⁶ Pullen to WMMS, St. Mary's March 12 1882, Box 296 H2709 mf. 920.

²²⁷ Maude on Mohammedanism, Box 295 H2709 mf. 1031 (date: approximately 1910).

clashes with *jihadist* Fode Kabba. They saw some of the Methodist chapels burnt²²⁸ and regarded Islam as very aggressive. William Pullen who in 1882 had the Arabic tracts that he distributed thrown back at him, also considered Islam to be an aggressive religion.²²⁹ William Maude, who worked in The Gambia at the turn of the century, when the Soninke-Marabout wars had subsided, saw Islam as superficial and little more than paganism.²³⁰ All of them were convinced that Muslims were indoctrinated against Christianity.²³¹ This underscored the importance of education. Through the schools young children – including Muslim children – could be exposed to Christian teachings when they were still impressionable.²³² The missionaries also realised that Islam offered a worldview to people that could compete with Christianity, which meant that Muslims were not as open to the gospel as traditionalists. Fieldhouse stated in 1876: ‘I add that a Moslem is much more difficult to deal with than a Pagan, that a mind frequently preoccupied with specious errors will not so soon embrace the truth as a mind unfettered by false teachings.’²³³ Conversion stories of Muslims were therefore related extensively and served as evidence that it was possible to break through the barrier of Islam.²³⁴ But the converts were scarce and neither education nor preaching or diakonia

²²⁸ ‘It is well for the native Christians that we are under the protection of the British government. If it were not so I doubt (humanly speaking) whether Christianity would long be permitted to exist here.’ ‘Mohammedanism in a more bigoted and cruel form than it has hitherto shown, appears to be fast gaining the ascendancy in this part of Africa so far as I can learn.’ Bridgart to WMMS, St. Mary’s, Aug 22 1855, Box 295 H2709 mf. 89 and Meadows to WMMS, St. Mary’s August. 7 1855, Box 295 H2709 mf. 891.

²²⁹ Pullen to WMMS, Bathurst March 12 1882, Box 296 H2709 mf. 920.

²³⁰ ‘The Mohammedanism of The Gambia is of a very low type and may better be described as paganism, witchcraft and greegreeism.’ Maude to WMMS, St. Mary’s Jan. 31 1899, Box 288 H209 mf. 1001.

²³¹ Peet to WMMS April 21 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 933.

²³² When the government opened a Muslim primary school in 1903, the missionaries feared that their primary means of reaching out to Muslims, education, would disappear. But the contrary was the case: over the years, more and more Muslim children joined the Christian schools. See also P.B.Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 125.

²³³ Fieldhouse to WMMS, October 20 1876, Box 295 H2709 mf 904.

²³⁴ See for example Cooper to WMMS, St. Mary’s April 20 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 933. Cooper tells the following story about the conversion of a Wolof Muslim *marabout*: ‘He is a Jaloof and received his early education training in our day school to which he often refers with feelings of grateful remembrance. After leaving school he was sent by his parents to the Maraboos (priests) to be prepared by them for entering the Mohammedan priesthood. His principle studies consisted of Arabic, Medicine and shall I say sorcery or the making and dispensing of charms to which the Maraboos profess ability to settle all palavers, protect them from all evils, even death itself and secure constant prosperity here and final salvation to all those who believe their profession. (...) His love of Arabic led him to apply to us about 2 years since, for the loan of an Arabic Bible. I well remember him calling upon Mr. Gurney during my first months residence and the joy manifested in being allowed to sit down in a corner and read the word of God for an hour or two. After spending some time in copying portions of the gracious truth, he would leave. On Br. Gurney’s departure to Lagos, the Bible was made a present to him. After that I lost sight of our Maraboo friend, until last Christmas when he called upon me in much distress. The cause was that while he had been sojourning on the mainland and was crossing a river, the canoe had upset and his treasure was lost. He begged me to supply him with another. I entered into conversation with him by means of an interpreter (my servant) for tho’ he understands a little English, he

changed the Muslim attitude towards evangelism. Despite all this evidence the Methodists continued to hope for a turn of events. James Peet wrote in 1860:

The day will come (that is certain) when thousands of Mohammedans who live near this place will be brought to Christ and instead of mosques of the false prophet being seen, the temples of Jehovah shall rise in Holy Grandeur to be a blessing to Africa.²³⁵

Around the turn of the century the Roman Catholics had given up their attempts to convert Muslims.²³⁶ But the Methodists were still pressing on. The Synod of 1917 saw new possibilities in Sukuta, 'a formidable Muhammedan Centre long closed to us is now open and waiting for our occupation.' But though an 'aggressive campaign' was

cannot fluently converse in it. In answer to my questions he confessed his belief in Jesus Christ, being the Son of God and His Saviour and the son of man, in His human nature, that He was promised as the Saviour when Adam sinned quoting Gen. 3:15. He did not believe Christ died, for God could not die. On my reminding him of what he had stated concerning the human and divine nature of Christ and opening the Scripture on this subject, he allowed that His body died and His soul was received by God the Father. Upon my asking if he believed the Lord Jesus died for his sins, he replied: 'No, He did not die for all, only for those who believe in Him and I do not believe. I am a Maraboo.' I then directed his attention to several passages, proving the blessed extend of the atonement, which he read and interpreted correctly, saying at the close with evident delight: 'O! Jesus Christ is mighty.' I next enquired how he hoped to be saved if he did not believe in the Son of God as his Saviour. 'O,' he replied, 'The Bible says all religions are good, Mohammedanism as well as Christianity', but he could not tell me where to find this statement. Desirous of bringing him to decision, I found him Gal. 1:8v. 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you – let him be accursed.' He read it slowly and thoughtfully, paused, appeared perplexed, a shade came over his intelligent countenance, his bright eyes filled with tears as he looked at me and said in English "Sir, I do believe in Jesus." Then resuming his own tongue, further confessed: 'I would renounce Mahomed, only by doing so, I should lose caste, my friends would become my bitter enemies. I should lose all my earthly all and die of want.' I endeavoured to comfort and assure him, with the loving words of Jesus and asked him to read the 3rd chapter of John. And slowly and thoughtfully and prayerfully he promised to do so and departed. On Monday (...) he called again and then professed to have found the Messiah. Placing his hand on his forehead, he said: 'I believe in Him, here' and then placing it on his heart, joyfully exclaimed 'I feel him here'. He further confessed to me, that he had in his heart renounced Mahommedanism and was engaged, as far as he dared, in preaching against it and proving from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ. On this account, he is much persecuted; particularly the Maraboos and his own family who declare that he has disgraced himself and them – that the white minister and his Koran have turned his head and he madly is aiding us in turning the work upside down. He has now only one wife and has very willingly given me his greegrees, significant facts. He called on us again this morning, professing anew his hearty belief in the truths of Christianity; is much perplexed what to do further. In case of making a decided stand for Christ, he will lose his livelihood. Having been trained a Maraboo, he understands none of the industrial arts. He sought my advice and anxiously enquired if the Mission could employ him in any way. He hates Mahommedanism and wishes to live and die preaching Christ. Touching Mission employ, I could say nothing, but gave him the best advice I could: I shall endeavour to watch over this precious soul, as one that must give account, and trust it may please the Lord of Hosts, to qualify and send him forth.'

²³⁵ Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's January 25 1860, Box 286 H2709 mf 938.

²³⁶ Davies to WMMS, Bathurst April 21 1910, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1031.

held and the Synod was convinced that 'the problem of Islam will be attacked with resolution and energy', the results were the same as ever: virtually nil.²³⁷

The Methodists did very little theological reflection on the issue of Islam. Maude's *Memorandum on Mohammedanism*, written around 1910, formed an exception. Some relevant parts need to be cited here:

No organised effort has even been made to get at the Mohammedanism of West Africa. Christian workers have been divided between those who seem to think (and sometimes openly declare) that the Mohammedan cannot be won for Christ, those who believe he can, but don't know how, and those, perhaps the greater number who have thought nothing about it. For myself I can come to no other conclusion than that, despite all our resolutions and regrets, unless something very remarkable takes place, something there is no sign of, West Africa, outside the present spheres of Christian influence, will be Mohammedan, after a fashion and that before very long... (...) It is not in this way (i.e. by force) Mohammedanism is spreading in West Africa today, but by the more peaceful methods of the missionary teacher and settler. The Mohammedan teacher is everywhere. He needs no society behind him, no funds to sustain him. He goes forth, as the first Christians went, with his staff and his wallet, and wherever he goes, he is at home. He is everywhere welcomed – though not perhaps more freely than the Christian teacher would be. Both have the prestige of being Book Men and God Men, and as such have a ready acceptance, wherever they go. (...) The Christian teacher goes as a stranger, amongst foreigners, and must be supported from without. It is just here that the Mohammedan scores. From the very first he has no difficulty in making a living. The people (the chiefs in particular) will pay for their sons, being taught by the Arabic teacher. (...) Besides which the Mohammedan teacher can make gain of the fears and superstitions of the people and does. He blesses their crops, and gets his share; he blesses their houses; he provides them with sacred charms to be hung at their doors and worn about their persons, and 'he don't do anything for nothing'. The Christian teacher is debarred from these methods of livelihood and aggrandisement; consequently he must be kept, or starve. Moreover he makes heavier demands on the people in other ways. The pagan may become a Mohammedan and it means only the adoption of certain forms and hours of prayer, the regular fast and abstinence from intoxicants. His other social customs, and all his inherited practices, are left untouched. (...) The greatest barrier to the acceptance of Christianity wherever we have gone amongst people of the Protectorate has been this woman question. (...)

It seems to me as if the first thing to be done, if we are to win these Mohammedan people to Christ, whom we love and whom we would serve, is to *make ourselves neighbourly*. We must show that, differences notwithstanding, we are their friends. We must gain their confidence, ministering to their bodily needs, familiarising them with Christian ideas, getting the children, humbling ourselves, after the manner of our Master, and making ourselves of them as far as we can innocently and healthily can.²³⁸

There are two striking things in Maude's *Memorandum*. First of all, Maude shows that he was aware that evangelism amongst Muslims demanded a different approach than evangelism amongst adherents of African traditional religions. Maude's report demonstrates that for the first time amongst Methodists in The Gambia, there is an awareness that the recipient of the message is of key importance in choosing the method of witness. Maude therefore called for a thorough reflection on what it meant to

²³⁷ Synod 1917, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426. Letter to Mission Committee.

²³⁸ Maude on Mohammedanism, Box 295 H2709 mf. 1031 (date: approximately 1910).

witness to Muslims. His own view on 'being neighbourly' sounds uncommonly modern. In his opinion witness to Muslims took place in day to day relations in which trust, service and friendship played a central role. Also in other writings Maude stressed that verbal witness was only one aspect of evangelism. In 1906 he had already pointed to the importance of witness in life and deeds. He stated: 'It is to be feared that the general type of Christianity exhibited [in Bathurst] is not of a kind to awaken either enthusiasm or desire in the heathen and Mohammedan world around.'²³⁹ Thus Maude can be seen as the forerunner of a new type of approach to Islam, in which the concepts of presence and service played a key role.

Secondly, Maude in his *Memorandum* pointed to the differences between Muslim and Christian witness. He described how the Muslim Quranic teacher contextualised his habits and services whereas the Christian catechist continued to be a stranger amongst the people he witnessed to. Much has been said about the need for inculturation of both the message of the gospel and the messengers of the gospel. Cardinal Lavigerie, founder of the White Fathers, insisted that his missionaries in food, life, language and habits became one with the people they were working among. To Lavigerie this was a prerequisite before any witness was to take place.²⁴⁰ Also Charles de Foucauld in his later years realised the importance of the need to submerge into the Tuareg culture. Listening to the people and endeavouring to understand them, was precondition before any credible witness could take place.²⁴¹ It seems that especially for a Christian community in a minority situation such as The Gambia, these pin-pointers of contextualising the gospel and establishing an indigenous Christianity are essential prerequisites for a credible witness.

7.5 The Methodist Church and the indigenous ministry

General remarks

In the 1870s the Protestant missionary strategists Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn developed the so-called 'three-self formula' of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches.²⁴² This theory emphasised the need for a competent indigenous ministry, which could lead the mission churches towards independence. It is possible, though not proven, that this theory influenced the Methodist missionaries working in The Gambia. In the 1880s there was a remarkably large number of ministerial candidates: 10 people were accepted as candidates for the ministry. They were known as 'Pullen's batch' because William Pullen was superintendent of the Gambian Methodist Church at the time of their acceptance. In the 1910s two more people offered for the ministry: William T. Cole Junior and Samuel Maclean. But these men were not the first ministerial candidates in the Gambian Methodist Church. As early as 1860 a Gambian catechist and local preacher, called York Clement offered for the ministry. He

²³⁹ Maude to WMMS, Freetown, Jan 24 1906, Box 795 H2709 mf. 1023.

²⁴⁰ J.M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes: Islam and Christianity in history*, Vol. 1, 313.

²⁴¹ J.J. Antier, *Charles de Foucauld: Charles of Jesus*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1997, 266.

²⁴² J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary missiology: an introduction*, 52, 64ff.

was sent for further training to Sierra Leone and became the first ordained Gambian Methodist minister. The stories of all these men will be discussed in this paragraph. The order will be chronological.

The Methodist missionaries had right from the start emphasised the need of nurturing and training indigenous agents, such as catechists, teachers and assistant missionaries. Most of these men were liberated slaves, who originated from Gorée or St. Louis. In the second half of the 19th century the Methodists also strived for the establishment of an indigenous ministry. Partly driven by the high mortality rate amongst the missionaries, but partly also by ideological reasons, the British missionaries worked towards the formation of a self-supporting indigenous clergy who could take over the work. But The Gambia had no indigenous ministers and the first generation of assistant missionaries had been retired. Therefore assistance was sought from Sierra Leone. In the 1850s and 1860s a series of Sierra Leonean ministers came to help out in The Gambia. Ministers like Joseph May (1850-1854), Charles Knight (1854-1858), Philip Wilson (1858-1860) and James Hero (1861-1869) can be named as examples. They often worked in the 'difficult' stations like Georgetown where many of the 'white' missionaries had died. When Georgetown declined in importance, the Sierra Leonean ministers were transferred to the educational sector. Men like Moses Randall (1885-1888) and Charles Leopold (1908-1920) are examples of this. Some Sierra Leoneans like Randall and Festus Johnson (1891-1902) came to The Gambia as catechists and teachers and offered for the ministry while serving in The Gambia.

Several factors caused this influx of Sierra Leonean workers. First of all, throughout the 19th century Sierra Leone and The Gambia formed a joint district. Thus the chairman of the district could easily station ministers from Sierra Leone in The Gambia and vice versa. Secondly, education, including theological education, was much better organised in Sierra Leone than in The Gambia. Fourah Bay College was opened as early as 1827.²⁴³ Thus Sierra Leone Methodist Church was able to offer qualified personnel. Thirdly, the missionaries assumed that the Sierra Leoneans would easily fit into the Gambian society, because there were intimate family ties between the Sierra Leonean and Gambian Krio community.²⁴⁴ Because of this involvement of Sierra Leoneans in the church in The Gambia and in other areas along the West Coast, Lamin Sanneh described the Sierra Leoneans as the real missionaries of West Africa.²⁴⁵ In the 1880s the chairman of the district Cockill envisaged a total indigenisation of the ministry in The Gambia. He recommended that all Europeans were to withdraw from The Gambia entirely and leave the work to African – read Sierra Leonean and Gambian – clergy.²⁴⁶ Though this recommendation was not brought into practice, it was an

²⁴³ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the religious impact*, 135.

²⁴⁴ This assumption of the missionaries was not correct. Though there were close family ties between Krio in The Gambia and Sierra Leone and though there was a constant migration between the countries, the Gambian Krio community still considered the Sierra Leonean ministers as 'foreigners' who were occupying positions that should be filled by Gambians.

²⁴⁵ L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the religious impact*, 144.

²⁴⁶ Synod 1890, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22. Cockill made this comment when a case of discipline that had arisen against one of the Gambian ministers, J.S. Joiner. Joiner was accused of embezzlement of funds. Cockill appointed a team of Sierra Leonean ministers to investigate the matter. The reason for this was that he thought that fellow Africans could give a sounder

indication that Cockill was convinced that Africans were the best to manage African affairs and an African Church.

York Clement

According to the records York Clement was the first Gambian Methodist minister. Not many biographical details of Clement are known. He was born around 1833 or 1834, possibly as a son to a family of redeemed Wolof slaves. He was a Wolof and a Christian and there are no indications that he was a Roman Catholic or Muslim before he became a Methodist. He was married, but there are no further details about Mrs. Clement.²⁴⁷ She probably did not work for the mission, as some of the wives of the first generation assistant missionaries did.

Clement seems to have worked as a local preacher and a catechist for the Methodist Church for a while, before he was sent to Sierra Leone for further training. The date when he left for Sierra Leone is not clear. James Peet, who worked in The Gambia from 1859-1861 mentions in one of his letters, written in 1860, that a young man was sent to King Tom's in Freetown to be trained as a teacher and assistant minister.²⁴⁸ Possibly the person referred to, was Clement, because we know that he was in Sierra Leone 1862. In that year the Sierra Leone district recommended him as an assistant missionary on trial²⁴⁹, but conference rejected the proposal. The reasons for the rejection are not known. The then chairman William West (1861-1865) spoke highly of him and possibly he was accepted as a probationer the year afterwards.²⁵⁰ In December 1862 the missionary Robert Daw requested that Clement be sent back to The Gambia.²⁵¹ Whether Clement came back to The Gambia in 1863 or 1864 is not clear, but by June 1864 he was there.²⁵² Most of his ministry Clement served in the rural areas. For a while he worked in Barra and surroundings on the north bank. The majority

and more appropriate assessment of the situation than a European, since Europeans were not as familiar with African society and customs as Africans were.

²⁴⁷ There are two indications that Clement was married. First of all there is a record that both his sister in law and her husband died on the same day in 1869 cholera epidemic. See B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 105. Secondly, in 1874 Clement was accused of and confessed to adultery. Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's December 21 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 902.

²⁴⁸ Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's May 24 1860, Box 286 H2709 mf. 941.

²⁴⁹ There seems to have been a difference between the first generation of assistant missionaries such as John Cupidon, John Gum, Pierre Salleh and the like and the second generation of York Clement, John Terry and others. While Cupidon and his colleagues were called assistant ministers, they more or less served as catechists who were working for the church but were not part of the policy making of the church. They did not participate in Synod meetings and did not seem to have had the right to deliver the sacraments. The second generation of assistant missionaries were really native ministers who received ministerial training, were on probation and were in the end were accepted into full connection, having the full rights of a minister. As such they were also present at Synod. Clement and his colleagues are therefore the first generation of the native ministry in The Gambia.

²⁵⁰ West to WMMS, Accra, Goldcoast November 25 1862, Box 286 H2709 mf. 954.

²⁵¹ Daw to WMMS, St. Mary's December 25 1862, Box 287 H2709 mf. 955.

²⁵² Southern to WMMS, St. Mary's June 18 1864, Box 287 H2709 mf. 960.

of his time however he served in Georgetown where he endeavoured to revive the work at MacCarthy.²⁵³

From the few letters we have of Clement, he seemed to have been socially and politically engaged. In 1872 Clement clashed with the manager of Georgetown Island Benjamin Tanner,²⁵⁴ when Tanner forbade Muslims and Soninke refugees to enter the island. Among the refugees of the Soninke-Marabout wars, seeking political asylum on the island, was the rightful owner of Georgetown, the King of Kattaba. When Tanner refused the King of Kattaba and his wives entrance to the island, Clement and another liberated African Methodist Dodgin spoke out, calling it 'equal to murder'. As a result the two of them were put in prison. Only the personal intervention of the powerful chairman of the district, Benjamin Tregaskis, ensured their release and an apology from Tanner and the Governor.²⁵⁵ Also in earlier years Clement had proven an advocate for aid to refugees from the Soninke-Marabout wars.²⁵⁶ He appealed for second hand clothing, education and government protection to bring back peace to the war-riven area.²⁵⁷

Clement in his letters stressed the importance of the vernacular:

The gospel does not spread in The Gambia as might be expected considering the length of time it has been promulgated here. Whether it is on account of the Bible not being translated in the different languages spoken by the inhabitants as in other parts of the world or not I cannot solve. If I had acquired some knowledge of Greek and Hebrew to enable me to translate the Bible... (broken off).²⁵⁸

But Clement like most of his African colleagues in the early days had received a very minimal education. Several times Tregaskis refused to admit Clement (and his Sierra Leonean colleague Hero) into full connection because he did not meet the academic requirements: Clement had been supplied with books 'but showed no sign of having read them.'²⁵⁹ The impression one gets, is that Clement had other priorities than studying, or maybe he was just so caught up by parish work like so many others before him, that it left him little time to study.²⁶⁰ In 1868 Clement was ordered down from Georgetown to St. Mary's to study under the guidance of his British colleague Vetrario Tyas. In 1869 he was finally received into full connection, about 6 years after he started

²⁵³ Clement to WMMS, Georgetown December 6 1866, Box 287 H2709 mf. 977; Clement to WMMS, Georgetown August 14 1867, Box 287 H2709 mf. 781; Clement to WMMS, November 29 1869, Box 295 H2709 mf. 896.

²⁵⁴ The Island manager was the highest British representative outside Bathurst.

²⁵⁵ Quilter to WMMS, St. Mary's February 12 1872, Box 295 H2709 mf. 897; For the full story see B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 108.

²⁵⁶ Clement to WMMS, Georgetown August 14 1867, Box 287 H2709 mf. 781.

²⁵⁷ Clement to WMMS, Georgetown August 14 1867, Box 287 H2709 mf. 781.

²⁵⁸ Clement to WMMS, St. Mary's December 6 1866, Box 287 H2709 mf. 977.

²⁵⁹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 103.

²⁶⁰ There seems to have been no discussion whether Clement's intellectual abilities prohibited him to complete his study. Prickett records Tregaskis' evaluation of Clement's attitude as 'discreditable indolence and unwarranted self-confidence'. B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 103. Synod 1866, Box 297 H2708 mf. 6.

his probation.²⁶¹ In that same year he lost his father, his sister in law, her husband and a servant, all on one and the same day during the 1869-cholera epidemic.²⁶²

During the end of his ministry Clement got himself into trouble. The most probable reason for this is that he became mentally ill. The loneliness and isolation of his station at MacCarthy might have contributed to it. Several other ministers and assistant church workers, like Hero, Parsonson, Daw and Sallah, suffered under the harsh climatological and psychological circumstances at Georgetown. The problems started in November 1874, when Clement had run into debts. It is not known what the cause of the debt was. Possibly the stipend he received did not cover the cost of running two households: his own household in Georgetown and one for his family in Bathurst. Indigenous ministers in Georgetown were rarely joined by their families when they were stationed up river.²⁶³ There were also some allegations that Clement had developed a drinking problem. An arrangement was made to pay off the debt by deducting monthly payments from his stipend and he was given a fresh start.²⁶⁴

A month later Clement was accused of and confessed to adultery.²⁶⁵ Even his closest companion and co-worker Dodgin, the oldest church leader at MacCarthy, testified that 'Clement was out of his mind' and 'talking al kind of foolish things'.²⁶⁶ After an investigation and a physical check up, Clement voluntarily resigned from the ministry.²⁶⁷ The doctor who was consulted diagnosed that Clement either had a drinking problem or suffered from an enlargement of the brain.²⁶⁸ Less than six months after his resignation he died.²⁶⁹ The cause of death was stated as 'enlargement and softening of the brain'. Thus the life of the first Gambian Methodist minister, called 'a worthy and inoffensive gentleman' by the Governor,²⁷⁰ came to an abrupt end. Clement was only 41 years old when he died.

Looking back on Clement's ministry, it is a clear that, despite his limited education, he was a man who was very much engaged in the social and political issues of his parish and was appreciated for that. His care for refugees, his willingness to clash with Tanner over the right of asylum, his opinion on the Soninke-Marabout wars and his advocacy for the Liberated African community in Georgetown all show a man to whom the gospel meant concrete social action in a specific context. Being a Gambian he knew this context better than anyone else. The memory of his work is somewhat overshadowed by the tragic side effects of his illness during the last year of his life. Nevertheless he seemed to have been appreciated as a minister and colleague. For a while in 1869 Clement was the only minister serving in The Gambia and was supervising the work in The Gambia. Tregaskis, a very demanding chairman, seemed to have had no objection to that. Considering that Clement served from at least 1864 until

²⁶¹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 103 and 105.

²⁶² B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 105.

²⁶³ It is also possible that great financial demands were made on Clement by his parishioners.

²⁶⁴ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's November 6 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 901.

²⁶⁵ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's December 21 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 902.

²⁶⁶ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's December 5 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 901.

²⁶⁷ Clement to WMMS (Boyce), St. Mary's December 18 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 902.

²⁶⁸ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's December 5 1874, Box 295 H2709 mf. 901.

²⁶⁹ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's June 6 1875, Box 295 H2709 mf. 902.

²⁷⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 105.

the end of 1874 as a minister – a period of 10 years - and that before that he served the church as a catechist for some time, he served longer than most missionaries in The Gambia during the 19th century.

John Delmar Terry

Clement's tragic end did not scare others away from the ministry. On the contrary it seems. In the second half of the 1870s and the 1880s a large group of men, some of whom were Sierra Leoneans, others Gambians, offered for the ministry. It caused the Roman Catholic priest Meyer to exclaim that the Methodists had 'a troupe of black ministers' because they paid their indigenous workers well.²⁷¹ In 1875 John Delmar Terry was received on trial as a native assistant missionary. Terry, according to the Synod minutes, was about 20 years of age, engaged to be married, had been a local preacher for a while and had already received ministerial training for about 5 months.²⁷² Badcock wrote about him: '...a hardworking young man and likely to make a successful missionary.'²⁷³ Terry was probably a Gambian. There are no records stating that he came from Sierra Leone and his work among the Jola and the Manjago indicate that he spoke some of the vernaculars.

Terry was first stationed at St. Mary's in 1875 and in 1877 was re-stationed to Cape St. Mary in Combo. There he had the responsibility for the Cape St. Mary parish as well as for the surrounding villages of Bakkaw Konko and Hamilton. A catechist assisted him in his work.²⁷⁴ The reason to station a minister in Combo was that the fact that members, probably Akou, had settled in Combo. These settlers felt neglected by the Bathurst ministry and had begun to fellowship in the Anglican Church.²⁷⁵ Terry's appointment to Combo was a Synod move to draw the people back to the Methodist Church. Apart from the Krio living in Combo, Terry also worked among the 'heathen' Jola and the Manjago.

In 1878 there was some discussion of disciplining Terry. The reason for the discipline is not mentioned and no measures were taken against him.²⁷⁶ It is not clear whether his resignation in 1879 was linked with the threat of suspension. Halfway that year Terry disappeared from his station without notice. Even his wife had no idea where he had gone. The mystery was solved when a few months later Terry wrote from England to hand in his resignation. How and why he left for England, remains unclear. After his resignation, he disappeared from the records.²⁷⁷

²⁷¹ Meyer to Schwindenhammer, August 5 1880 and Meyer to Emonet, Aug. 17 1883, Boite 160B/III, Lettres Gambie 1880-1884.

²⁷² Synod 1875, Box 297 H2708 mf. 11. NB. Terry's stipend was 100 pound per year, whereas a British missionary earned 160 pound a year.

²⁷³ Badcock to WMMS, Bathurst May 23 1876, Box 295 H2709 mf. 904.

²⁷⁴ Synod 1878, Box 297 H2708, mf. 12.

²⁷⁵ Terry to WMMS, Cape St. Mary's August 20 1877, Box 296 H2709 mf. 909.

²⁷⁶ Lamb to WMMS, Bathurst, November 23 1878, Box 297 H2708 mf. 12. The reason why suspension was discussed is not mentioned in the letter.

²⁷⁷ Dixon to WMMS, St. Mary's May 26 1880, Box 296 H2709 mf. 918; Synod 1880, Box 297 H2708 mf. 14.

Charles McKie and Isaac Watson Harding

Two other candidates had offered themselves for the ministry. In 1877 Charles McKie arrived in The Gambia with a recommendation of the General Secretary of WMMS. McKie was probably a West Indian and was officially received as a candidate to the ministry in 1878 because Synod did not meet in 1877.²⁷⁸ He was stationed in St. Mary's for educational matters, but soon he was disciplined because of drunkenness.²⁷⁹ In 1880 he was again rebuked²⁸⁰ and then disappears from the minutes.²⁸¹ It is unclear whether he went back to the West Indies because his contract had ended or because he was suspended because of misbehaviour.

Another ministerial candidate originated from Sierra Leone: Isaac Watson Harding. Watson had worked as a catechist at Wilberforce in Sierra Leone and was since 1877 engaged as a catechist at Barra. He was recommended as a native assistant minister on trial at the Synod of 1879.²⁸² He was assigned to the Gambia Institution but his ministry in The Gambia was short-lived. In January 1881 he died of smallpox.²⁸³

John Samuel Joiner

Catechists proved to be a fertile source for the native ministry. Four of the eight catechists, who served the mission in 1880, were recommended for the ordained ministry in the 1880s.²⁸⁴ One of them was John Samuel Joiner. Joiner, a native of Bathurst and fluent in Wolof, had worked as a catechist at Barra, where he had been 'very useful'.²⁸⁵ Even before his work as a catechist, Joiner had made himself useful to the church. He had been active as a class leader and had also worked as a Sunday School teacher. In 1881 Joiner was accepted as a candidate to the ministry and was stationed at St. Mary's, where, as a letter of 1884 shows, he worked among the Wolof.²⁸⁶ No further details are known about his ministry, except for the fact that in 1887 he was stationed in Kaur in an attempt to establish a congregation. But alas in vain.²⁸⁷ In 1886 he was received into full connection, being the second Gambian to attain that stage.²⁸⁸

In 1889 there was a turn of events: Joiner was accused embezzlement of funds. The chairman W.R. Cockill put together a team of Sierra Leonean ministers to help him investigate the matter in order to avoid any racist bias in the case. The team investigated the affair and declared Joiner guilty. But members of the Bathurst congregation protested against the accusations brought forward against Joiner. In their opinion Joiner

²⁷⁸ Synod 1878, Box 297 H2709 mf. 12.

²⁷⁹ Synod 1880, Box 297 H2708 mf. 14.

²⁸⁰ Dixon to WMMS, St. Mary's May 26 1880, Box 296 H2709 mf. 918.

²⁸¹ His name is no longer mentioned at the Synod in 1881. Synod 1881, Box 297 H2708 mf. 15.

²⁸² Synod 1879, Box 297 H2708 mf. 13.

²⁸³ Dixon to WMMS, Bathurst Jan. 6 1881, Box 296 H2709 mf. 919.

²⁸⁴ They were: John Samuel Joiner, Jeremiah Dalton Johnson, William Thomas Cole and James William King.

²⁸⁵ Synod 1881, Box 297 H2708 mf. 15.

²⁸⁶ Joiner to WMMS, February 7 1884, Box 296 H2709 mf. 921.

²⁸⁷ Cole to Osborn, St. Mary's May 31 1887, Box 288 H2709 mf. 988.

²⁸⁸ Synod 1886, Box 298 H2708 mf. 19.

was not guilty of embezzlement but had become the victim of a private dispute between Joiner himself and two members of the church. Money wise, he had just been careless in keeping the accounts and had mixed things up. According to the Bathurst Leaders' Meeting, the Joiner case was a matter of neglect and ignorance rather than of embezzlement. But their appeal was dismissed. More so, they were not even heard by the team. As a result they accused Cockill of racism and of treating them with contempt because they were black and he was white.

Also the British missionary Robert Dixon (1880-1882) who had been instrumental in Joiner's candidature protested. According to Dixon Joiner had not had a fair hearing and had been given too much responsibility to carry without having received proper instructions on how to keep accounts.²⁸⁹ But none of the protests helped. Cockill asked Joiner to resign, but Joiner refused to do so.²⁹⁰ Cockill thereupon suspended Joiner in 1890.²⁹¹ But the matter was not over yet. Joiner appealed to the Missionary Committee and endeavoured to explain the matter: '...it never occurred to me that any minister could be subjected to such treatment and abuses as I have been, though I stooped to them all. (...) I was condemned as natives generally are.'²⁹² But it was all to no avail. The decision was not reconsidered and Joiner no longer a minister. Again the career of a Gambian minister was cut short by circumstances.

For some reason or another Joiner was later re-employed by the mission as a native agent. In 1904 the name of a man called John Samuel Joiner is mentioned in the list of district agents.²⁹³ It is not clear whether this is the same person, but it seems so. It seems that Joiner worked for a while as a trader after his career as a minister, but somewhere around the turn of the century was re-employed by the mission. In 1905 a case arose against him of adultery and he was fired.²⁹⁴

It is difficult to judge the Joiner case. Several times in the history of the Methodist Church the leadership protested against the presumed biased treatment given to 'their ministers'. Both letters of the leaders of the Bathurst Circuit to WMMS and Joiner's own letter to the Missionary Committee, show that the Gambian leadership was very conscious of the role and influence of racism. And, the time being the heyday of colonialism, there was probably some truth in their complaint. Cockill however seemed to have been aware of the fact that the British missionaries were racially biased. Hence his appointment of a team of Sierra Leonean ministers to investigate the matter. Then again, the relations between the Sierra Leonean and Gambian Krio were not always as smooth as the British missionaries presumed. The Gambian Methodist community had at several occasions expressed the feeling that the Sierra Leonean missionaries were given preferential treatment by appointing them to the 'good' places, whereas their

²⁸⁹ Leaders to WMMS, Bathurst Jan 31. 1890, Box 288 H2709 mf. 991.

²⁹⁰ Synod 1889, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

²⁹¹ Synod 1890, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

²⁹² Joiner to WMMS, Bathurst Feb. 11 1890, Box 288 H2709 mf. 991/992.

²⁹³ Synod 1904, Box 298 H2708 mf. 26.

²⁹⁴ Synod 1905, Box 298 H2708 mf. 27.

'own' people had to serve at rural outstations.²⁹⁵ Some elements of this Sierra Leone – Gambian competition might have influenced the case.

No doubt Joiner's limited education also complicated the case. Having had little or no formal theological training and certainly no training in accountancy, it seems likely that Joiner had difficulties with the financial aspects of the ministerial work. Demands made on him by family, friends and parishioners might have led him to spend money that was not his own. Paperwork and keeping receipts must also have been a new thing to the African minister. The judgement whether slack paperwork and generous giving to family and friends would count as embezzlement of funds would differ from culture to culture. There is no verbatim of the interview of the investigation team with Joiner, nor are there any records of facts that explain how much money had disappeared. Therefore, whether or not Joiner was rightly suspended, is impossible to say.

Jeremiah Dalton Johnson

Another candidate to the ministry was Jeremiah Dalton Johnson. Dalton was born in 1856 in Sierra Leone and offered to go to The Gambia in 1877 as a teacher-catechist. According to the Synod minutes he first served as a catechist at MacCarthy²⁹⁶ and later in Albreda when the prospects there seemed promising.²⁹⁷ He was first recommended for the ministry in 1882 but nothing came of the recommendation because Dixon, who had recommended him, left The Gambia. At the next Synod in 1884 when he was accepted. It seems he continued his work at Albreda while a probationer.²⁹⁸ The only thing known about his ministry, is that the Synod of 1887 questioned his willingness and ability to work, but no action was taken.²⁹⁹ Also Johnson's career was cut short. Jeremiah Johnson died in 1888, only 32 years old.

William Thomas Cole Senior

The story of William T. Cole Sr. is similar to that of Johnson. Born in 1843 in Sierra Leone, Cole arrived in The Gambia at the age of 13. In 1868 he became a local preacher. The British missionary Henry Quilter (1869-1873) intended to recommend him for the ministry in 1873, but nothing came of it, because Quilter fell ill and was rushed home to England. For a while Cole served as a schoolmaster in Barra in 1873. It seems that there was a verbal agreement between Cole and Quilter that Cole would temporarily serve at Barra in expectation of a recommendation for further training in Sierra Leone. When Tregaskis refused to give Cole permission for further studies in Sierra Leone, Cole resigned and became a government clerk.

In 1875 the Bathurst leadership accused one of the missionaries, George Adcock (1873-1879) of making decisions without consulting the local leadership. Several letters were written to WMMS accusing Adcock of arrogance, racism etc. Even allegations of smuggling and selling guns and maltreating women were made. Most of these charges

²⁹⁵ Synod 1890, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22. The members of the representative session of Synod strongly protested against Cockill's proposal that a Sierra Leonean minister was to be appointed to lead the Gambian part of the district, precisely because of this reason.

²⁹⁶ Synod 1882, Box 297 H2708 mf. 16.

²⁹⁷ Pullen to WMMS, (..... *no date mentioned) 1884, Box 296 H2709 mf. 921.

²⁹⁸ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 18.

²⁹⁹ Synod 1887, Box 298 H2708 mf. 21.

were false and spiteful and the majority of the leaders later apologised. Only Cole persisted in the charge against Adcock, probably still resented not being sent to college. Because of this, the incident came to be known as 'Cole's agitation'.

In 1880 Cole was re-employed by the church. He was appointed as a catechist and teacher at Sabiji, because he was fluent in Wolof and Mandinka. He candidated for the ministry in 1884. From that moment onwards he again worked in Barra³⁰⁰ but also went on trips to the Casamance to preach.³⁰¹ Cole died unexpectedly in 1888, being in his mid forties. Cockill, in a letter to Osborn in 1888, commented:

You will observe a reticence in the Gambia reports in recording the death of the brethren J.D. Johnson and W.T. Cole. Silence in their cases was the better thing. Poor Johnson was at his best a trifler and was never fit for our work; while Brother Cole was a man who had failed in everything he attempted in life, was a heavy drinker and drank immoderately to the last. Had Bro. Cole lived, I should have had to suspend him. The reception of such men into the ministry was part of Mr. Pullen's incomprehensible administration.³⁰²

Charles Foster Pratt Johnson

Apart from Jeremiah Johnson and William Cole, there was a third person recommended for the ministry in 1884: Charles Foster Pratt Johnson. Very little is known about him, except that he was a Sierra Leonean, born in 1841 who had come to The Gambia at the age of 3. Charles Johnson had served the mission as a teacher in Combo since 1860 and as a local preacher since 1861. At the time of his candidature he was married. He was sent to the MacCarthy Island circuit to do his probation, where he served until 1889.³⁰³ That year a report on him was brought to Synod, stating that his preaching, his study progress and also his ministry at MacCarthy were deemed unsatisfactory.³⁰⁴ After that his name disappeared from the Synod minutes, so he evidently left the ministry. He had given 29 years of service to the church.

James William King

The Synod of 1885 again recommended three new candidates for the ministry. One of them was James William King. King was an senior candidate. He was 48 when he was recommended for the ministry and had served as a catechist at MacCarthy and British Combo for six years before he was proposed as a ministerial candidate.³⁰⁵ It seems he was a Gambian, because he spoke and preached in Wolof and Mandinka. In 1890 King was recommended to be received into full connection. The Synod's recommendation stated that King was 'a man of excellent character.'

King served the church in St. Mary's for many years.³⁰⁶ In 1897 he was transferred to MacCarthy Island but refused to go on the grounds of ill health. He had already reached the age of sixty by then and had just got married the year before. He requested

³⁰⁰ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 18.

³⁰¹ Cole to Osborn, Barra May 31 1887, Box 288 H2709 mf. 988.

³⁰² Cockill to Osborn, March 1 1888, Box 288 H2709 mf. 989.

³⁰³ Synod 1884, Box 298 H2708 mf. 18.

³⁰⁴ Synod 1889, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

³⁰⁵ Fullen/Maude to WMMS, Bathurst March 23 1885, Box 288 H2709 mf. 985.

³⁰⁶ Synod 1890, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

to become a supernumerary on medical grounds, after having travelled 12 years in the ministry without a flaw. The request was granted³⁰⁷ and King continued to serve the Methodist church as a supernumerary for another 16 year. During the period that he was a supernumerary his name continued to be mentioned under the Bathurst circuit. Among other things he served as a chaplain to the army and led the temperance society.

In 1914 King passed away, due to a paralytic seizure, aged 76. He had served the church for 6 years as a catechist, for 12 years as an active itinerant minister and another 16 as a supernumerary, a total of 34 years. This made King the longest serving Methodist church worker – and a Gambian for that matter - in the 19th century. No details are known about King's ministry. But maybe Delaney Russell's tribute to him, writing to the Missionary Committee to inform them of the King's death, is telling enough. Russell wrote: 'His name is still fragrant in the Combo's and MacCarthy'. He thereby referred to the text of 2 Corinthians 2:15 in which Paul encouraged people to dedicate their lives to Christ as a sweet smelling sacrifice.³⁰⁸ This might be interpreted as a worthy praise for a faithful worker.

Moses William Randall and Abraham Snowball

Moses William Randall, twenty nine years of age, was also recommended for the ordained ministry in 1885. Randall was a Sierra Leonean and had served as a catechist and as the second master to the Boys High School, when he was recommended for the ministry. It seems he worked in The Gambia for a period of four years, after which he, with compliments of the Synod for his performance, returned to Sierra Leone.³⁰⁹

The last person of Pullen's batch was Abraham E. Snowball, a Gambian who grew up in Bathurst. He was recommended for the ministry in 1885 and was to go to Richmond for training.³¹⁰ What happened to him is unclear. There is no indication that he ever went to Richmond, nor is there evidence that he served elsewhere in the church in The Gambia. Possibly he either died or withdrew after his training abroad did not materialise.

William Thomas Cole Junior

After this group of people who were encouraged to enter the ministry in the 1880s by William Pullen, there were no new ministerial candidates for some time. It is unclear whether the missionaries were reluctant to accept new candidates because of the problems with 'Pullen's batch' of which only King had been a long term serving and successful candidate, or whether the Gambians themselves had become scared of the ministry.

Towards the end of the period under discussion in this chapter two new people offered themselves for the ministry: William Thomas Cole Junior and Samuel Maclean. Cole Junior was born on December 12 1877 as son to the Rev. W.T. Cole. In 1902, only 25 at the time, the Bathurst quarterly meeting recommended him as a candidate for

³⁰⁷ Synod 1897, Box 298 H2708 mf. 23.

³⁰⁸ Russell to WMMS, March 3 1914, Box 796 H2709 mf. 1044.

³⁰⁹ Synod 1889, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

³¹⁰ Synod 1886, Box 298 H2709 mf. 19.

the ministry.³¹¹ Cole Junior was relatively well trained at the time of his recommendation for the ministry: he had received four years of high school training in Sierra Leone. But the Synod thought he was still rather young and inexperienced and his marks for the candidature exams were on the low side, so the offer was decline. Meanwhile the church employed him as a teacher and from 1904 onwards he was in charge of the Boys High School.

In 1906 Cole Junior was again proposed as a candidate and this time he was unanimously accepted. He had probably matured. His *curriculum vitae* states that he had been raised in a 'godly' home and had 'followed the Lord since his youth.' Apart from his work as a teacher he had assisted the Bathurst circuit in preaching and teaching. Besides, he knew some Wolof and was willing to study it further. The Synod's report on Cole Junior's candidature shows that the Synod had learned from the past. The report included the remarks that Cole Junior 'had no debts', was a total abstainer and had good health.³¹² It seems that Cole was sent to Sierra Leone for further training and returned in 1909. After that the practical side of his probation started.³¹³ He was stationed at MacCarthy and was received as a minister in full connection in 1914.³¹⁴ Cole Junior served the Gambia Methodist Church for nearly forty years, until his death in 1949. He was 73 years old when he died and esteemed and dearly loved by all he served and worked with.³¹⁵

Samuel Maclean

The Bathurst quarterly meeting of 1902 also recommended Samuel Maclean for the ministry. An age mate of Cole, Maclean was also born in 1877. He had been raised in a Methodist home and was educated at a Methodist primary school in The Gambia. After this he went to Sierra Leone for his High School education. On his return he worked for a while in the Methodist Primary School that had educated him, after which he switched to Muhammedan Primary School, the first Muslim primary school in Bathurst. He had been a lay preacher since 1898. Because Maclean scored low in the exams, the Synod declined Maclean's offer for the ministry. Also his limited eye-sight was thought to form an obstacle for the ministry.³¹⁶ In 1909 he again offered his services to the church and was employed in Ballanghar as a district agent.³¹⁷ As a district agent Maclean was an asset to the ministry of the church: he spoke three vernaculars including Jola.

In 1910 Maclean was recommended for the ministry for the second time and this time the offer was accepted.³¹⁸ He was ordained in 1916.³¹⁹ Maclean alternatively served in Combo and at MacCarthy Island. In 1922 he requested to be sent to Sierra Leone to have a different ministerial experience. He served there for about 8 months

³¹¹ Synod 1902, Box 298 H2708 mf. 25.

³¹² Synod 1906, Box 298 H2708 mf. 29.

³¹³ Synod 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

³¹⁴ Synod 1914, Box 234 H2708 mf. 425.

³¹⁵ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 211.

³¹⁶ Synod 1902, Box 298 H2708 mf. 25.

³¹⁷ Synod 1909, Box 298 H2708 mf. 33.

³¹⁸ Synod 1910, Box 298 H2708 mf. 34.

³¹⁹ Howard to WMMS, August 24 1916, Box 797 H2709 mf. 1052; Synod 1916, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

after which he returned to The Gambia and was again sent to MacCarthy.³²⁰ In 1934 he was asked to retire for one year, owing to financial problems: the Synod could not find money to pay his allowance.³²¹ What was intended as a year's leave from the active service, became 12 years of retirement. The financial strains within the district were great and the world-wide economic crisis lingered on.

Meanwhile Maclean, receiving an allowance, aided in the Bethel circuit and travelled up river every now and then to give communion. Twice there was discussion about his performance. In 1936 a special Synod was convened when Maclean had been spreading the rumour that the Synod was unhappy with his performance and was about to remove him from Bethel.³²² This incident seems to have been placated without any further consequence. In 1940 there was a problem with money and the Standing Committee of Synod suspended Maclean.³²³ The suspension was only temporarily, because the minutes of 1944 indicate that Maclean again received an allowance.³²⁴ Maclean became an active supernumerary again in 1946 and was sent to MacCarthy.³²⁵ He was upriver in Georgetown when he heard of Cole's death. In shock he stumbled and fell in the sand. He died the same day, probably of a heart attack caused by the death of his friend.³²⁶

The lay ministry

The indigenous ministry in the Gambian Methodist Church did not consist of ordained ministers only. Right from its beginnings in the 1820s the Methodist Church made use of indigenous personnel, working as translators, catechists, evangelists, local preachers, class leaders and teachers. To mention all the names, is impossible. The list would be endless. In 1852 for example, the Methodist Church employed 11 local agents.³²⁷ A person like John Ashley worked for several years as a teacher/catechist at MacCarthy Island in the 1850s and many succeeded him in that position.³²⁸

One person, who certainly needs mentioning, is Thomas Peynton. The archives mention Peynton for the first time in 1853 when the church engaged him as a teacher to succeed John Cupidon who had died that year. But the archives indicate that Peynton had been engaged by the mission long before that.³²⁹ Several times during his service he was rebuked for drinking too much,³³⁰ but he was retained on the staff. In 1875 he retired after 32 years of service and died the next year.³³¹ Adcock commented on Peynton's retirement: 'He is a remarkable man for an African but has one most unfortunate failing: drink. As to the services he has rendered the Mission, it is

³²⁰ Synod 1923, Box 237 H2708 mf 428.

³²¹ Synod 1934, Box 245 H2708 mf. 434.

³²² Synod October 23 1936, Box 248 H2708 mf. 438.

³²³ Synod 1940, Box 251 H2708 mf. 443.

³²⁴ Synod 1944, Box 255 H2708 mf. 447.

³²⁵ Synod 1946, Box 256 H2708 mf. 450.

³²⁶ B. Prickett, *Island base*, 212.

³²⁷ Synod 1852, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

³²⁸ Synod 1854, Box 297 H2708 mf. 3.

³²⁹ Meadows to WMMS, St. Mary's December (no date) 1853, Box 295 H2709 mf. 888.

³³⁰ Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's, August 11 1873, Box 295 H2709 mf. 899.

³³¹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 121.

impossible to estimate them too highly.³³² Another person who needs to be mentioned by name was Charles Leopold, also active in the field of education. Leopold was a Sierra Leonean minister who came to The Gambia in 1908 and single-handedly ran the Boys High School for 12 years, teaching eight or more subjects weekly.³³³

Most of the people who worked for the Methodist Church as catechists, teachers and evangelists are little more than names in the Synod minutes. The only additional information was usually their place of stationing. Sometimes a sentence is added to explain why a person was suspended. Drinking, gambling and adultery were three main causes. But many served loyally and faithfully. To give just a few examples: There was a Mr. Nicol who served as catechist at Barra around 1864.³³⁴ One of his successors in Barra was a couple called Bayne, who drowned while crossing the river in 1870.³³⁵ In Ballanghar the district agent Isaac Watts served for several years in the beginning of the 20th century, until he died in 1905.³³⁶ A colleague district agent called George H. Assundoe served for many consecutive years in Combo.³³⁷ Assundoe was still there in 1910. All these people contributed greatly to the work of the mission. They gave their time, energy and talents in the field of education and evangelism, while the payment was poor. They worked at what we would call now the grass roots level. They prepared the ground where the ministers and missionaries followed and often gave (many) years of their lives to God and the church, while working under difficult circumstances. Their contribution to the establishment of the Methodist Church in The Gambia cannot easily be overestimated.

Evaluating the Methodist indigenous ministry

Reflecting on the indigenous ministry in the period under discussion, it is first of all good to draw attention to the fact is that there so were many attempts to raise an indigenous ministry. Considering that the period under discussion belonged to the heyday of colonialism and racism was becoming widespread both among government officers and missionaries, it is noteworthy that within the Methodist Church 12 men were accepted as ministerial candidates.

Remarkable is the boom in the 1880s when there were seven ministerial candidates. One wonders whether this was a deliberate and active attempt to indigenise the ministry and whether this development was the result of the more general tendency to indigenise the church in Africa in the 1870s and 1880s, as was advocated by men like Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn.³³⁸ Though Cockill was far from content with Pullen's selection procedure, he nevertheless seemed to have shared Pullen's ideas about the need for an indigenous ministry. In 1890 Cockill suggested the withdrawal of all British missionary staff and recommended leaving the Methodist Church in The Gambia to the supervision of experienced ministers from Sierra Leone.³³⁹ This did not

³³² Adcock to WMMS, St. Mary's, March 27 1875, Box 295 H2709 mf. 902.

³³³ Synod 1920, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427.

³³⁴ Southern to WMMS, St. Mary's June 18 1864, Box 287 H2709 mf. 960.

³³⁵ Synod 1870, Box 297 H2708 mf. 9.

³³⁶ Synod 1904, Box 298 H2708 mf. 26.

³³⁷ Synod 1910, Box 298, H2708 mf. 33.

³³⁸ The 1870s and 1880s were also the time of Bishop Crowther and his Niger Delta Pastorate.

³³⁹ Synod 1890, Box 298 H2708 mf. 22.

materialise because the Gambian Methodist community objected to the proposal and missionaries continued to be sent.

It is clear that the increasing world-wide demand for missionaries had its effect on the availability of personnel for The Gambia. WMMS had started work in a large number of countries and thus many people were needed. Countries like Nigeria and India proved to be missionary success stories and most of the resources in finance and personnel were directed towards these more 'successful' areas. Church growth or potential church growth proved to be the only legitimate reason for assistance. The Gambia, where WMMS had been active since the 1820s, had shown little growth and the small Methodist community in The Gambia tended to be neglected. Thus in order to survive the Gambian Methodist Church had to find its own resources in personnel and finance. Hence the urgent need for an indigenous ministry.

Superficial reading would seem to suggest that many of the 19th century attempts to raise an indigenous ministry ended in a failure. York Clement and John Joiner were suspended and also Samuel Maclean was in problems with the Synod several times. John Terry withdrew from the ministry as did probably Charles Johnson and Abraham Snowball. Isaac Harding, Jeremiah Johnson and William Cole Senior all met an early death, noting that both Johnson and Cole were not performing well. It would seem as if only William King and William Cole Junior – two out of the eleven candidates - served satisfactory and even excellent. But a positive or negative evaluation of the indigenous ministry depends on the perspective taken. It is correct that Clement ended his ministry with suspension. But it should also be remembered that he served for several years as a catechist and for another 10 years as a minister. This brings the total of years that Clement successfully served the church at about 12 years. Only after 12 years of ministry, he was suspended. A similar reasoning applies to the other candidates. Terry worked for nearly five years as a probation minister. Joiner served for at least 11 years as a minister. Before his acceptance into the ministry, he had served some years as a catechist and later worked as a district agent. This meant that he gave at least 15 years of his life to the Methodist Church. Jeremiah Johnson worked as a catechist for 5 years before entering the ministry. As a probationer he served the church for another 4 years, making it a total of nine years. W.T. Cole Senior had worked for the Methodist Church in the early 1870's and later again in 1880 when he was a catechist at Barra. He gave another four years to the church as a probationer, starting with his recommendation to the ministry in 1884 until his death in 1888. This makes his period of service somewhere around 11 years. With regard to Charles Johnson, he was engaged by the church as a teacher in 1860. He continued to work non-stop for the church until his name was removed from the list in 1889. That meant a period of service of about 29 years. James King, as was stated above, had a total number of 34 years in the service of the Methodist Church. Maclean served intermittently in the early 1900s and from 1909 until his death in 1946 while W.T. Cole excelled them all by first serving for several years as a teacher and another 40 years as a minister. All of these men served longer periods than the average missionary. Missionaries on the average stayed about 3 years in The Gambia in the same period. The contributions of the indigenous ministers should be seen and evaluated in the larger perspective of their long term service and not just be judged by the incidents that terminated their appointments.

Some causes can be identified why it was very hard for the indigenous ministers to succeed and meet the – Western - expectations of the missionaries. First of all the indigenous ministers were given little formal education. No doubt this was one of the main causes of the problem. Compared to the responsibilities entrusted to them – think of Joiner who was expected to run the circuit both pastorally and financially – the education of the indigenous ministers was very minimal. With the exception of W.T. Cole Junior who seems to have gone to Sierra Leone for further training, the indigenous ministers received no formal training. All ministerial training was on the spot and consisted of private studies, which were examined at the pastoral sessions of Synod. The curriculum consisted of the study of English, Hebrew and Greek and the books of John Wesley and some theology, which did not really prepare them for the practical work ahead. It must have been hard to see the relevance of Hebrew while being stationed in Georgetown.

This was further complicated by the fact that the majority of the African probationers had only gone through primary school and at most had a few years of high school. Therefore they had not been taught to plan their studies or taught how to study to begin with. Thus probation studies during their stationing must have been virtually impossible without proper and strict supervision. And since most of the probationers were stationed in the rural areas there can not have been any supervision to speak of.

There was another factor that might have caused some of the problems in raising an indigenous ministry. The Gambian Methodist Church had the habit of stationing the indigenous ministers to the 'outstations' in Combo, in Cowar, at MacCarthy or in Ballanghar. These were places where the families of the indigenous ministers refused to follow them, places where life was hard, the climate hot and the infrastructure minimal. Collegial visits were scarce and encouragement rare. Thus, ministry became a lonely journey which few could walk to the end. In retrospect, an attachment of an African probationer to British colleague might have prevented some of the problems: the European education combined with the African familiarity with customs and life in general might have led to mutual enrichment and a better functioning church. But the constant lack of personnel demanded separate appointments, with the unfortunate result that many people – Africans and British - stranded along the way.

In her evaluation of the native ministry Prickett in her book *Island Base* gives two reasons why many of the assistant missionaries and native ministers ended their career with suspension. She points to the limited training given to the native agents and states that there was a certain amount of rivalry among the missionaries with regard to indigenous personal. She suggests that those missionaries, who were instrumental in the appointment of the native agents and acted as their spiritual and theological mentors, were quite aware of the lack of training and the weakness of each of their 'pupils'. Their successors however, met the native agents established at their work and received little or no handing over notes. Possibly they assumed that the agents could work independently and perform meticulously. Subconsciously, Prickett suggests, there might also have been some jealousy at the influence of the missionary's predecessor over the agent in question.³⁴⁰ Whether that last, very human factor played a role, is

³⁴⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 145, 145a, 145b.

difficult to determine. But Prickett might be right in suggesting that the native agents, once established and serving for many years, were presumed to function independently, whereas their training in certain fields, such as accounts, was very limited and they could not (and never) meet British standards. This inevitably led to a clash, as was the case with Joiner.

Racism, rivalry among the missionaries, cultural differences and differences in priorities between missionaries and indigenous personnel, the limited training of the indigenous ministry, lack of supervision and encouragement and a limited communication between missionaries and indigenous personnel all have contributed in their own way to the many hurdles that were found on the road towards the raising of an indigenous ministry in the Methodist Church. But it has to be stressed that despite the hurdles and despite the problems that arose, from a very early time onwards, the British Methodist missionaries attempted to raise an indigenous ministry. And as the saying goes: one cannot be blame for failing every now and then, one can only be blamed for not trying.

7.7 The Anglican Church

Precious little is known about the history of the Anglican Church in The Gambia in this period. The Church was started, as was stated in the previous chapter, as a chaplaincy to the West Indian Regiment stationed in The Gambia. The Sierra Leonean George Nicol was one of best-known people who served in that capacity in Bathurst from 1869 onwards.³⁴¹ Other names of chaplains who served in The Gambia that survived are a certain Mr. Monserat, who was present at Richard Cooper's funeral³⁴² and a certain Mr. Robin who was said to be acting colonial chaplain in 1864.³⁴³ A Methodist source from 1872 stated – possibly not totally free from envy - that 'the Anglican chaplain is only there and to quote the Bishop of Sierra Leone "would not exist if not entirely supported by the government"',³⁴⁴

Somewhere during the 1880s, the exact date is uncertain, the West Indian regiment left The Gambia. With them also the provision of an Anglican government chaplain disappeared. Thereupon the Bathurst merchants seemed to have requested the Bishop of Sierra Leone for a permanent replacement of the army chaplain.³⁴⁵ Though a very small community – according to the 1871-government census there were only 291 Anglicans in St. Mary's³⁴⁶ - the Anglican were able to offer a stipend and a residence for their new priest.³⁴⁷ The Bishop agreed. John Laughton who served as an Anglican

³⁴¹ Clement to WMMS, St. Mary's November 29 1869, Box 295 H2709 mf. 896.

³⁴² Peet to WMMS, St. Mary's August 23 1859, Box 286 H2709 mf. 936.

³⁴³ Hero to WMMS, St. Mary's November 24 1864, Box 287 H2709 mf. 961.

³⁴⁴ WMMS archives, Synod 1872, Box 297 H2709 mf. 10.

³⁴⁵ Williams to WMMS, Bathurst July 20 1899, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1002.

³⁴⁶ Government statistics on religion in The Gambia, 1871, WMMS Archives, Box 295 H2709 mf. 897. NB. The number of 291 included the colonial officers and soldiers who were stationed in The Gambia.

³⁴⁷ M. Tomkinson, *Gambia*, Michael Tomkinson Publishing, Hammamet, Tunisia and Oxford, 1991, 50.

missionary in The Gambia in the 1930s in his book *Gambia* discussed the issue. In 1938 he stated: 'At first there was a government chaplain resident there, but just over fifty years ago he was replaced by a priest supported chiefly by the native Christians and since then the work has plodded on quietly and uneventfully.'³⁴⁸ This would bring the date of the arrangement somewhere in the late 1880s. From that moment on the Anglican Church had a native pastor serving under the Bishop of Sierra Leone.

In the earliest days the community had been meeting at the chaplain's house. The communion plate and the church furniture date back to that early period, being inscribed with the date 1819.³⁴⁹ From 1836 onwards the Anglican community was offered the use of the officers' mess as a place of worship. In 1869 a school annex church was opened. When the government needed the premises in 1900, they offered the Anglican Church the present site at MacCarthy Square and £500 to erect a building.³⁵⁰ Immediately, construction work was started - the first moneys towards the building of a cathedral had already been donated in the 1840s! - and in 1901 Bishop Taylor Smith of Sierra Leone consecrated the present building, known as St. Mary's church.³⁵¹

Education work was taken up seriously by George Nicol. Nicol started an Anglican school in 1869.³⁵² There had been a small 'garrison' school, to teach the children of the soldiers during the day and adults during the evenings. Governor G.A.K. D'Arcy, appointed to The Gambia in 1859, took an interest in the school and with his encouragement and under the guidance of George Nicol the school was opened in 1869. Another Sierra Leonean, W.C. Cates served as its first headmaster, while Nicol's daughter Sarah took care of the girls' department of the school. According to the government school reports of the 1880s the Anglican school of those days could not compete with the Methodist and Catholic schools; neither in numbers nor in quality.³⁵³ Gray also mentioned a school among the Serer, opened in 1871, supported by voluntary subscriptions from the Bishop of Sierra Leone and others.³⁵⁴ In the 1930s there was still a catechist working in a small bush school in Kinti Kunda, near Kerewan. It is possible that this was the same school as the one for the Serer started in 1871.³⁵⁵ This would imply that some mission work was undertaken at that time, but no further details are known and the school is not mentioned in the government reports on education from the

³⁴⁸ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 27.

³⁴⁹ J. M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 494/495. Possibly the communion plate was brought to The Gambia by one of the early colonial officers, shortly after the establishment of Bathurst. Possibly it was a gift.

³⁵⁰ Williams to WMMS, Bathurst July 20 1899, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1002.

³⁵¹ J.M. Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 495.

³⁵² Clement to WMMS, St. Mary's November 29 1869, Box 295 H2709 mf. 896. There is no indication that the evening school was a continuation of the Quaker school for Liberated Africans, nor is there any evidence that the day school had any connection with the school started by Blenkarne in 1824.

³⁵³ *Report on the Catholic Schools Bathurst, St. Mary's, Gambia (1885-1889)* Boite 411.1B file VIII.

³⁵⁴ J.M. Gray, *A history of Sierra Leone*, 495.

³⁵⁵ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 31.

1880s. Only in the period after 1935, when the diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas was created, detailed church archival material is available.

It is hard to make any conclusive statements on the situation of the Anglican Church during the period under discussion. Very little source materials are available. But the little evidence that exists, indicates that the Anglican Church, though small, was self-sufficient. The Anglican community was able to pay the stipend and a priest for the St. Mary's parish and was able to run a small school in Bathurst without grants from abroad. Little mission work seems to have done except the school in Kinti Kunda. But considering the size of the congregation, this is hardly surprising. Possibly there were also Anglican trading communities along the river, but it seems that in most cases, such as in Cowar and Basse, Anglicans joined the Methodist fellowships while upriver.

7.8 Conclusion

The second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century were a time of a great instability. Travel in the rural areas was difficult and constructive extension work was nearly impossible. The death rate among missionaries was high: West Africa's nickname of 'the white man's grave' proved bitter reality in The Gambia. It is noteworthy that the missionary societies continued to send new people to The Gambia, despite this great loss of personnel and it testifies to their great dedication to spreading the gospel. The period under discussion was not a time of extensive growth of the mission work in The Gambia, except maybe in education, but considering the circumstances of the time it is already remarkable that the churches were able to consolidate existing work.

Three main issues featured high on the agenda of the church: evangelisation, education and indigenisation of the ministry. During the period under discussion the Roman Catholic Church was able to gather the scattered Roman Catholic members. Wolof was accepted as the *lingua franca* in the Roman Catholic Church and much effort was put into the translation of materials into Wolof. Stimulated by the endeavours of the Roman Catholic Church, also the Methodist Church paid attention to translation work. Attempts were made to extend the work to the rural areas: parishes were established in the Casamance, in Georgetown and in Combo but the work among Jola in Foni failed because there was a lack of continuity. When the Roman Catholics returned to Foni in the 1930s most Jola had become Muslim.

In the period under discussion the Methodists continued their work among the Akou and Wolof but also endeavoured to extend the church beyond the borders of the Krio-Wolof community and evangelise the Jola, the Mandinka and the Manjago. But only few of them became Christians. Only in Combo did the Methodist Church succeed in establishing new parishes but the membership consisted mainly of Akou who had moved to Combo. Similarly, the chapels, opened in some of the trading towns up river, served mainly the Akou traders who lived upriver during the trading season. Little or no mission work was done. When the traders moved away, the chapels were closed and no trace of Christianity was left.

The Anglican Church also seems to have worked with the Krio, many of whom came from Sierra Leone during the period under discussion. The majority of their

members however, were expatriates: British colonial officers and traders. In the 1870s a school was established on the North Bank in Kinti Kunda, in an attempt to evangelise Serer. The school was still active in the 1930s but there is no evidence that any of the Serer converted to Christianity as a result.

Evangelism work inevitably brought up the question how to relate to Muslims, because it was during this period that Islam became the religion of the majority of the Gambians. By the end of the 19th century the Roman Catholics had decided to abandon their attempts to convert Muslims and focussed their attention on the adherents of the African traditional religions. The Methodists struggled on for another 30 years, trying to convert Muslims. Maude's *Memorandum on Muhammedanism* of 1910 is unique in many ways. Maude neither agreed with the Roman Catholic attitude of totally abandoning the Christian witness to Muslims nor shared the naïve ideas of his contemporaries within the Methodist Church who still hoped for a turn of events. The document shows that Maude was aware that the Christian witness to Muslims needed a special sensitivity and a contextualisation of both the gospel and its messenger. The *Memorandum* is one of the few statements in the mission history of Gambian Christianity that consciously reflects on the Christian attitude towards Muslims.

Education was of great importance to the Gambian churches. All three churches invested much time, personnel and energy in the establishment of schools and education was a field of fierce interdenominational competition. All churches offered primary education, while the Methodist Church from the 1870s onwards also provided higher education. The schools served two main purposes. The first was to underscore and build up the existing Christian community, hoping to spread Christian influence in society through its educated members. The second purpose of education was to expose non-Christian children to Christian teachings and Western culture, thus hoping that the ground would be prepared for conversion to Christianity. The majority of the children taught in the schools were Muslims and only very few of them became Christians because of education. Christian education in The Gambia did not bring the desired results of mass conversion. It was mainly an instrument to spread Christian values in society. The fact however, that churches continued their commitment to education even when it became clear that it would not result in large numbers of conversions, generated a lot of goodwill towards the churches among the Gambian population.

The third main issue in the period under discussion was the attempt to establish an indigenous ministry. Both the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church endeavoured to encourage people to enter the ministry. The Methodists were somewhat more successful in their attempts than the Roman Catholics: eleven people candidated for the ministry in this period. Possibly this was enhanced by the fact that the Methodist Church had a thirty-year advance in the raising of an indigenous ministry. Also the Protestant theology in the 1870s and 1880s advocated the self-reliance of the church and the indigenisation of the ministry. From the 1860s onward the phenomenon of assistant missionaries was abandoned and replaced by that of African ministers: people were trained and ordained as ministers and received the full rights of a Methodist minister. Only few of the Gambian ministers served until retirement. It is certain that racism was one of the reasons why some of the candidates stranded along the road. The letters of protest to the Missionary Committee in London testify to that. Another reason was that the African ministers were expected to perform at British level, even though

they had a different cultural background, a minimum of education, little encouragement of their British colleagues and were posted in outstations far away 'in the bush' where their families refused to follow them. It seems that especially Cockill was sensitive to the complications of culture and racism. Around 1900 he pleaded for an all African ministry in The Gambia. But his advice was not heeded. With catechists, districts agents and teachers there seem to have been fewer disciplinary problems, but possibly the expectations for them were not as high as for ministers.

The Roman Catholic Church in the 19th and early 20th century mainly had Senegalese priests who offered for the indigenous priesthood. It seems they were considered equal to their European colleagues. There was only one Gambian priest during the 19th century, named Samba. Cultural differences between him and his European supervisors and possible the fact that he was not yet matured when he was ordained, led to many difficulties during Samba's ministry. After the death of Kobès only few people offered for the ministry. Several indigenous priests had died young and a number of seminarians died while being educated. Suspicion arose that there was a curse on the priesthood. Thus parents, already not enthusiastic of 'losing' their son to a celibate life, prohibited their children from offering themselves for the ministry. Though some Gambians offered for the religious life, not much is known about the Gambian brothers and sisters. It seems most of them died during the noviciate or withdrew before making the final vows. Lay people, such as catechists and teachers, were only scarcely used in the 19th century Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia. The phenomenon of the catechist, who played such a crucial role in the spread of the gospel elsewhere in Africa, did not feature in the Senegambia until the 1920s.

In the period under discussion two models featured prominently: the model of expansion and the model of diakonia. Expansion was the umbrella model for the period. All three churches attempted to establish congregations in the rural areas, even though the political situation was difficult at the time. When the Roman Catholic Church realised that the conversion of Muslims was not forthcoming, they turned their attention to the conversion of the traditional believers. Education, though a diaconal service, was put fully in the context of the spread of Christianity. The education of non-Christians was seen as preparation for the proclamation of the gospel. All three churches hoped that by the means of education they would be able to influence young people and convince them to become Christian. But education in The Gambia did not lead to mass conversion. It mainly was successful as an instrument to spread Christian influence in society.

In the period under discussion there are no clear cases of the model of presence, though the individual lives of people might have had an exemplary character. William Maude's Memorandum on Mohammedanism represents a unique exception to the predominantly antagonistic approach towards Muslims. Maude's treatise on Islam, though it needs to be read and interpreted in the context of the time, is the first sign of a changing attitude towards Muslims. Maude pleaded for an attitude of service and friendship towards Muslims, calling upon people 'to make ourselves neighbourly'. Maude's *Memorandum* is therewith the first sign of an emerging model of dialogue.

8. CONSOLIDATION AND OUTREACH IN THE RURAL AREAS (1917-1965)

8.1 Introduction

'As far as I can see, my best policy will be as follows: 'to find an unworked area in the Protectorate and there to establish a central station with as big a staff as I can afford', the Anglican Bishop John Daly said in 1935.¹ This policy statement was not only true for the Anglican Church but was characteristic of the outreach strategy of all three mainline churches in the period under discussion. Despite the crises in the world economy and in world politics – the period encompasses the aftermath of the first world war, the economic crisis in the 1930s and the second world war – the period of 1917-1965 was a time of large financial and personnel investments in an effort to spread Christianity in The Gambia. The British colonial government had 'pacified' the Protectorate and travel in the rural areas had become relatively safe. These conditions aided the mainline churches in The Gambia in their effort to break the coastal captivity of Christianity and to establish Christian communities in the rural areas.

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church had already been active in the rural areas along the river in the 19th century, but lack of financial resources and a scarcity of personnel had forced them to retreat or retrench their activities to an absolute minimum. Education and consolidation of the coastal churches became the churches' main activity. By the end of the 1920s however the Roman Catholic Church, spearheaded by Fr. John Meehan, extended its activities to Basse, Bwiam and the north bank (paragraph 8.2). The Methodist Church, already active in Combo and trading towns along the river, struggled to find its 'unworked area'. Plans to evangelise the Jola in Foni and the Fula in Fuladu did not materialise due to lack of resources. On the eve of the Independence the Methodists came in contact with the village of Marakissa, which became their centre for outreach in Western Division (paragraph 8.3). In the 1930s a new period started for the Anglican Church. In 1935 John Daly was appointed as bishop of the newly created Anglican diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas (paragraph 8.4). The Anglican Church also ventured outside the Greater Bathurst area. Their experiment to establish a Christian village as a witnessing presence in the rural areas is described in paragraph 8.5. Paragraph 8.6 briefly discusses the role of Christian political pioneers on the road to Independence and the chapter closes with a conclusion (paragraph 8.7).

The year 1916 was the year in which the Gambian Methodist Church became an independent district. It was used as a marking date for a period in which all the Gambian churches began to develop from mission churches into independent churches. The Roman Catholic Church became an independent mission *sui juris* in 1931 and received

¹ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives, Box 764 H2708 mf 1091 (I found the letter in the Methodist Archives).

the status of a Diocese in 1957. In 1935 the Anglican Church in The Gambia became the seat of the Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas.

In the mid sixties two important events took place that changed the Christian scene: one internal and one external. First of all, on the 18th of February 1965 The Gambia became independent. Soon the government of The Gambia proved to have a different policy towards the establishment of churches and church organisations than its colonial predecessor. The colonial government had not been willing to grant visa to churches and church organisations other than the three established mainline churches: the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Requests from the evangelical organisation World Evangelism for Christ (WEC)² to establish itself in The Gambia had been rejected. After Independence, WEC again applied for visa and was granted residence permits for medical personnel.³ This marked the beginning of the settlement of new Christian groups in The Gambia, often of an Evangelical or Pentecostal conviction.

The second event that influenced the life of the Christian community in The Gambia, was the second Vatican council (1962-1965). The Council gave a high priority to ecumenism. In The Gambia this was directly implemented in inter-church relations and resulted in the establishment of the Gambia Christian Council in 1966, of which the Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches were the founding members. This event as well marked a new phase in the history of Christianity in The Gambia.

8.2 The Roman Catholic Church: From the Parish of St. Mary's to the Diocese of Bathurst

From parish to diocese

In 1917 the Roman Catholic Mission of 'St. Marie de Gambie' was little more than a parish. The total number of Roman Catholics in the country was about 800, catechumens included.⁴ The majority of the members lived in Bathurst while a small group of faithful resided nearby in Combo. There was also a small chapel annex school in Georgetown. By 1965 'St. Marie de Gambie' had developed into an independent diocese with outstations all over the country. This change of status was not so much a reflection of the growth of the church – the membership was about 5000⁵ – as it was an appreciation of the fact the church had been able to establish itself throughout the country.

The first step in the separation of the Gambian Roman Catholic Church from the Vicariate of the Senegambia was taken on July 2 1931, when Cardinal Van Rossum of

² The name World Evangelism for Christ was adopted in The Gambia in the 1990s. Before that time the abbreviation WEC stood for World Evangelical Crusade.

³ A. McLaren, *Evangelisation in the Gambia through social work*; a paper presented at the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia conference on 'Evangelization of The Gambia by AD 2000 and beyond', October 31 1998, 1.

⁴ *Report Juin 1916 à Juillet 1921*, Addition to Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, Boite 4i2.3.

⁵ Annual returns 1959/1960, Annual returns, Boite 4I1.1a, File III.

the Society for the Propagation of the Faith declared The Gambia a mission 'sui juris'.⁶ The importance and the implications for the mission of that decision were underlined by the fact that from July 2 1931 onwards the language of the *Spiritans Journal* became English. In the preceding years the *Journal* had been written in French. The next step was taken on March 8 1951 when The Gambia was declared a Prefecture Apostolic. Fr. Michael Moloney (1938-1981) was appointed as the Prefect Apostolic.⁷ On June 24 1957 The Gambia received the status of a diocese, supervised by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.⁸ On the 5th of January 1958 Moloney was declared its first bishop.⁹ He was consecrated on May 4 1958 in Dublin, Ireland.

Missionary and indigenous personnel

Three main issues dominated the period: personnel, education and outreach. The most urgent issue no doubt was that of personnel, for personnel, both missionary and indigenous, was scarce. During World War I 320 French Spiritans were mobilised to serve in the forces as chaplains and orderlies and the seminary training and recruitment of people were disrupted. Even African clergy were taken to serve in the war. One of the Senegambian diocesan priests, Fr. Gabriel Sene, who had worked in The Gambia from 1904-1907, was appointed chaplain to the Senegalese soldiers fighting the war in Europe. Sene died, struck by shrapnel, in the trenches in the north of France, while administering the sacraments.¹⁰ It brought the horror of World War I home to the Gambian community.¹¹

As a result of this recruitment, very few new appointments were made to Africa during the First World War and directly afterwards. A major setback was suffered in 1920 when the Vicar Apostolic of the Senegambia, Bishop Hyacinth Jalabert and 18 new missionaries drowned in a shipwreck in the Bay of Biscay.¹² When The Gambia was separated from the Vicariate of the Senegambia in 1931, another source of potential assistance was closed off. Senegalese priests no longer came to assist in The Gambia. The massive response of the Ibo in Nigeria also had its effects on the availability of personnel for The Gambia.¹³ Whenever Bishop Moloney asked for more

⁶ Cardinal Van Rossum to Mrg. A. Grimault, Rome July 2 1931 (no. 2305/31) Boite 311.16a. Probably the fact that St. Marie de Gambie was the only Anglophone mission station in an overall Francophone Vicariate Apostolic, contributed to the separation of The Gambia from the Vicariate of the Senegambia. Note: This development in The Gambia was in line with the world-wide policy of Propaganda Fide to encourage mission territories to become independent local churches. See. A. Camps, 'The Catholic missionary movement from 1789 to 1962' in F.J. Verstraelen, *Missiology: an ecumenical introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1995, 235, 236.

⁷ F. Farrelly, *Report for the Bulletin Mensuel*, 1953, 21. The report is entered into the Journal, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸ Entry June 24 1957, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. The new diocese was called: the Diocese of Bathurst. In 1973 it was renamed into 'Diocese of Banjul'.

⁹ Entry January 5 1958, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1925-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰ Entries October 1 1904, April 4 and December 16 1907 and May 25 1917, Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

¹¹ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 24.

¹² Entry January 10 1920, Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

¹³ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 23; P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 100, 101.

priests, the General Superior Griffin would reply that there would be no personnel available for The Gambia. All were needed in Nigeria where there were more than 90,000 baptisms a year.¹⁴ The Gambia, with a Roman Catholic community of about 5000 in 1960 could not even begin competing with that situation. And thus priority was given to the situation of explosive church growth in Nigeria rather than to the struggling minority church in The Gambia,

In the first decades of the 20th century the number of clergy was limited to two or three at most. The tight situation seemed to improve a little in the 1920s. Several Gambians were in training for the ministry. Assistance in the form of an Irish and Senegalese priest was to ease the pressure. But death, illness and bad luck continued to haunt the mission. In 1920 the young Senegalese priest Gabriel Pélégrin came to replace the German Spiritan priest Edouart Wintz. This meant that for the first time in seven years there was again a Senegambian in charge of the parish in Banjul.¹⁵ But Pélégrin's assistance was literally short-lived. In 1925 he died unexpectedly of a heart attack, during a holiday in France.¹⁶ Of the seven Irish missionaries who came out in the period between October 1932 and December 1936, no one stayed. Some died, others went home invalid. Between them, they served no more than an average of ten months.¹⁷ Only towards the end of World War II the situation changed for the better and a larger number of Irish Holy Ghost Fathers were stationed in The Gambia.¹⁸

Father Joseph Mendy

Also the road to creating an indigenous ministry was far from smooth. The initial expectations were high, because the experiences with Senegalese priests had been positive and there was a number of young Gambian men in training in the 1920s and 1930s. On June 22 1924 for the first time in 55 years (!) a Gambian priest was ordained: Fr. Joseph Mendy. The *Journal* states: 'in truth the day that the Lord hath made, a red letter day in the History of Bathurst which witnesses for the first time the ordination of a priest and then it is one of our own, a native of Bathurst.'¹⁹

Mendy, born in Bathurst, had been sent to the Junior Seminary in Ngasobil in 1909. He was one of the priests who had their complete formation in Africa and had spent 13 years training for the priesthood in Senegal. Mendy was ordained on June 22 1924 in the church in Bathurst. People of all denominations attended his ordination and also many priests and religious from Senegal were present. The

¹⁴ M. Moloney to Mgr. Griffin, Bathurst January 14 1952; Mgr. Griffin to Mohoney, Paris March 23 1956, Boite 411.1B, File III, Correspondence Gambia 1936-1950.

¹⁵ Entry March 20 1920, Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

¹⁶ Entry July 5 1925, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst, IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. Pélégrin died on June 17 1925.

¹⁷ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 33-34.

¹⁸ After WW II there was a average addition of one priest per year to The Gambia. The highest point was reached in 1970 when there were 23 priest serving in the country. In 1981 the number had decreased again to 14. *GPI Newsletter*, 5/8 (1981), 8.

¹⁹ Entry June 22 1924, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Box 4i2.4. Note: the remark that the ordination of Mendy was the first priestly ordination ever in Bathurst, is not quite correct. Already in April 4 1849 Bishop Kobès ordained Henry Warlop into priesthood.

Journal of the Spiritan Congregation reported that never before had there been so many priests in The Gambia.

Mendy served as a parish priest in Hagan Street and soon had the reputation of being extremely saintly. Oral history states that Mendy lived an ascetic life, spending much time in prayer and sharing all he had with the poor.²⁰ The same oral tradition states that on several occasions unannounced visitors to the church found Mendy in a levitated state, lost in prayer.²¹ Though the authenticity of this last fact might be debatable, it indicates the respect and reputation Mendy had gained amongst the Bathurst congregation. No details about Mendy's ministry have been recorded in the *Journal*, but the tributes paid to him after his death speak of a good and dedicated pastor. Unexpectedly, after eight years of service to his church, on July 12 1932 Mendy died during a bowel operation. The *Journal* records: 'The mission lost in him a hardworking and good missionary.'²² His German colleague Aloyse Haegy (1922-1946) called him 'a priest who was very dedicated to his work.'²³ Only Meehan, the superior of the mission, was more critical. Though he admitted that Mendy had been a good priest, he also called him headstrong and obstinate.²⁴ Meehan however was at least in later years known for his patronising, overcritical and possibly racist attitude towards another African colleague.²⁵ It is possible that this also influenced his evaluation of Mendy.

Father Thomas Gregory Jobe

There was only one other Gambian priest ordained in the period under discussion, though several other young men had been sent for training: Thomas Gregory Jobe. Jobe was born in Bathurst in 1906 of a Wolof father and a mother of mixed Wolof Portuguese descent, who originated from Gorée.²⁶ As early as June 1922 Jobe's name appears in the Spiritan archives. In that year he came first in the country's school exams, winning a price of £4 and a picture of the British royal family (sic!).²⁷ That same year he left for the Junior Seminary in Ngasobil where he befriended Leopold Senghore, who later became president of Senegal. After two years in Senegal, Jobe

²⁰ B. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 32. Cleary adds that this generosity extended itself to the distribution of mission property, to the extreme annoyance of his colleague Fr. Meehan. Meehan to Le Hunsec, Bathurst June 21 1932, Boite 411.1B, File II Gambie/Bathurst, Correspondance 1932-1935, folder 1 Correspondence Meehan and Whiteside 1932/33. Meehan refers to Mendy's unorganised state of finances.

²¹ B. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 32.

²² Entry July 12 1934, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

²³ Haegy to LeHunsec, July 21 1932, Boite 411.1B, File II Gambie/Bathurst, Correspondance 1932-1935, folder 1 Correspondence Meehan and Whiteside 1932/33.

²⁴ Meehan to Le Hunsec, Bathurst June 21 1932, Boite 411.1B, File II, folder 1 Correspondence Meehan and Whiteside 1932/33. Meehan calls him 'rogue', arrogant, doing things his own way: 'C'était un bon prêtre mais un rogue. (...) Il était à moitié formé. Il faisait tout à la façon de sa tête et je crois que s'il avez veçu il devendra fou.' Meehan however might not have been the most objective judge.

²⁵ In later years he clashed with Fr. Thomas Jobe and the general opinion holds that the conflict was a result of Meehan's racist attitude.

²⁶ 'RIP L'Abbé Thomas Gregory Jobe (1906-1995)', *GPI Newsletter*, 19/3 (March 1995), 9.

²⁷ Entry June 1 1922, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

continued his training in France and was ordained on October 11 1933 in Paris by Bishop Le Hunsec, former Vicar Apostolic of the Senegambia.²⁸ On October 14 1934 he celebrated his first mass in The Gambia, again called a red letter day by the *Journal*. It seems he addressed the people present in the vernacular.²⁹

Not many details are known about Jobe's ministry in The Gambia. Meehan asked Jobe to be in charge of the Bathurst parish and initially seemed to have hoped that Jobe would become the administrative superior, which would give him Meehan time for mission work.³⁰ He took Jobe on a tour through the country, first to Combo, which was part of the Bathurst parish and later also to Basse, to familiarise him with the work of the mission.³¹ Jobe's name is also mentioned in connection with work among Jola who lived in Bathurst and surroundings. In 1938 a group of adult Jola whom Jobe had nurtured into the Christian faith, was baptised.³²

Unexpected and unexplained the *Journal* mentions on January 18 1944 that Jobe had left the country for Senegal without saying goodbye.³³ Later sources indicate that there had been problems between him and Meehan, which came to a clash in January 1944 and caused Jobe to leave the country. Racism might have played a prominent role in the strained relations between Jobe and Meehan.³⁴ After he left The Gambia, Jobe worked from 1944 to 1946 as the Director of the Junior Seminary in Carabane, in the Casamance.³⁵ In 1946 he left the active priesthood and went to France. In 1960 President Senghore offered him Senegalese citizenship and invited him to work in Senegal, first as the UNESCO representative to Senegal, later as the Ambassador for Senegal to Ghana and Italy. When Jobe retired, he settled in Ivory Coast.³⁶ In 1975 Jobe – still highly esteemed and respected by people – was invited to return to The Gambia and lived a quiet life until his death on January 30 1995,³⁷ occasionally helping out with the formation of catechists.

²⁸ Le Hunsec to Meehan, Paris March 1 1933, Boite 4I1.1B File II, Gambie/Bathurst, Correspondance 1932-1935, folder 1 Correspondence Meehan and Whiteside 1932/33; Entry October 14 1934, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. Jobe returned to The Gambia, after a short stay in Ireland to perfect his English. Meehan to Le Hunsec, Bathurst February 12 1934, Boite 4I1.1B

²⁹ Entry October 14 1934, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

³⁰ Meehan to LeHunsec, November 4 1935, Boite 4I1.1B File II, Gambie/Bathurst, Correspondance 1932-1935.

³¹ Entry February 3 1934 (to Combo) and May 9 1940 (to Basse), Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

³² Entry December 26 1938, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

³³ Entry January 18 1944, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

³⁴ Moloney to Father General, Bathurst April 7 1958, Boite 4I1.1B, File IV letters 1951-1955; interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999; interview with Fr. Tony Gabisi, Kanifing February 9 1999. Note: Mr. Thomas Senghore is a nephew of Fr. Jobe.

³⁵ One of his students was Pierre Sanyang, the present Bishop of St. Louis in Senegal. Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

³⁶ It is said that Jobe did not go back to The Gambia because the Vatican, when releasing him of his duties in 1944, told him not to return to The Gambia in order not to disturb the relations. Interview Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

³⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, 19/2 (Febr. 1995), 4; 'RIP L'Abbé Thomas Gregory Jobe (1906-1995), *GPI Newsletter* 19/3 (March 1995), 9. It is mentioned that on his return to The Gambia Jobe occasionally helped out with the formation of catechists.

Two contemporaries of Jobe also offered for the priesthood, Paul Edwin and Samuel (Labe) Njie. Paul Edwin died in 1935, a year before his ordination³⁸ while Samuel (Labe) Njie left the seminary in 1940 – he was sub-deacon by then – and married in 1943.³⁹ In the 1950s two more men were sent to Nigeria for training.⁴⁰ One of them withdrew,⁴¹ the other candidate, Daniel Joof, died suddenly in 1957 after six years of training.⁴² In the 1960s three more people were sent for training. This time the church opted for a seminary in Senegal, hoping that the familiar environment would help the candidates to persist. Unfortunately two of them died while in training. The third candidate, Dominique Sanyang, withdrew and later became the originator of the 1981 coup d'état.⁴³ Though several others were sent to the seminary in later years, all withdrew in the process of training⁴⁴ and there were no new ordinations for more than 40 years.⁴⁵

Gradually it became clear that the case of Jobe had a long lasting impact on the indigenous vocations in The Gambia. Parents objected to their sons 'being made slaves for the missionaries' and discouraged plans to offer for the priesthood.⁴⁶ Because of the problems encountered with vocations, several attempts were made by the clergy in The Gambia to clear up the incident with Jobe and to restore him to the priesthood. But the Superior General did not support these efforts.⁴⁷ Thus the incident of Jobe haunted the vocations for nearly 40 years.

³⁸ Meehan to LeHunsec, Bathurst September 13 1935, Boite 411.1B File II, Gambia/Bathurst, Correspondance 1932-1935 Edwin seems to have died in Chevilly, France. Some sources give a cold (pneumonia?) as reason, while others say he died of tuberculosis. Thereupon the other candidate, Samuel Njie who was training in Cattlehead, Ireland was transferred to Yaounde in Cameroun.

³⁹ Footnote at Entry August 23 1936, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, Boite 4i2.4. His daughter Pauline Njie later became the first Gambian Presentation Sister. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 63.

⁴⁰ Moloney to Mgr. Griffin, Bathurst March 19 1953, Boite 411.1B, File III, Correspondence Gambia 1936-1950.

⁴¹ Annual returns 1955/1956, 1957 and 1958, Annual returns, Boite 411.1a, File III.

⁴² W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 35. Joof was sent to the senior seminary in Nigeria in 1954. Entry January 22 1954, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. In 1959 there were five students in the minor seminary in Bathurst; three of them later went to Senegal for further formation. Annual returns 1959, Annual returns, Boite 411.1a, File III.

⁴³ His full name was Dominique Savao Kukoi Samba Sanyang. Interview with M. Casey, Darsalami January 19 1999.

⁴⁴ The *GPI Newsletters* regularly mention both the opposition of parents to the vocation of their children, and the names of those who have withdrawn from the training. E.g. *GPI Newsletter*, 2/7 (July 1978), 2; 3/18 (1979), 2; 4/8 (1980), 6 and 4/13 (1980) 2 etc.

⁴⁵ On April 13 1985 Fr. Tony Gabisi and Fr. Peter Gomez were ordained as priests. *GPI Newsletter*, 10/4 (Oct. 1987), 5.

⁴⁶ Interview with Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

⁴⁷ Bishop Moloney of The Gambia wrote to following letter to the Superior General: 'Since my appointment I have been naturally preoccupied with trying to encourage African vocations, as was my predecessor. We both find ourselves against the same difficulty – the fact that our last man, Father Jobe, abandoned the obligations of the priesthood. There is no doubt but that he still holds a large place in the affections of the people here, and that there will be no keenness among them towards promoting vocations, if his position is not cleared up. I know how difficult it is, as Father Farrelly and other have already met him on a few

Also the fact that several candidates to the priesthood died during their training while quite a few of the Senegalese priests had died a few years after their ordination, increased the reluctance of parents to allow their children to be trained for the ministry.⁴⁸ People were convinced there was a curse on the priesthood. These two issues, family pressure and death, hampered the development of an indigenous priesthood for nearly half a century. The sad result of this failure to establish an indigenous priesthood was that from 1944 until 1985 an expatriate, mainly European (Irish) clergy led the Gambian Roman Catholic Church. In many ways this failure to establish an indigenous priesthood set the church back into a 19th century situation, in which it had been primarily a church of missionaries. The fact that in the 19th century this situation had only lasted a few years, because soon Senegalese priests came to assist in the parishes, only made it worse. In order to bring some African flavour into the leadership of the church, Senegalese priests were invited every now and then to preach or hold a retreat.⁴⁹ From the late 1970s onwards some Nigerian Spiritans worked in The Gambia.⁵⁰

occasions. May I respectfully suggest to you a further attempt from a different angle of approach.

My suggestion may show more keenness than feasibility and you will be able to decide yourself. It is that you yourself or possibly the Archbishop LeHunsec (who was his former Vicar Apostolic) see him and explain to him that I personally and all the Fathers, and especially the people, would be delighted to see him restored to his former position and that I have written to you to that effect. That Rome has informed us that no form of reconciliation (public) will be insisted on, unless he has entered on any civil matrimonial contract, which would have legal complications. I am assured, on reliable authority, that nothing like this has taken place, and that his conduct has been in the circumstances, excellent. I foresee one big difficulty in the way of his return. It is the presence of Father Meehan.

I do not at all consider that Fa. Meehan had any major responsibility for Fa. Jobe's action, but the fact remains that in Father Jobe's mind and in the people's unfounded opinion, it was the clash between him and Father Meehan which prepared the way for the final bolt. If this proved to be the only obstacle, I would be prepared to ask Meehan to remain in Ireland. This would be a hard step but the return of Fa. Jobe would be so important for the future of the mission here, that I am sure Fa. Meehan would be prepared to make this additional sacrifice for The Gambia.' Moloney to Superior General, Bathurst April 7 1952, Boite 4111B, File IV letters 1951-1955.

On the letter a comment is written: Fa. Jobe must shed some of his terrible pride first. Signed: F.G. 16-5-1952. Thus no further action was taken.

⁴⁸ Many parents also objected to their sons offering for the priesthood, because the celibacy implied no children to take care of them when they were growing old and to pour libation for them after their death.

⁴⁹ Eg. In 1948 Mgr. Dodds from the Casamance was invited to bless the new St. Theresa's Church in Kanifing (Entry April 11 1948), in December 1956 a Senegalese priest Fr. Cisse came to hold a retreat with the people. Entry December 5 1956, Journal de St. Marie de Gambie IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁵⁰ Interview with Fr. Tony Gabisi, Kanifing February 9 1999; W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 63. In the late 1970s an exchange programme was set up with the Nigerian Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers and several Nigerians such as Fr. Casimir Eke worked in The Gambia for periods of two years each.

In 1972 the Senegalese Fr. Pierre Sanyang, who later became bishop of St. Louis, was invited to The Gambia to lead the newly established Junior Seminary at Fajara.⁵¹ It was hoped that his presence would stimulate vocations. This hope proved founded. Some of the young boys, who entered the Junior Seminary in 1972 under Sanyang, were ordained in the mid 1980s. At last the indigenisation of the ministry had begun.

The indigenisation of the religious congregation in The Gambia was also slow. Europeans dominated the religious female orders for most of the 19th and 20th centuries. The first Gambian woman who completed her noviciate was Sr. Jeanne Therese Ndeye. In August 1968, more than a hundred years after two Senegalese women had started the Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Heart of Mary, she made her final profession in the Congregation of St. Joseph of Cluny.⁵² In the midst of a missionary dominated leadership of the Gambian Roman Catholic Church, it was the catechist, who represented the Gambian element in the ministry. From a few men in the first two decades of the 20th century, the number of catechists rose to nearly fifty in the 1940s.⁵³ When more priests became available in the 1950s it seems that the number of catechists gradually but steadily declined.⁵⁴ But in the 1970s the role of the catechist was again re-valued and the catechist became the crucial pawn in the rural areas.

Education

Education continued to be an important topic on the church's agenda as well. The hope of converting people through education had been abandoned by the 1950s. Moloney commented that 'Muslims receive education in a Catholic school rather than Catholic education.'⁵⁵ But this knowledge did nothing to diminish the priority of education because the church was convinced that through education it could spread Christian influence and thus affect the society. Thus, education continued to be a prime activity of the Roman Catholic Church during the 20th century. Wherever new mission stations were built, a school (catechetical, nursery or primary) accompanied and often preceded the chapel and the teacher was often catechist at the same time and vice versa. Fr. Francis Farell (1937-1972 and 1976-1983) spoke in 1953 about the endeavour to get schools in key areas in the Protectorate before the Native Authority (read: Government) Schools were established in the region. It put a strain on the finances of

⁵¹ In November 1972 a Junior Seminary, called St. Michael's, was started in Fajara, The Gambia in order to stimulate vocations. Later the seminary moved to Lamin. Two of the 19 young people who were part of the first 'batch' of 1972 actually became priests: Fr. Tony Gabisi and Fr. Peter Gomez were ordained in 1985.

⁵² W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 63.

⁵³ Annual returns, Boite 411.1a, File III. In 1932/33 there were for example 29 catechists, 11 (!) of whom were female and 18 male. In 1941 this number had risen to 48, 34 of whom were male and 14 (!) female.

⁵⁴ In 1957 there were still 42 catechists, in 1958 37 while in 1959 there were only 33 catechists left. Annual returns, Boite 411.1a, File III. It is unclear what the cause for this reduction was. It might be the increase in priests available. It might also be that the education requirements for catechists became stricter. The low payment might also have caused some people to leave.

⁵⁵ Loose clippings from newspapers of 1958 glued into the Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 412.4.

the Church but also guaranteed an entrance into the Protectorate, which could serve as a starting point for evangelism.⁵⁶

Already in the 19th century, education had been a field of competition between the different churches: the number of pupils, results in exams and the school sports competition were meted out widely to underline this rivalry.⁵⁷ The fact that the Methodist Church started with a Boys' High School in 1875 (revived in 1908) and a Girls' High School in 1915 (reopened in 1917) seemed to have caused some envy on the Roman Catholic side. A report of 1921 states that 'our rich and influential adversaries do not hesitate to spend large amounts of money to attract the young people of the colony to their schools. The Wesleyans are busy building a superb school, a real palace, decorated with the name of high school, which costs about 200.000 francs.'⁵⁸ Shortly after the Methodist Girls' High School was opened, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny started a Secondary School for Girls. But it took until 1928 before St. Augustine's Secondary School was started. The official opening of the Secondary School took place on January 10 1930.⁵⁹ Oral tradition says that Meehan kept his plans to build a secondary school a secret from his Superior, afraid that he would not be given permission and that the money he had saved for the building would be taken from him.⁶⁰

The real problems in education however did not come from competition with other churches but from the Government. Since the late 19th century the mission schools had been receiving government grants to run their schools. As time passed by and the schools increased, they became more and more dependent on the government for financing the schools. By setting conditions for the grants – such as the requirement of qualified teachers – the Government had been able to extend its influence over the schools. In 1945 a new education act was passed. It ruled that all primary schools were to come under direct government control.⁶¹ Its implementation meant that the influence of the churches in education decreased. The teachers were paid and supervised by the government and the Government also had a say in the appointment of teachers. The act implied that the schools in practice became government schools, though they used buildings owned by the mission. For this the missions received rent. The churches were also allowed to make a limited contribution in the board of the schools, but finance and curriculum were from that moment on government business. Though the protest of the churches was strong, the new policy was implemented and the 'local arrangement schools' came into being. Primary schools that were built after 1945 by the mission were subject to different rules, but in all cases the Government paid the teachers salaries.

⁵⁶ F. Farelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 4 in Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, after entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4.

⁵⁷ *Rapport Juin 1916 à Juillet 1921*, Addition to Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

⁵⁸ *Rapport Juin 1916 à Juillet 1921*, Addition to Journal de St. Marie de Gambie III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

⁵⁹ Entries December 18 1928 and January 10 1930, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁶⁰ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 31.

⁶¹ Bulletin des oeuvres 1953, Annual returns, Boite 4I1.1a, File IV.

A second proposal of the Government, made in 1951, affected the secondary schools. Baldwin, a Government adviser, investigated the secondary school system and advised that all four secondary schools, St. Joseph's, St. Augustine's, MBH and MGHS should be amalgamated and made into one government high school. The churches opposed the proposal, not wanting to lose their secondary schools. Also the financial consequences and the reduction of the number of students, who would receive education, seemed reasons to resist the proposal. But the Government stuck to its guns. Eventually, the Methodists gave in to government pressure and their two schools were amalgamated into the Gambia High School.⁶² Moloney, however, refused and after much negotiations was able to ensure the continuation of St. Joseph's and St. Augustine's Secondary School, despite threats of cuts in grants.⁶³ He was, however, obliged to ensure that there would be enough qualified personnel to run both secondary schools.

A new complication arose in 1961 with the introduction of the Common Entrance Examination. The exam was taken at Standard Four and only students who passed could proceed with their education. Because neither St. Joseph's nor St. Augustine's Secondary School were government schools, children who had failed could in theory still continue their education in the Catholic Secondary Schools. But because both schools depended on government funds, the Roman Catholic Church was obliged to honour the fact that the Government had the right to set the selection criteria. Thus in 1963 Bishop Moloney accepted the Common Entrance Examination as a selection criterion for the mission's secondary schools.⁶⁴

It is noteworthy to see that despite all difficulties and obstacles the Roman Catholic Church continued to give priority to the promotion of Christian education. In the 19th century the schools had been started to protect Roman Catholic children from influences of Protestantism, Islam and African traditional religions. Gradually education also became a means of building up the Roman Catholic community. It educated people who could faithfully serve within the church as catechists and teachers or spread a Christian influence in public life as government employees. By the end of the 19th century the schools were seen as a means of outreach: both Muslim children and children who were raised in a background of the African traditional religions were exposed in the schools to Christian doctrine and the Christian way of life. Unlike other areas in Africa however, the school did not become a successful instrument of evangelism in The Gambia. Though some young people converted to Christianity during their school years, most of them went back to their former religion (often Islam) after leaving school. Therefore gradually the aim of education, apart from being a simple though expensive act of diakonia, shifted to spreading Christian influence. After Vatican II the schools were also seen as a meeting point for people of different religions to get to know each other and to form friendships.⁶⁵ Several people,

⁶² The High School was for a short while called Concord High School and later renamed Gambia High School.

⁶³ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 52-54. Entry April 29 1952, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁶⁴ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 54.

⁶⁵ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 54.

among whom the Vicar General in 1999 Fr. Vincent Comer and Bishop Michael Cleary who both worked in schools for a considerable period of their career, have indicated that the schools form an important place where interreligious relationships were built and friendships developed.⁶⁶ One of the *GPI Newsletters* states:

The vast majority of pupils attending these [mission] schools are Muslims. This mixing of Muslim and Christian pupils brought a result of inestimable value; the establishing of notably good relations between Islam and Christianity, a characteristic of life in The Gambia today which is almost unique. It has meant that the Catholic community, though small, has made a valuable contribution in all areas of Government and public life.⁶⁷

In this sense Christian Schools, where at least a considerable number of the teachers are Christian, can contribute to the growth of mutual understanding of Christians and Muslims in The Gambia. A Gambian Cluny Sister, Sr. Catherine Jarra, has explored the way education has contributed to the harmonious relationships between Christians and Muslims and has given suggestions to work consciously on improving the religious encounter by including it in the Religious Education programme of the school curriculum.⁶⁸

Rural outreach

The third topic that dominated the Roman Catholic Church's agenda in the 20th century was rural outreach. Around the turn of the century attempts had been made to establish mission stations in Combo and in Foni, but lack of resources in finance and personnel had forced the mission to retrench. The only station that remained open during the meagre years of World War I and its aftermath was MacCarthy Island where a teacher-catechist was stationed. In the 1920s men like Nicholas Prom and Francis Malik Njie served at MacCarthy, but it seems the work did not flourish.⁶⁹ In 1926 the MacCarthy

⁶⁶ Interview with Fr. Vincent Comer, Kanifing February 11 1999. *GPI Newsletter*, 5/7 (1981), 4-6.

⁶⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, 11/6 (June 1987), 6.

⁶⁸ C.M. Jarra, *Christian Muslim relations: its educational and pastoral implications in The Gambia*, M.A. Thesis, Rome 1996/97, 90 ff. 'In the light of the present situation, the authorities of both religions should avail of their specialists to prepare a unified programme, since both religions have a lot in common. The Gambian people will hopefully develop a better healthy relationship, and come to realise that all adore the One God and that religion does not divide but unite. The initiative already taken by PROCMURA [Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa MTF] and the GPI [Gambia Pastoral Institute MTF] on educating Christians on Islam would materialise if the formation is preceded in our institutions. (...) We may propose to the GCC [Gambia Christian Council MTF] in collaboration with their Muslim counterparts, could if they produce an integrated programme for all levels of formal education.' Note: faulty grammar in the original text.

⁶⁹ Entry January 10 1920, January 20 1922 and June 4 1922, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3. According to a report called *Historical notes on the education activities of the Catholic Mission* in the *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1928-1958, (Boite 4i2.4) after the entry 1958, the school in Georgetown was closed in 1921.

mission is mentioned in the *Journal* for the last time.⁷⁰ The station was closed down soon afterwards and the attention of the mission shifted to Mbolett, Basse and Bwiam.

From the early 1920s onwards the Roman Catholic Church adopted an active policy to escape its imprisonment at St. Mary's Island and to move into the rural areas. For a large part this zeal was instigated by the drive to compete with the other missions in the country. A report of 1921 explicitly states that the first aim of the mission was 'to stop the Protestants, who preceded us in this mission, from triumphing over Catholicism.'⁷¹ The other motivation for the move into the rural areas was the evangelisation of the adherents of the traditional religions, in order 'to stem the tide of Islam'.⁷² The hope of converting Muslims to Christianity had since long been given up and the missionaries had begun to concentrate on the pockets of adherents of African traditional religions to curtail the expansion of Islam. The vision was to create small islands of Christianity in a predominantly Muslim country. In line with this scheme the Jola in Combo and Foni, the Serer in Niimi and the Fula in the Basse region were identified as groups among whom the Church envisaged mission work. The activity resulted in a series of mission stations, first still centred in the coastal region, but from the 1930s onwards also inland. It was from that time onwards that the Roman Catholic Church became the largest Church in The Gambia.⁷³

The main architect of the mission's outreach work was Fr. John Meehan. No doubt due to his slender resources Meehan first turned his attention to the areas and people directly surrounding St. Mary: the Jola in British Combo on the south bank and the Serer in Mbolett across the river from Bathurst on the north bank. In 1920 a small house was built at the Cape in Combo, followed by a small chapel that same year.⁷⁴ Soon 50 to 60 Jola and Manjago catechumens⁷⁵ came to attend the catechism classes.⁷⁶ In 1922 a

⁷⁰ Entry January 14 1926, *Journal St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4*. Possibly the mission was abandoned because the importance of MacCarthy as an administrative and commercial centre had gradually declined and people had moved away from the island.

⁷¹ Rapport Juin 1916 à Juillet 1921, addition to the *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3*. That same report saw 'preserving our Christians from the Mohammedan contamination, the school of sensuality' as the second object of the mission, whilst 'the conversion of the blacks' took a third place in priority list. The mission at Kanifing can serve as an example of the competitive spirit. In 1948 Farrelly wrote to Bishop LeHunsec that the Roman Catholic Church had moved quickly into Serekunda 'to anticipate the heretical activities of an influential *Pasteur Anglican* who has his design on the Diola District around our new foundation.' Probably this *Pasteur Anglican* was William Macauley, who in the 1940s supervised the building of Christ Church in Serekunda. F. Farrelly to Mgr. Le Hunsec, May 6 1948, Boite 4I1.1B, File III Correspondence 1936-1960.

⁷² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 80.

⁷³ The statistics of 1932/33 estimate the number of Catholics at about 3000 while the number of 'heretiques' (read: Anglican and Protestants) together was estimated at 2963. Annual returns 1932/33, Boite 4I1.1a, file III, Annual returns. But this last number might be too optimistic. The Methodist Synod of 1938 estimated the number of Methodists at 1622. Synod Minutes 1938, Box 249 H2708, mf.440. The Anglican Church was considerably smaller. Laughton estimated the number at about 700 in 1938; J. Laughton, *The Gambia*, 30.

⁷⁴ Entry June (no date) 1920 and November 8 1920, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4*.

⁷⁵ F. Farrelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 4, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958*, after entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4. The report gives an overview of the

mission station was opened at Bakkow Konko. A small Jola style chapel, called St. Michael's chapel was built and Etienne Lamin Diatta was appointed as catechist for the area.⁷⁷ In 1923 the congregation at Bakkow Konko had grown to 40 regular attendants each Sunday, five of whom were communicant members. Two catechists were in charge of the area: Etienne Diatta and Augustine Bassene.⁷⁸ When Diatta left in 1924, Bassene continued on his own.⁷⁹ He supervised the villages of Bakau Konko, Pacôme, Sabiji and Jeswang,⁸⁰ while priests from Bathurst travelled regularly to Bakau Konko to give communion.⁸¹

In 1933 another grass-hut chapel was erected in Jeswang-Jola, during the week serving as a school. A certain Mr. Andrew acted as teacher and gave catechism classes in Jeswang and Sabiji.⁸² During the war, when the Jeswang area was used for military purposes, the village was moved. The village, including the chapel, was demolished to make way for an airstrip for military planes. When after the war people settled back into their old area, it was decided to build a mission station with a school in Kanifing rather than to return to Jeswang. Kanifing seemed to become the new centre of residence. In 1948 St. Theresa's Church was built.⁸³ Bishop Dodds of Ziguinchor came for the opening to bless the church. In 1999 the Kanifing parish had grown into the largest parish in the diocese.⁸⁴

Kanifing had a resident priest from 1950 onwards.⁸⁵ Soon after its foundation, the Kanifing mission station became the new centre of outreach. The school flourished

development of the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia in the 20th century. It attributes the growth of the church first of all to large families and secondly to the conversion of 'pagan' migrant workers, being Jola girls from the Casamance and Manjago men from Guinea-Bissau.

⁷⁶ Entry November 8 1920, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3. Oral tradition mentions that Fr. Jobe regularly travelled by bicycle to the Church in Old Jeswang to give communion. Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

⁷⁷ Entry November 22 1922 (under the heading: facts not mentioned), Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

⁷⁸ Entries August 14 1923, Journal de Sante Marie de Bathurst III, 1893-1923, Boite 4i2.3; February 27 1924, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁷⁹ Diatta left for the Casamance because his brother had died. Entry February 7 1924, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸⁰ Entry December 7 1924, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸¹ Entry August 14 1923, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

⁸² Entries June 9 1933 and March 11 1934, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸³ The names of Mr. George M. Senghore and John Charles Fox are transmitted as the ones who made a feasibility study for the establishment of a mission station at Kanifing. In 1946 the area was still a forest, used by the Jola for circumcision. In 1968 St. Theresa's was rebuilt on a much larger scale. Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999. Note: other information states that the Church was reopened in 1972. S. Bakurin, 'Around the diocese: St. Theresa's parish', *GPI Newsletter* 20/3 (March 1996), 12-13.

⁸⁴ Numbers vary but the estimate is that about 4000 worship in Kanifing each Sunday. Note: that is about as much as all the members of the Anglican and Methodist Church together! Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

⁸⁵ F. Farelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 4 in Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, after Entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4.

under the capable guidance of Mr. James Ogoo. In 1953, 5 teachers were attached to St. Theresa's Primary School and about 280 children attended the school. Gradually this school became one of the biggest in the country. Also the pastoral side was well taken care of. Five catechists were employed by the parish to care for the Manjago in the neighbouring villages.⁸⁶ From Kanifing contacts were made with Lamin⁸⁷ and in 1951 the Lamin church was built, donated by Mr. Pierre Njie, a convert from Islam.⁸⁸ In later years also villages like Brikama, Gunjur⁸⁹ and Kartong⁹⁰ became outstations of Kanifing. In more recent times the churches have been built in the nearby villages Manjaikunda, Bakoteh and Kotu, all forming part of the Kanifing parish. Also the work in the nearby parish of Cape St. Mary continued. In 1949 with funds from Mr. Sarkis Mahdi, one of the Lebanese members of the Bakau parish, a new church was built.⁹¹

Meehan directed his attention not only south to the Combo but also to the north, across the river where many Serer lived. In Senegal a considerable number of Serer had converted to Christianity⁹² and possibly Meehan hoped for a similar response in The Gambia. In 1924 he made his first visits to Mbolett⁹³ but there seems to have been no follow up for some years. From 1931 onwards he visited Mbolett regularly. It seems that in the early days Meehan considered Mbolett first of all as a sort of personal retreat centre. He planted fruit trees and created an aviary, which he visited regularly, but does not seem to have initiated any mission work as such.⁹⁴ Gradually however Mbolett developed into a mission station. Mr. Ndick Jye was appointed as catechist-caretaker in 1931⁹⁵ but in 1935 he was sent on retirement because 'he was taking things too easy.'

⁸⁶ F. Farelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 4 in Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, after Entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸⁷ Entry February 6 1949, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁸⁸ Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999; W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 38.

⁸⁹ Entry January 1 1954, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁹⁰ Fr. Andrew Carroll started Kartong in the early 1960s. While travelling around the Kartong area he found the Karoninka people open to Christianity. In 1962 a school was opened, followed in 1964 by a church. Kartong proved a difficult mission station because people constantly moved away from the village in search of further education and work. Some of the outstations of Kartong, like Berendeng, Sanyang and Gunjur also have proven to be up-hill stations. In the two other outstations of Kartong, Darsalami and Sifoe, people were more responsive. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 60; *GPI Newsletter* 19/9 (Nov. 1995) 13-14. Several of the indigenous priests, David Jarjue, Pascal Mendy and Emile Sambou, and a Presentation Sister, Catherine Jibba, come from the Kartong area.

⁹¹ Entry January 29 1949, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. The present Stella Maris Church seems to have been opened in 1960. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 60; *GPI Newsletter*, 20/4 (April 1960), 3.

⁹² P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 76. Clarke observes however that though many Serer became Christian towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, many more became Muslim.

⁹³ Entries January 6 1924, March 31 1924 Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁹⁴ Entries March 9 1934, May 10 1935, July 6 1935, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁹⁵ Entry June 8 1931, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

Peter Sylva became catechist in his place.⁹⁶ In 1937 a school was opened and Joachim DaCosta was appointed as its teacher. That very same year DaCosta already had 25 boys on the roll.⁹⁷ It seems DaCosta was replaced in 1940 by Etienne Sarr, himself a Serer.⁹⁸ By that time it had become clear however, that the Serer were not turning to Christianity in great numbers. The same entry that announced the appointment of Sarr, noted that 'it was a hard missionary district, all steeped in superstition.' Nevertheless, Sarr did relatively well and in April 1941 he took 7 or 8 young boys over to Bathurst to celebrate Easter at the Bathurst Church.⁹⁹ It seems that the death of the catechist Peter Sylva in December 1943 – he was bitten by a snake and died almost immediately – sealed the fate of Mbolett mission station.¹⁰⁰ After that the work dwindled and Mbolett is no longer mentioned in the *Journal* until 1953. It was about the same time that its initiator Meehan, after forty years of work, started to take things a bit easier. Perhaps that was another reason for the neglect of the station; Mbolett had been Meehan's initiative. In 1953 Bishop Moloney undertook an effort to restart the work by re-starting the school,¹⁰¹ but it was not until 1965 that the work really revived. In that year the centre of the mission was changed to Njongon and a resident priest was appointed to care for the mission.

A little further away from Bathurst, there was another area, which attracted Meehan's attention: Foni. In the past Haas and Wieder had pointed to the possibility of a mission among the Jola because the Jola had resisted conversion to Islam. In the first decade of the 20th century Meistermann and a team of catechists had tried to get the work in Foni started. A station had been built at Boulelai and when Meisterman died in 1908, catechists had endeavoured to keep things going. In 1921 three catechists were still engaged in mission work among the Jola in Boulelai.¹⁰² One of them was Auguste Ellis. According to the *Journal* he spoke five languages fluently and later offered himself as a postulant brother in Ngasobil.¹⁰³ In 1922 Meehan was forced to close the station due to lack of funds and personnel.¹⁰⁴

The work in Foni was taken up again in the 1930s. In 1933 Fr. Harold Whiteside made an orientation tour through The Gambia and recommended Bwiam as good site for a potential mission station because many people were still 'pagan'.¹⁰⁵ Less than three years later however, he had to revise this opinion: the Jola had already been thoroughly islamised and the expectations about the Bwiam mission should not be

⁹⁶ Entry October 27 1935, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁹⁷ Entry March 17 1937, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

⁹⁸ Entry February 14 1940, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. The *Journal* mentions that the catechist was recalled and replaced by Etienne Sarr. But Peter Sylva worked for the mission until his death in 1943, so possibly Sarr replaced DaCosta.

⁹⁹ Entry April 13 1941, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰⁰ Entry December 20 1943, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰¹ Entry February 17 1953, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰² Le Hunsec to ???, Dakar July 14 1921, Boite 261A/X.

¹⁰³ Rapport Juin 1916 à Juillet 1921, Addition to the *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst* III, 1894-1923, Boite 4i2.3.

¹⁰⁴ *Bulletin Général*, 377 (January 1922) 387.

¹⁰⁵ H. Whiteside to Mgr. LeHunsec, Bathurst February 14 1933, Boite 4II.1B, File II Correspondence Gambia 1932-1935.

raised too high.¹⁰⁶ Still full of hope however, and with good memories of the potential of the Boulelai mission in mind, the work in Bwiam began. In June 1933 land was allocated for a mission station, fruit trees were planted and a temporary residence for visiting priests was built.¹⁰⁷ The next year Whiteside supervised the building of a mission station where he installed himself in June 1935.¹⁰⁸ For several years the station was only manned in the dry season 'Bwiam being hot'.¹⁰⁹ When Whiteside went on leave and it became clear that he was not coming back, the station was abandoned for nearly a year and half until the arrival of Fr. Francis Farrell in October 1937.¹¹⁰ The school had to be rebuilt, because the previous one had collapsed during the rains. In 1939 Farrell received assistance in the form of a catechist, named Joseph Richards.¹¹¹ In March 1941 there were already 5 catechists in the Bwiam area: Harry Kujabi, a man called Syriac, a person called Jude and two others whose names are no longer readable. They worked in the villages around Bwiam such as Kanilai, Sintet, Kaimo and Kafuto.¹¹² Farrell had meanwhile been appointed as principal of St. Augustine's,¹¹³ so the catechists had to struggle on by themselves. The baptism register in Bwiam testifies to the fact that they worked hard. In the 1930s and 1940s many Jola were baptised in Bwiam, many of who had been Muslim. No doubt the catechists can be credited for doing most of the work, because the priests only visited occasionally, travelling up and down between Bwiam and Bathurst. Though quite a few Jola were baptised in the early days of Bwiam, nearly all the converts went back to Islam as time passed by.¹¹⁴

In 1947 Bwiam at long last got its resident priest: Fr. Andrew Carroll (1945-1998).¹¹⁵ But by then Haas' prediction of 1886 that if the mission in Foni was left, it would soon be islamised, had come true.¹¹⁶ A report from 1953 stated: 'Through procrastination and delay Bwiam from being the most promising mission station, has now become the most difficult one we have. Bwiam itself has become completely

¹⁰⁶ H. Whiteside to Mgr. LeHunsec, Bwiam March 4 1936, Boite 411.1B, File III, Correspondence Gambia 1936-1960.

¹⁰⁷ Entry June 18 1933, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰⁸ Entries January 17 1934, February 22 1934, January 15 1935, June 15 1935, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1953, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁰⁹ Entries July 6 1935 and April 15 1936, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹⁰ Entries October 1 1936 and October 29 1937, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924 - 1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹¹ Entries March 6 1938 and January 7 1939, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. The marriage of Joseph Richards was the first Christian marriage ever in Bwiam. Joseph Richards is again mentioned in 1943 as leader of a Jola Choir who sang for Christmas. Then he is called ex-catechist and aspirant brother, which must mean that his marriage can not have lasted very long. Entry December 25 1943, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹² *GPI Newsletter* 17/4 (1993), 4.

¹¹³ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 39.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999. In 1999 there were only 8-10 Jola Christians in Bwiam left, comprising of two staunch Christian families namely those of Henry Jammeh and Marcel Baji.

¹¹⁵ Entry March 7 1947, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹⁶ Haas to Riehl, St. Mary's December 10 1886, Boite 160B/III, lettres Gambie 1885-1886.

Muslim and our main hope is of the villages near the border.¹¹⁷ Despite the difficulties and disillusion the Bwiam mission struggled on. When it became clear that the elders were keen on sending their children to school, the main focus in Bwiam became education. Small catechetical schools were opened in villages such as Kanilai,¹¹⁸ while further education was given in Bwiam itself. Nowadays Bwiam is one of the largest educational centres outside the urban area.¹¹⁹

In the 1950s many of the children who went to school in Bwiam were baptised. But most went back to Islam.¹²⁰ The elders of the community discouraged them to continue practising their Christian faith once they had left school. One of the lessons the Roman Catholic Mission has learned from the Bwiam experience was that it was not wise to baptise children or teenagers of non-Christian parents. The Bwiam experience taught that it was not fair to children to put them in a position where they would suffer from social pressure and would be torn apart by a divided loyalty between their teachers and their family.¹²¹

A fourth area of missionary attention was the Basse region where the majority of the Fula where still adherents of African traditional religions.¹²² Basse, being the most

¹¹⁷ F. Farelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 5 in *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958*, after entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹⁸ Entry March 11 1952, *Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958*, Boite 4i2.4.

¹¹⁹ In 1995 there were about 2000 students enrolled in the Roman Catholic schools in Bwiam. Bwiam has a nursery school, St. Edwards Primary School and the Fatima Junior and Senior Secondary School. Bwiam also has a vocational training centre and there are 4 primary schools and 13 nursery schools in the satellite villages of the Bwiam parish. P. Crowe, 'Around the parish: Bwiam', *GPI Newsletter*, 19/7 (July 1995), 13-15.

¹²⁰ In the *GPI Newsletter* of 1979 a Christian from Bullock (Bwiam area) Henry Sanyang sent in the following contribution: 'I would like to raise a point for discussion. There were many Jola who chose the path of Christianity in the Foni area in the period 1950 to 1960. Where are these now and what religion do they follow? Some have become Muslims to join the Moslem society in which they live. Some have slacked off in their adherence to the way of Christ because there are not enough priests to stay in the parishes in the Foni. Some have become Moslems because they wish to marry a Moslem partner. Did such a person ever have the faith if he/she denies the faith to marry the chosen partner? They do not like the total and permanent commitment of Christian marriage and this is their way of avoiding it. Some youngsters accept too easily the statement that Christianity is not an African religion. Is Christianity any more or less African than Islam? For one to suggest that Christianity is not African, I state that he has not enough knowledge of African religions and traditions. The recent visit of the Pope is a reminder of the millions of African Christians.' Henry Sanyang, 'Christianity in the Foni', *GPI Newsletter*, 4/12, 7.

¹²¹ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999. Fr. Ellison mentioned that nowadays in cases where young people, even after having completed their education, continue to be interested in the Christian faith, contact is made with the elders of the family. The priest or catechist will visit the family and ask them to give the person the freedom to choose his/her way with God. When questioned, Ellison added that he is convinced that even among those who have gone back to Islam 'at heart many of them still find some meaning of life in their knowledge of Christ.'

¹²² Both the Anglican and Catholic Mission endeavoured to work among the Fula in the Basse region. The Fula in the Upper River Division (URD) are said to be of a different clan than those in Fulladu, in Futo Toro and the Futa Jallon who were all staunch Muslims. It seems that the Islamisation of the Fula in URD took place in the 1940s and 1950s and was mainly

important trading town in the Protectorate, already had a Christian community of Lebanese shopkeepers and Krio traders who travelled up to Basse in the groundnut season to trade. Regularly, Meehan journeyed to Basse to spend time with the Christian community.¹²³ These two reasons, the non-Muslim Fula community¹²⁴ and the Christian trading community, led to the establishment of a mission station in Basse. In 1935 the Government allocated a plot of land in Basse and a church was opened in June 1936.¹²⁵ In 1937 the mission was extended with a school and a teacher/catechist was appointed to take charge of the school.¹²⁶ In 1938 the mission was strengthened by the arrival of Fr. Michael Moloney, who became the resident priest. Moloney served in Basse for 13 consecutive years until his appointment as the first Prefect Apostolic of The Gambia in 1951.¹²⁷ Basse had therefore in its early years the advantage of a resident priest and continuity in the development of the mission.

A lot of effort was put into the evangelisation of the Fula. Moloney himself learned Fula. Together with his catechist companion George Baldeh he translated several devotional works and the catechism into Fula. They also composed many hymns in Fula. The training and stationing of catechists and teachers in the villages surrounding Basse played a crucial role in the strategy to evangelise the Fula. In 1943, Moloney decided to move his residence from Basse to the Fula village of Mansajang. In Mansajang he started a boarding school to train catechists and teachers for the area. Though the boarding facility had to be closed down around 1950 due to financial constraints, it had served its purpose.¹²⁸ Many of the young people who were trained at St. George's School served for some time as teachers and catechists in the many villages and catechetical schools around Basse.

The Basse mission expanded quickly. As early as 1940 Moloney and the two catechists, who assisted him, Pierre Saine and John Baldeh,¹²⁹ had contacts with nearby Fula villages like Kebbekunda, Nafogam, Bansang and Kondam. In 1947 there

accomplished through intermarriage and social pressure. Interview with Mr. Bernard Baldeh, Kanifing March 5 1999.

¹²³ Entries March 2 1935, June 19 1935, January 17 1936, June 6 1936 and December 18 1936, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹²⁴ Whiteside visited Basse on his apostolic tour in 1934. H. Whiteside to Mgr. LeHunsec, Bathurst February 14 1933, Boite 411.1B, File II Correspondence Gambia 1932-1935. Whiteside also noted that Swedish and Canadian missionaries, possibly from the organisation World Evangelism for Christ were working among the Fula in Wellingara.

¹²⁵ Entry June 6 1936, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹²⁶ The first teacher, Samuel Johnson started in January 1937, but a month later he had died of pneumonia. John Njie was appointed as his successor and soon had about 35 children in the school.

¹²⁷ Entries February 13 1937 and December 28 1938, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹²⁸ Interview with Bernard Baldeh, Kanifing March 5 1999.

¹²⁹ Entries April 21 1939, March 8 1940 and December 19 1940, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. Note: Pierre Saine was an old mission boy and was stationed in Bansang, but – according to a footnote in the Journal – left the mission in 1941/42 to go and work for a commercial firm. Also John Njie seems to have left the mission because he could make more money elsewhere.

were 2 teachers and 8 catechists engaged in Basse and the villages around it.¹³⁰ Also the Fulabantang mission station, which was initiated by the Basse mission in 1943, flourished.¹³¹ In 1945 Fr. James White (1945-1996) was appointed as a resident priest in Fulabantang¹³² and year later Fulabantang had a boarding school with 30 students, four catechists working in the area and some teachers to run the school.¹³³ The work was also strengthened by the arrival of two Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in Basse in 1947. Sr. Brigid took charge of girls' education¹³⁴ whereas Sr. Lawrence started medical work, assisting in maternity cases and visiting the surrounding villages for clinics.¹³⁵

Yet despite all efforts and manpower put into the evangelisation of the Fula, the response was not too encouraging. There were several reasons for this. First of all, the elders resisted change. A report from 1953 says that 'the very characteristics that made the Fullas resist the inroads of Mohammedanism made them also slow to accept the teachings of Christ.'¹³⁶ Cleary cites an occasion where Moloney had prepared 32 boys for baptism in Borokunda, but the ceremony was cancelled at the last moment because parents refused to give permission for their children to be baptised.¹³⁷ Secondly, parallel to the Christian evangelisation of the Fula, there was also pressure from the Muslim side on the Fula to become Muslims. According to Mr. Bernard Baldeh, a church worker who grew up in Basse, there was a strong social pressure on the adherents of the African traditional religions to convert to Islam. Muslims refused to attend the *ngente* (namesgiving ceremony), weddings and funerals of non-Muslims. Thus the Fula who were traditionalists, felt social outcasts. As a result many Fula families converted to Islam in the 1940s and 1950s. Also intermarriage contributed to the Islamisation of the Fula in Upper River Division.¹³⁸ Education reached a considerable number of people in the Basse area. Many young people even converted to Christianity in the period between the 1940s and the 1970s. But the same story of

¹³⁰ F. Farrelly to Mgr. Griffin, Bathurst April 11 1947, Boite 411.1a, File I.

¹³¹ Entries November 24 1944 and October 10 1945, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4. In 1943 Mr. James Ogoo was appointed head teacher for the school in Fulabantang but from 1948 onwards he headed the school in Kanifing. Also Joseph Jawo, a mission boy from Bathurst served in Fulabantang. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 41; Entry October 25 1946, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1928-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹³² Entry August 14 1945, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1928-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹³³ F. Farrelly to Mgr. Griffin, Bathurst April 11 1947, Boite 411.1a, File I.

¹³⁴ Some girls from the primary school were boarders in the convent. O. Cronin, 'My memories of Basse', *100 years of missionary service by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in The Gambia*, 81ff.

¹³⁵ Entry February 17 1947, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1928-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹³⁶ F. Farrelly, *Report for 'Bulletin Mensuel': The Gambia 1953*, 4 in Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, after Entry 1951, Boite 4i2.4.

¹³⁷ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 41.

¹³⁸ Interview with Mr. Bernard Baldeh, Kanifing March 5 1999. These developments seem to correspond with the experiences of the Anglican Church in Kristikunda. Olufosoye concluded that by 1950 it was no longer possible to speak of the Fula in the Basse region as a predominantly pagan tribe. T. Olufosoye, *Statement spoken at a Gambian diocesan association committee meeting (all former bishops present)*, in the *Bulletin*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File.

Bwiam was repeated in Basse. Of those baptised in school, nearly all went back to Islam.¹³⁹ Presently there are only two or three Christian Fula families left in Basse. A report in the *GPI Newsletter* of 1995 states that 'given the "old age" of the parish and what it is today, one is tempted to say that Basse is one of the old parishes which has made little progress by the way of evangelisation.'¹⁴⁰ The present Basse parish consists mainly of Manjago and some Jola, Karoninka and Mansuanka.

Small wonder that Bishop Molohey at his consecration spoke of The Gambia as 'a very difficult mission. The Church has to work in a strong Islamic setting more in the pattern of the Mohammedan Middle East and North Africa than of the great Christian and pagan lands of Central Africa.'¹⁴¹ 'It must be admitted that not only has little progress been made in conversion but the Church has failed to stem the flow of pagan races into Islam. (...) Many great missionaries of the past predicted that the advance of Western education would be the forerunner of a mass conversion of Mohammedans to Christianity. So far this prophecy has not been fulfilled.'¹⁴² And he concluded: 'It may not always be possible to reach Mohammedans by direct instruction but we can always influence them by good example.'

8.3 A separately governed Gambian Methodist District

State of affairs of a centenary church

At the eve of the centenary celebration of 1921 the Methodist Church in The Gambia received a letter from the parent society WMMS. Rather than congratulating the jubilee church, the letter described The Gambia as a 'barren field.'¹⁴³ It was true that in many ways The Gambia did not turn out to be the flourishing mission that had been hoped for in the early 19th century. After a hundred years of hard missionary work, the results were small. There were about 1450 Methodists, divided over the two churches in Bathurst and some small communities in Combo and along the river.¹⁴⁴ The church had 16 local preachers, 47 class leaders, 2 evangelists, 2 Gambian ministers. Two missionaries - a Sierra Leonean educationalist attached to the Boys' High School and a British minister who served as District Superintendent - were attached to the district to strengthen the work.¹⁴⁵

Education had always been an important part of Methodist missionary work. Therefore the church supervised a considerable number of schools. The Methodist Church ran four primary schools, in which 595 children were taught. Two schools were

¹³⁹ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 3 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Fr. Peter Gomez, 'Around the Diocese: St. Joseph's Parish, Basse, *GPI Newsletter* 19/6 (June 1995), 16-18.

¹⁴¹ M. Moloney, 'Mohammedanism: a barrier to Christianity', *Missionary Annals*, June 1958, MGF Kimmage Manor, Dublin (no page numbers mentioned as the newspaper cuttings were glued in the Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV).

¹⁴² Loose clippings from newspapers of 1958, glued into the Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 1924-1958, Boite 4i2.4.

¹⁴³ Synod letter to Thompson, March 3 1920, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427.

¹⁴⁴ Statistical returns, Gambia Membership 1921, Box 236 H2708 mf. 454.

¹⁴⁵ Statistical returns, Christian workers in The Gambia 1921, Box 236 H2708 mf. 454.

in Bathurst, one in Georgetown and one in Combo.¹⁴⁶ In the two High Schools another 114 children received education.¹⁴⁷ The Technical High School, with about 10 children enrolled, had closed in 1920.

This was certainly not an impressive result after a century of hard work.¹⁴⁸ But the Synod replied with dignity that

in retrospect we were able to find that it is not fair to call the Gambia a barren field... there is evidence of a sad lack of continuity of policy and persistence of efforts, for stations that were manned by African ministers – and these had received but poor training for their work – were closed just after the work had begun to take root.¹⁴⁹

The problem was that, as usual, WMMS had been comparing the Gambian situation of a small Christian community in the midst of Islam to the Mendi mission in Sierra Leone and the Ibo mission in Nigeria, where adherents of traditional religions had responded in great numbers to the gospel. The awareness that there might be other valid methods of evaluating the impact of a church in a predominantly Muslim society apart from the membership returns, had not yet reached the London headquarters. Only in the 1950s the ideal of 'an aggressive evangelism' gave way to the idea that the church was a servant of the community.¹⁵⁰

Most of the letters from WMMS to the Gambian Synod in the 1910s and 1920s showed oblivion of the Gambian context and were stressing the need for evangelism and church growth. The Synod of 1920 was told that 'as your Churches rise towards the stature of Christian manhood, we trust they will take upon them more and more the responsibility for evangelisation of the non-Christian people about them.'¹⁵¹ The letter seemed to imply that those efforts had not been made in the past! In December 1922 the tone of the letter to Synod was even stronger:

The closing down of the Kombo Mission leaves your District almost without any missionary work strictly so called. This is a condition which will be no more satisfactory to you than to ourselves. We are *saved to serve* and a Church which does not spend itself on others cannot flourish.¹⁵²

A year later, in 1923, the Missionary Committee had the audacity to suggest that maybe the Gambian Methodist Church might better support the Mendi or Limbah missions in

¹⁴⁶ Statistical returns, Day Schools The Gambia, Box 236 H2708, mf. 454. The Church employed 15 teachers to run the schools. Out of the 595 children in the primary schools 88 were Muslim (about 15 percent).

¹⁴⁷ Statistical returns, Boys and Girls High Schools The Gambia, Box 236 H2708, mf. 454. Nine of the students were Muslim.

¹⁴⁸ There had been times, such as in the 1880s when the state of the Methodist Church had been more promising but times were difficult at the beginning of the 20th century.

¹⁴⁹ Synod letter to Thompson, March 3 1920, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427.

¹⁵⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 217.

¹⁵¹ WMMS to Synod, Synod Minutes 1920, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427.

¹⁵² WMMS to Synod, Synod Minutes 1923, Box 237 H2708 mf. 428.

Sierra Leone, if conversions were not forthcoming in The Gambia.¹⁵³ It was a sign that as far as the Missionary Committee was concerned The Gambia was no longer worth investing time and money in.

There were more signs that The Gambia had become a 'last comer' on the agenda of the Missionary Committee. A visit of two members of this Committee in 1928 lasted two hours,¹⁵⁴ while the visit of the Women's Secretary Mrs. Leath in 1930 was planned to last about two hours but in the end did not materialise at all, owing to lack of time.¹⁵⁵ The words of John G. Lane (1917-1925), barely more than a probationer when he found himself in charge of the Gambia district, could have been that of the Gambia Synod. He complained: '...you sent me no word of any kind, and left me to feel that I was forgotten.'¹⁵⁶ This attitude of the Missionary Committee in London made work slow, because all plans and proposals had to be ratified by London before any action could be taken. The Canadian educational missionary Harold Eburne (1930-1931) commented: 'I have been studying the History of Missionary enterprise here and it seems a strange blend of heroic sacrifice and missed opportunities.'¹⁵⁷

Financial hardship

The emphasis of the Missionary Committee on the need for evangelism was all the more tart because the cost for all evangelistic outreach was to be borne by the Gambians themselves. Financial problems at the Mission House in London had led to a forced financial independence of the Gambian Methodist Church from the 1880s

¹⁵³ Thompson to Lane, London November 23 1923, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1076. 'We should like you to maintain a local missionary society with annual collections and to choose some small field for its operations. It need not be within the Gambia Colony. You might like to support work in Sierra Leone among the Mendis or the Limbah people, undertaking to maintain one or more workers. It is important that the obligation to undertake missionary work should be recognised, and it should take the form of a particular piece of work.'

¹⁵⁴ Local Committee to WMMS, Bathurst March 8 1928, Synod minutes 1928, Box 239 H2708 mf. 429.

¹⁵⁵ Synod minutes 1930, Box 241 H2708 mf. 430; Synod minutes 1931, Box 242 H2708 mf. 431. Requests of the Synod to return the Trust Deeds of Gambian property, which were borrowed by one of the secretaries of the Missionary Committee had to be repeated for more than 20 years, before they were actually sent out. B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 187.

¹⁵⁶ Lane to Thompson, Bathurst April 26 1924, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077. The exact quotation is: 'From the time, in 1919, when – alone in the district for six months as I was – you sent me no word of any kind, and left me to feel that I was forgotten.' Lane was one of the many missionaries in The Gambia who complained about the lack of interest of the Missionary Committee. James Fieldhouse, who served from 1876-1879, seems to have been the most unfortunate of them all. During his term of service of about 2 ½ year, he received no letter whatsoever from the Missionary Committee. Though with time the means of communication improved and not all Missionary Secretaries were slow in writing – Rev. William Goudie who worked for WMMS in the early 20th century was one of the better letter writers – the complaint was quite general and persisted far into the 20th century. Prickett points to the fact that the WMMS, as a matter of pride, tried to keep their secretarial expenses to a minimum, but comments: 'There comes a point, however, when this can be a danger to efficiency, and what is more important, to personal relationships.' B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 186 ff.

¹⁵⁷ Eburne to Thompson, Bathurst November 28 1930, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1081.

onwards.¹⁵⁸ Any new extension work undertaken by the Gambian Methodist Church was to be paid locally.

For years the resident missionary was paid from the funds for the native agency and the District Extension Fund (DEF).¹⁵⁹ It seems that after 1906 the situation improved a little. In that year well-to-do members of WMMS cleared all debts.¹⁶⁰ But in 1915 the financial situation of WMMS was again so shaky that several missionaries had to be withdrawn from the West Coast. The Gambia was told that they should consider themselves lucky that no staff would be withdrawn. Prickett comments: 'Considering that Armitage was largely supported by Government grants, and that Toye was the only missionary, any reduction would have meant a complete withdrawal of missionary staff.'¹⁶¹

The financial debacle of the WMMS lasted for a considerable period of time. The economic malaise in the late 1920s and the 1930s followed the time of hardship during World War I; in 1930 the deficit had again risen to £23,000.¹⁶² All requests for assistance either in personnel or in cash met with the same reply: the Gambian Methodist community was 'to make greater efforts towards self-support, so sharing with the Home Church, the difficulties it is called to face.'¹⁶³ But also in The Gambia the consequences of the slack world economy were felt and money was scarce.¹⁶⁴ When Britain went off the Gold Standard in the early 1930s, the effects were felt everywhere and government grants for education and welfare were reduced drastically.

Precisely these government grants had thus far saved the Methodist Church in The Gambia from a complete bankruptcy. Especially the grants for education had always brought in enough money to keep things going.¹⁶⁵ The District Superintendent usually functioned as the supervisor for the primary schools and the grant from the government for that task, formed a considerable part of his annual stipend. The year 1924 can serve as an example. The District Superintendent John Lane received a government allowance of £150 towards his salary for supervising the primary schools. His colleague missionary F. Morton (1922-1928) was in charge of the BHS and received a Government grant for his work. Morton's sister Elsie (1923-1927), who had offered her services as a volunteer worker for the MGHS, did not cost WMMS more than accommodation and her fare to and fro¹⁶⁶ because other expenses were covered by

¹⁵⁸ Synod 1898, Box 298 H2709 mf. 24.

¹⁵⁹ Maude to WMMS, Freetown March 28 1898, Box 288 H2709 mf. 1000.

¹⁶⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 196.

¹⁶¹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 174.

¹⁶² Synod Minutes 1931, Box 242 H2708 mf. 431.

¹⁶³ WMMS Missionary Committee to Synod, Synod 1919, Box 236 H2708 mf. 427.

¹⁶⁴ Synod letter to WMMS, February 22 1924, Box 238/240 H2708 mf. 428.

¹⁶⁵ Synod Minutes 1924, Box 238 H2708 mf. 428. In the 1920s the two High Schools ran into debt temporarily because parents were not paying the school fees, but it seems these debts were cleared by a special emergency fund of WMMS. Synod Minutes 1928, Box 239 H2708 mf. 429.

¹⁶⁶ Also other women worked for the church on the same conditions. A Mrs. Barraclough, wife of a Government officer, worked for the MGHS in 1923, on the condition that the church would give her a place to stay - her husband had no married quarters and had therefore been obliged to leave her behind in England - and would pay her return fare. Synod Minutes 1923, Box 237 H2709 mf. 428. And the missionary Harold Eburne (1930-1931) who married the

a grant which was received for her contribution to the school. The fourth missionary, the Sierra Leonean Melville Cole also worked in the BHS. He as well received a government grant towards his salary. Lane therefore replied to a stern letter about finance from the WMMS secretary Thompson that The Gambia could hardly be called an *expensive* mission.¹⁶⁷

The Methodist chairman Benjamin Tregaskis had once exclaimed: 'You may sooner think of closing your chapels than of extending religion without education'¹⁶⁸ This statement received renewed relevance in the 1930s when things came to a head. Due to the abandonment of the Gold Standard, prices in The Gambia, where many crucial foodstuffs had to come from abroad, had shot up. All schools had financial arrears because parents could not pay school fees. In 1932 the government decided that it had to reduce its grants considerably.¹⁶⁹

G.S. Trealeaven (1931-1945), just arriving in The Gambia, saw himself confronted with a financial deadlock: either the schools had to be closed or there had to be severe salary cuts to reduce the costs.¹⁷⁰ But closing schools was not a Methodist thing to do, so salaries, already low, were reduced even more. Harold Eburne voluntarily retired from the BHS to save expenses and all missionaries accepted a five percent cut in their salaries. The two Gambian ministers even sacrificed ten percent of their salaries and the teacher/catechist C.C Taylor at Georgetown was given the option of closing the school or receiving £3.10 from that moment on. Dedicated to the school, Taylor sacrificed fifty percent of his already minimal allowance to keep the Georgetown school open. It seems he accepted the salary decrease with the words 'but do not cut it anymore or we cannot live.'¹⁷¹ By 1933 the schools were nearly out of debt,¹⁷² but finance in the District remained tight. Maclean for example was made a

deaconess and educationist Dorothy Platts (1928-1930) was told by Thompson: 'It is an understanding in our Society that a missionary's wife is an honorary worker, that is, if she does any kind of work for the Mission, it is not paid for in money though gratefully recognised and genuinely appreciated. I do not want this good tradition to be broken.' Thompson to Eburne, London July 1 1930, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1084. This 'good tradition' implied a fifty percent cut of their income to the newly wed Eburnes. It was a generous marriage gift of the Missionary Committee.

¹⁶⁷ Lane to Thompson, Bathurst April 26 1924, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077.

¹⁶⁸ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 100.

¹⁶⁹ Until that time all the costs for the women missionaries, for Baker and Eburne and £150 towards the salary of the Chairman were paid by the Government. Synod minutes 1933, Box 245 H2708 mf. 435. The cut in the government grants were partly caused by the tight financial situation of the government, partly based on a changed educational policy, which advocated that people were to pay for education. In the past the parental contribution to education had been a mere token.

¹⁷⁰ Synod minutes 1933, Box 245 H2708 mf. 435.

¹⁷¹ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 199. An example of the year 1932 shows that the Government grants had been quite substantial. Of the total expenditure for the Primary Schools of £1001, £783 was met by - already reduced! - Government grants, while the rest came from fees paid. About half of the cost of the High Schools was met by Government grants. G.S. Trealeaven to Thompson, Bathurst March 8 1932, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1084.

¹⁷² Synod Minutes 1934, Box 245, H2708 mf. 435.

supernumerary from 1934 until 1946 'owing to the impossibility of finding his allowance.'¹⁷³

Education and welfare services

The 1930s and 1940s education received much attention. Most missionaries were in one way or another tied up with education. In Combo schools were opened – and closed again – in villages like Serekunda, Latrikunda and Sukuta.¹⁷⁴ In Bathurst the High Schools flourished. The revived Boys' High School, restarted in 1912, gradually increased in numbers, having a total of 80 in 1945.¹⁷⁵ Especially J.J. Baker, principal from 1931-1951 contributed to the quality and stability of the school. From 1930 to 1941 the teachers of the BHS also ran a Teacher Training Institute in order to prepare qualified teachers. Later the Teacher Training Courses became a government affair.¹⁷⁶ The Methodist Girls High School did even better than the BHS. Under the guidance of women like Elsie Morton, Rose Little (1929-1936) and especially Norah Senior (1939-1956)¹⁷⁷ the Girls' High School increased from 20 girls in 1927¹⁷⁸ to 169 in 1945.¹⁷⁹ It

¹⁷³ Synod Minutes 1934, Box 245 H2708 mf. 434.

¹⁷⁴ There were small schools, run by voluntary workers, in Sare Jobe Kunda (Serekunda) and Kaur in 1928 (Synod Minutes 1928, Box 239 H2708 mf. 429), in Sukuta in 1930 (Synod Minutes 1930, Box 241 H2708 mf. 429), in Latrikunda and again Serekunda (the other probably had been closed again) in 1931 (Synod Minutes 1931, Box 242 H2708 mf. 431). The 1931 Synod education report on primary schools mentions 26 children (boys only) in Sukuta, taught by Mr. F. Riley, who also gave sewing classes (!) once a week to girls from Sukuta. It seems the Sukuta school was initially a joint project with the Anglican Church, but later the Anglicans withdrew. There were 17 children in Serekunda, taught by Mr. J.J. Cole. Apart from the regular curriculum the school also offered gardening and woodwork classes for boys and a sewing class for girls. A Mr. Williams, a itinerant carpentry teacher took over from Mr. Cole later in 1931. The Latrikunda school had 17 children enrolled in 1931. The report mentions that the number of children had declined after the appointment of a new chief in Latrikunda. The teacher in Latrikunda was a Mr. King who was a local preacher and a steward. The schools were usually run by volunteer teachers and funded by the District Extension Fund. In 1939 the Serekunda school was closed again in order to fund the re-opening of the Georgetown School. Synod Minutes 1939, Box 250 H2708 mf. 250. In at least one instance promising children were brought to Bathurst for further education when the rural school had to be closed down due to lack of finance Synod Minutes 1941, Box 252 H2708 mf. 444.

¹⁷⁵ Statistical returns BHS 1945, Statistical returns High Schools, Box 256 H2708 mf. 456. From the 1940s onwards a considerable number of the students – between 30 and 40 percent - enrolled in the BHS were Muslims. For the MGHS this percentage of Muslim students was considerably lower. Most of the time it was below 10 percent. This might have something to do with the traditional Islamic view at the time on the need for girls' education.

¹⁷⁶ In the mid 1950s the Government started a teacher training school in Yundum. Interview with Mr. Bernard Baldeh, Kanifing March 5 1999.

¹⁷⁷ Norah Senior is credited with the reorganisation of the MGHS. She divided the girls according to age groups. B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 205. Ms. Little started a teacher training scheme and a kindergarten section in the MGHS. Synod Minutes 1929, Box 240 H2708 mf. 430.

¹⁷⁸ Statistical returns MGHS 1927, Statistical returns High Schools, Box 239 H2708 mf. 454.

¹⁷⁹ Statistical returns MGHS 1945, Statistical returns High Schools, Box 256 H2708 mf. 456.

shows clearly that there was a need for and an interest in girls' education in The Gambia at the time.

Though in the 1930s Treleaven had effectively reorganised the financial situation of the schools, the worries over the schools were far from over. In 1936 there was a setback when Wallace Cole died unexpectedly. C.W. Cole was a Gambian who had been working as an assistant in the BHS before he was sent to Westminster Training College in England for further training in the early 1920s. Upon his homecoming in 1926 he returned to the BHS and acted as its vice-principal.¹⁸⁰ With his death the Methodist community lost its main Gambian educationalist. Another Gambian educationalist that had been employed at the BHS was the Anglican Rev. J.C. Faye.¹⁸¹ Faye retired from the BHS in 1937 in order to revive Anglican education. The establishment of an Anglican school resulted in a loss of students for the Methodist Schools.¹⁸²

In 1938 the government announced that there would be a new education policy. The block grant would be reduced and starting with immediate effect cover only 80 percent of the African teachers salaries. Synod concluded: 'that we shall keep the schools open as long as it is possible to do so, that we shall make what economies are possible towards this end, but that it is quite impossible for us at this stage to say what we shall feel it wise to do in 1940 or later.'¹⁸³ Once again Tregaskis' words had resounded in the decision.

In December 1940 the situation had again become precarious and a special Synod, dedicated to education and finance, was convened. Again the decision was taken to hold on to the schools as long as possible.¹⁸⁴ But when in 1943 the Government again changed its educational policy, the Synod gave up:

Briefly the suggestion is that Government schools shall replace all Methodist and English Catholic schools, both Primary in the Short Term Policy and Secondary in the Long Term Policy. The schools suggested are to be Government Amalgamated Schools for Protestants, English Catholics and Mohammedans. The present Mohammedan Boys School and the RC Primary and Secondary Schools will continue but with greater Government assistance. We ask for your very careful consideration of this new policy. Our people do not wish to lose the financial advantages which the Scheme offers, *for we are unable to shoulder the increasing responsibility.* We also believe that the chief cause of our present difficulties would be removed if all Teachers were fully supported by Government. There appears to be no justifiable reason why this should not be done for the Protestant community, as the scheme

¹⁸⁰ J.J. Baker, the British missionary educationalist who was principle of the BHS from 1931-1951 wrote to the WMMS secretary Ayre: 'I need hardly tell you what a blow to me personally the news of Mr. Cole's death has been. We had grown to know one another and to understand and respect each other's viewpoints. I shall miss him more than I can say. Moreover, as Mr. Treleaven has said, he is irreplaceable in the school, for we have no African with qualifications comparable to his.' Baker to Ayre, Bathurst November 19 1936, Box 764 H2709 mf. 1086.

¹⁸¹ Synod Minutes 1933, Box 244 H2708 mf. 433.

¹⁸² Synod Minutes 1938, Box 249 H2708 mf. 440.

¹⁸³ Synod Minutes 1939, Box 250 H2708 mf. 441.

¹⁸⁴ Synod Minutes 1941, Box 252 H2708 mf. 445.

suggests it shall be for the RC community, without the surrendering of all our Schools to Government and the removal of all Protestant European Educational missionaries.¹⁸⁵

What had been for so long at the fore of the Methodist Church, its education, was surrendered to the Government. In 1944/45 the MacMath/Allen proposals were implemented and the primary schools were taken over by the Government. For a while there was an amalgamation of the Methodist and Anglican Schools but this decision was reverted in 1958.¹⁸⁶ The Baldwin Report of 1951 led to the merger of the Methodist Boys High School and the Methodist Girls High School into the Gambia High School in 1959. The Synod of 1944 concluded:

It may be that all schools will become Government Schools, to which we can take no exception if Government is to assume full financial responsibility. The function of the Churches will then be to see to it that religion is at the base of all education and that it is taught in the schools by trusted men and women well qualified for imparting religious instruction, partly by training, partly because of their own deep religious convictions. The Churches will also hope for an ample representation on any Boards or Committees of Education or Management which may be set up.¹⁸⁷

In the period under discussion also other welfare work was started, apart from education. From the 1920s onwards WMMS paid special attention to different forms of women's work. Edna Green (1926-1927), the first medical missionary of the Methodist Church to The Gambia, was sent to The Gambia set up a mother and child clinic in Bathurst to diminish infant mortality. The medical work was done in co-operation with the Government and the church withdrew from the clinic in 1940, because the Government 'openly refuses to acknowledge that the Mission has any part in, or responsibility for the Clinic, other than to provide a sister.'¹⁸⁸ Ms. Wingad (1926-1929), a Methodist missionary was asked by the Government to start the Girl Guide movement.¹⁸⁹ Also her work was supported by Government grants. The mother of Rev. W.T. Cole Junior is credited with starting with Women's Work meetings in the

¹⁸⁵ Synod Minutes 1943, Box 254 H2708 mf. 446.

¹⁸⁶ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: The Gambia - commissary Canon Alan Grainge, French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea*, Archdeacon Macaulley, 1958, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul, 1.

¹⁸⁷ Synod Minutes 1944, Box 254 H2708 mf. 447.

¹⁸⁸ Synod 1925, Box 238 H2708 mf. 428. The medical work lasted until 1940 when the Methodist Synod decided to withdraw from the co-operation with the Government in the clinic: 'It is with distress that we report Government's attitude towards our co-operation in the Mother and Child Welfare Clinic. The opinion of both African and European members of Synod is that we can no longer share in work where our moral principles are disregarded (...) ... none of the Missionaries who has held it, has been satisfied with her opportunities for Christian work (...). Now the Government openly refuses to acknowledge that the Mission has any part in, or responsibility for the Clinic, other than to provide a sister, we feel time has come to decline merely to assist Government financially. Note: For a while the Methodist Church organised medical work in Sukuta, but that was later closed down again due to finance. Synod Minutes 1931, Box 242 H2708 mf. 431. There was also a small clinic in the late 1930s at Cape Point. Synod Minutes 1939, Box 250 H2708 mf. 441.

¹⁸⁹ Lane to Thompson, Bathurst April 25 1925, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077.

church.¹⁹⁰ The present day form of the Methodist Women's Associations, the Women's Auxiliaries, was started in 1932.¹⁹¹ Dedicated both the social and devotional field, the Women's Auxiliaries over the years have been active in raising funds to support the work of the mission. The case of the 1940s, where part of the money they raised, was used to support the needy High Schools, might serve as an example.¹⁹²

Extension work

Due to financial constraints during most of the period under discussion, missionary extension work was limited. The Synod already had a difficult time to find money to maintain the existing work, let alone to extend it.

Combo, so close by, was one of the church's main outreach areas. At several times during the period under discussion attempts were made to start small communities and bush schools in Combo, but there seems to have no consistent policy or funds to maintain the work. The Synod of 1917 wrote that they had collected the highest amount for District Extension work ever because 'the burden of the heathen and Muhammedan is becoming very heavy upon the hearts of our people.'¹⁹³ There was to be 'aggressive work' in 'Sukuta, a formidable Muhammedan Centre, long closed to us through the opposition of the chief' (...) 'now open and waiting for our occupation.' The Synod of 1919 mentioned that there was 'fearless proclamation of the gospel from our pulpits and in the open, and faithful application of our discipline within church. It was felt that though we were passing through dark day at present, there were prospects of a brighter future.'¹⁹⁴ In 1922 the brighter future had become dark again. The Synod minutes stated:

Our work in the Kombo and the River stations among Muhammedans show little prospect of success, and the Synod considers that we should give ourselves, in the immediate future to the training of suitable workers, so that we may start work amongst Muhammedans with properly trained and equipped staff.¹⁹⁵

That same year an elaborate plan was developed to start work – preferably medical - among the Jola in Foni. Again there was no continuity because two years later the Synod thought it wiser to concentrate on the Fula in Fuladu.¹⁹⁶ The Synod stated: 'The work MUST be begun, for it is our deep conviction that Our Master is calling us to seize the opportunity whilst it yet remains to us.'¹⁹⁷ The plan never materialised, because there was no money to start the work and no personnel to implement it. A request for personnel assistance from London was turned down. The District Missionary Lane, already overburdened with work, was told by the Missionary

¹⁹⁰ Synod Minutes 1929, Box 240 H2708 mf. 430.

¹⁹¹ Synod Minutes 1933, Box 245 H2708 mf. 435.

¹⁹² Synod Minutes 1940, Box 252 H2708 mf. 444.

¹⁹³ Synod Minutes 1917, Box 235 H2708 mf. 426.

¹⁹⁴ Synod Minutes 1919, Box 235 H2708 mf. 427.

¹⁹⁵ Synod Minutes 1922, Box 236 H2708 mf. 428.

¹⁹⁶ Report on the proposed evangelistic work Gambia District 1923, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1076.

¹⁹⁷ Synod Minutes 1924, Box 238 H2708 mf. 428.

Committee that if he thought the work so important, why not go there himself?¹⁹⁸ Lane replied exasperated that he was to act as Chairman of the District, to supervise the primary schools, to sort out the financial problems of the District and to monitor the evangelisation work at MacCarthy and the communities in Combo and along the river. What did Thompson think that he had been doing these last years to suggest that he go to Fuladu himself?¹⁹⁹

The work in Georgetown also suffered from the financial constraints. Samuel Maclean who had spent most of his time working in the River stations of Ballanghar and Georgetown, was recalled in 1934 and temporarily superannuated because there was no money. The district agent, J.J. Taylor kept the school and church going until he fell ill in 1934. J.C. Cooker was sent as headmaster in 1934²⁰⁰ and served there for several years. When no one else could be found Georgetown was temporarily closed due to lack of staff.²⁰¹ Volunteer workers such as a Mr. Shyngle, Mr. George Roberts and Mr. Smart kept the church going.²⁰² The Synod of 1941 reported that the River Mission was dwindling, with only 6 active members left in January 1941. WMMS wrote to the Synod: 'We gather that you feel that the church is neither advancing nor holding its own, but is in danger of loosing ground; that is a state of things which cannot but cause deep distress both to you and to us.'²⁰³ In 1946, with Maclean as 'active supernumerary' an attempt was made to revive the work, but considering that Maclean was nearly 70 the expectations could not have been too high.²⁰⁴ When Maclean died in 1949, J.C. Cooker offered again to go to Georgetown and he served there for more than 10 years. When he died the school was closed down and work was not restarted until the 1970s.²⁰⁵

Lack of funding and lack of personnel continued to be a major obstacle to effective evangelistic work. Eburne complained there was nothing in the district that could even remotely be called evangelistic outreach, since most missionaries were educationalists supported by Government grants and thus tied down to Bathurst to do the work they were paid for.²⁰⁶ Even the minister and district agents at MacCarthy did not have their hands free for evangelism. They were expected to head the school, which implied that

¹⁹⁸ Thompson to Lane, London March 31 1924, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077.

¹⁹⁹ Lane to Thompson, Bathurst September 7 1922, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1076.

²⁰⁰ Synod Minutes 1935, Box 246 H2708 mf. 435. J.C. Wyse, E. King and T.B. King respectively succeeded him but the River Mission was haunted by bad luck. Both Wyse and T.B. King died with a year of serving and E. King went back to Bathurst ill.

²⁰¹ Synod Minutes 1940, Box 251 H2708 mf. 443.

²⁰² Synod Minutes 1943, Box 254 H2708 mf. 446; Synod Minutes 1946, Box 256H2708 mf. 449.

²⁰³ Synod Minutes 1941, Box 252 H2708 mf. 445.

²⁰⁴ Prickett comments on the ministerial staff in the 1940s: 'An appeal to ministers in England caused the Rev. Arthur Summerfield, already seventy-one years old, to offer for the Gambia. It was now a ministerial staff of old men, except for those whose work was in the High School. Even some of the younger men of the past, who kept asking for more experienced men to come to their aid, might had felt three ministers with an average age of seventy was almost more age and experience than the occasion warranted.' B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 211.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, Banjul March 10 1999. Interview with Rev. Francis Forbes Senior, Banjul March 16 1999.

²⁰⁶ Eburne to Thompson, Bathurst July 1 1930, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1084.

for most of their time they had to stay in Georgetown and did not have time for long journeys on the mainland or for nurturing contacts with potential converts.

Apart from a few exceptions, most district agents and teachers saw employment by the church as a stepping-stone to a better job. The church paid them poorly and as a result most of the more talented ones left the mission once they could find a better employer. It left the church with men of dubious qualities and character.²⁰⁷ Various Synod meetings reported that such and such a district agent had been fired because of drinking, adultery or another type of unacceptable behaviour.²⁰⁸ The hopes that the Boys High School would be a nursery for district agents and teachers proved to be unrealistic.²⁰⁹

Stimulated by WMMS, the Synod however maintained that it was necessary to have some outreach project. When all other projects had failed, outreach work in Bathurst was started. In 1931 a Fula convert from Islam, Moses John Phal started an evening school for Fula. He and the Superintendent of the District taught at the school and about sixteen people attended.²¹⁰ It seems this project continued for several years. During World War II the Missionary Committee urged the Gambian Methodists with renewed vigour not to be content

to leave Jolas, Joloffs and Mandingoes to Mohammedanism without effort to bring them to the knowledge of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus. (...) When the war is over, we shall hope that Methodism in The Gambia will look beyond the immediate circle of Bathurst and its neighbouring tribes and will enrich itself and the island river side tribes by planning that the gospel of Christ shall be preached to them also.²¹¹

The Synod replied in 1946 that they were willing to make yet another effort to evangelise The Gambia. They wrote: 'In the next two years we need eight new missionaries, six more educational workers... We know that these requests are almost too great to send home but we need a new start in The Gambia.'²¹² The request was – of course – not granted and the Methodist Church in The Gambia did not get its new start until the 1960s when – by accident – a layman from Bathurst, Mr. Edwards, came into contact with the village of Marakissa. There, in Western Division, among the Manjago, the Methodists finally found their 'unworked area' and a people responsive to their evangelism zeal.²¹³ The story of Marakissa will be described in the next chapter.

²⁰⁷ Toye to Goudie, Bathurst March 5 1919, Box 762 H2709 mf. 1068; Thompson to Lane, London March 31 1924, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077.

²⁰⁸ E.g. Synod Minutes 1917, Box 235 H2708 mf. 427 which mentioned that six agents resigned and two were dismissed.

²⁰⁹ Synod Minutes 1939, Box 250 H2708 mf. 441.

²¹⁰ Synod Minutes 1932, Box 243 H2708 mf. 431. The Synod of 1934 mentioned that the evening school for Fula was still active, but the candidates were not yet ready for baptism. Synod 1934, Box 244 H2708 mf. 433.

²¹¹ Synod Minutes 1943, Box 254 H2708 mf. 446.

²¹² Synod Minutes 1946, Box 256 H2708 mf. 448.

²¹³ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 220ff.

Continuity in leadership and the quest for an indigenous ministry

The congregations in Bathurst experienced a time of great stability and continuity despite all the financial hardships. The fact that the church leadership served for many years contributed to this. Some of the appointed missionaries served for more than a decade: G.S. Treleaven was District Superintendent from 1931-1945 whilst J.J. Baker (1931-1951) served as principal of the BHS for twenty years and Ms. Norah Senior (1939-1956) headed the MGHS for seventeen years. Also the Gambian ministerial staff consisted of the same two men for more than 40 years. From 1917 until his death in 1949 Rev. W.T. Cole had the pastoral oversight over the Bathurst congregations, assisted by a team of class leaders and local preachers.²¹⁴ Rev. S. Maclean was the other Gambian minister during the period. An age-mate of Cole, he was ordained in 1916 and died on hearing the news of Cole's demise. Both men were literally serving until their death, both being in their seventies when they died.

The calm waters were only disturbed in the 1930s when the Missionary Committee again suggested a union with Sierra Leone. The Synod replied:

While the Synod wishes to express to the Committee their high gratitude for their wish and salutary counsels in the past, and their undoubted interest in the welfare of the Gambia district in approving such proposal, yet with extreme regret they feel themselves constrained to reject the proposal of a union of Gambia and Sierra Leone.²¹⁵

Wisely, the WMMS respected the decision of the Synod and did not press the matter any further.

In the 1940s, with Cole and Maclean ageing, the need for Gambian successors became urgent. 'The work which the Rev. W. T. Cole is expected to do is now beyond the power of any man of his age, or indeed of any one man' the Synod reported in 1940.²¹⁶ But candidates were not coming forward. In 1919 there had been an offer of J. Dixon Baker for the ministry, but the Synod decided that 'he was not yet ripe for the sacred office of the ministry but was encouraged to offer himself again as he shew promise.'²¹⁷ But he did not offer again nor did anybody else. When there were still no candidates in 1933, the Synod started to get uneasy.

Although the District is at present not able to bear the financial burden this would involve, Synod nevertheless felt that it would soon be a matter of urgency, otherwise the continuity of our work would be broken in a few years time when our present ministers reach their retiring age.²¹⁸

From the mid 1930s onwards the quest for ministerial candidates became an annual topic in the Synod. In 1936 there seemed a possible candidate, John R. Foster, but it

²¹⁴ Cole was ordained in 1914 but before that date he had served as a probationer for several years. Under Cole's supervision a place of worship was built in Bakau in 1932. Synod Minutes 1933, Box 244 H2708 mf. 433.

²¹⁵ Synod Minutes 1934, Box 245 H2708 mf. 434.

²¹⁶ Synod Minutes 1940, Box 251 H2708 mf. 443.

²¹⁷ Synod Minutes 1919, Box 235 H2708 mf. 427.

²¹⁸ Synod Minutes 1933, Box 244 H2708 mf. 433.

never came to an official candidature.²¹⁹ In 1940 the Synod expressed that they were 'deeply concerned at our failure to find a candidate for the ministry',²²⁰ and suggested that attempts should be made to secure help from along the coast.²²¹ Rather than encouraging the church in The Gambia, the Africa Secretary of WMMS wrote reproaching letters to the Synod:

One of the surest tests of the spiritual health and vitality of a Church is the existence of true family religion, in which young men may grow up with a high conception of the service of the Church and are encouraged to offer themselves for the ministry, and we are sure that the lack of such offers compels you to reflect on the general tone of the Christian life of our members. (...) If they '[ministerial candidates] are not forthcoming that is a sign of general weakness in the life of the Church.'²²²

The tide turned in 1944 when there were reports on 'a possible candidate', a BHS pupil.²²³ The candidate, Ernest Stafford, was sent to Kumasi for a Teacher Training Course, where he was proposed as a ministerial candidate in 1948.²²⁴ Stafford returned to The Gambia in 1951 and was ordained two years later. In order to widen his experience, he requested an exchange with Ghana. In 1958 an exchange was arranged between Stafford and Rev. J.Y. Bannerman. In 1960 Rev. John Agbeti came to take Bannerman's place and in 1962 Rev. Kofi Boateng came to replace Agbeti as part of the exchange programme. At that time however, the exchange had become one sided because Stafford had announced his resignation from the ministry to pursue a political career in Ghana.²²⁵ Stafford returned to The Gambia as a minister in the 1980s.²²⁶

In 1955 another candidate to the ministry came forward. Ian Roach, who had been a teacher at the BHS, was sent for training to Kumasi and returned in 1958 for his probation. In 1966 an exchange programme was arranged for Roach. The Rev. Eric St. Clair Clarke from the West Indies came to The Gambia to act as chairman while Roach served in the West Indies. Like Stafford, Roach did not come back after the exchange but remained in the West Indies until the late 1970s.

Roach and Stafford, like other Gambian ministers after them, served most of their time outside The Gambia. Though not all of them left for the same reason, some causes within the Gambian setting can be identified which contributed to this trend. First of all, there is the small size of the district, which has a limited number of stations. Secondly, the prestige of the ministry was and still is low and so is the salary. Thirdly, there were and continue to be internal conflicts between leading families in the church, which have made work very difficult. Lastly, the lack of authority of the indigenous ministers amongst their people, due to the fact that they minister among family and friends, might have contributed to the decision to work abroad. The possibilities of a creative and inspiring life-long ministry in a small community like The Gambia are limited.

²¹⁹ Treleven to Ayre, Bathurst February 21 1936, Box 764 H2709 mf. 1091.

²²⁰ Synod Minutes 1940, Box 251 H2708 mf. 443.

²²¹ Synod Minutes 1941, Box 252 H2708 mf. 445.

²²² Synod Minutes 1942, Box 253 H2708 mf. 446.

²²³ Synod Minutes 1944, Box 254 H2708 mf. 447.

²²⁴ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 210.

²²⁵ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 218.

²²⁶ Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, Banjul March 10 1999.

As early as 1927 Morton wrote to Thompson about these problems: 'I have been very concerned lately with the conduct of affairs in the Circuit. To put it mildly, W.T. Cole has no authority. (...) The problem of immorality is simply untouched. (...) Cole will not put his foot down, I suppose because he is one of the people.'²²⁷ And Treleven wrote in his District report of 1933: 'Such long appointments [as those of Cole and Maclean] in a small area are hurtful to both ministers and people. With all Mr. Cole's excellencies no one would deny that he ought to have received a change of appointment long ago.'²²⁸ These limited possibilities, the small number of stations and the interrelatedness of the indigenous ministers with their congregation is certainly an area, which still needs careful attention and consideration, if the Gambian Methodist Church is to work towards a strong indigenous ministry. Part-time ministry, non-stipendary ministry and exchange programmes might to some extent offer a solution. They would give people the opportunity to widen their experience of the church and to broaden their responsibilities outside the small community of the Gambian church. It also eases the financial burden of the church. As an additional advantage, it brings to the ministry people with a wide and diversified work- and life experience that will enrich the church.

Ecumenical ventures

Most of the Methodist parishes were of the traditional type: the membership consisted of Methodists only. But in the rural areas there was another type of Christian communities, which was interdenominational in character: the wharf town or trading congregations. During the dry season Christian traders (Akou, Wolof and Lebanese) from Bathurst travelled up river and settled in commercial centres along the river like Ballanghar, Basse, Kaur, Kuntaur and Kossemar. On Sundays they came together for worship and formed small Christian communities in the Protectorate. Most of these communities had an interdenominational character. Some of these communities had a church worker or catechist of their own, as was the case for the Methodists in Kaur and Ballanghar, where Maclean was stationed from 1914 onwards. But mostly the church was run by volunteers with an occasional priest or minister visiting their parishioners to deliver the sacraments.²²⁹

These rural ecumenical ventures did not always last, because denominational rivalry was still strong. In 1926 the ecumenical congregation of Kaur was persuaded by the Methodist District agent Decker to become Methodist,²³⁰ while in Basse there was an Anglican take over in 1931. It seems the Anglican priest in Basse, Rev. S.P. During claimed the ecumenical school and used the material that the Methodist Church had sent up for a chapel to build an Anglican chapel, without any consultation with the Methodists. Protests were made with the Colonial Secretary but in the end the matter was settled amicably. Since the Methodists did not have the manpower to work in

²²⁷ Morton to Thompson, Bathurst September 18 1925, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1077.

²²⁸ District Report 1933, Box 764 H2709 mf. 1090.

²²⁹ Morton to Thompson, Bathurst December 31 1927, Box 763 H2708 mf. 1078; Giddings to Thompson, Bathurst April 22 1929, Box 763 H2709 mf. 1078.

²³⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 192.

Basse, they reasoned that it was better that another Protestant church was working there, than no church at all.²³¹

The congregation in Basse was not the only occasion where Anglicans and Methodists cooperated closely. In 1929 the Anglican Rev. L. Humphry sent an official request from to see in which areas the Methodist and the Anglican Church could cooperate.²³² Possibly the joint school venture at Sukuta in the 1930s was a result of this consultation.²³³ A further collaboration was the engagement of J.C. Faye, the prominent Anglican educationalist as a teacher at the BHS. When the newly appointed Anglican bishop for The Gambia and the Rio Pongas, John Daly, proved to be a high church man, the good relations were disturbed for some time.²³⁴ The hopes of the Methodist Synod that there could be one Protestant Church in The Gambia were thwarted and the Synod of 1936 wrote:

For some time now we have felt that the ideal for Gambia would be one Protestant Church, but such hope for the future is now gone. If the Methodist Church were removed there would be, not one Protestant Church, we feel sure, but one African Church and an Anglo-Catholic Church.²³⁵

And the Methodist Chairman Treleaven wrote:

We are not prepared to open the door to those influences from Sierra Leone, which you know so well, and which is a continuous struggle to keep out of our Church here. The Boys' High School itself, is older than the Anglican Church and our people would regard it as betrayal of their heritage were it to be amalgamated with any other Mission, and especially with the present Anglo-Catholic Church.²³⁶

Gradually however, the fear died down a bit and the relations improved again. In 1943 the Methodists requested the Anglicans for a joint representation to the government on legislation regarding the drinking, dancing and smoking habits of young people,²³⁷ while in 1946 there were joint services with Anglicans in the prisons and the Home for the Infirm.²³⁸ That same year the Methodists investigated the possibility of having an ecumenical Christian boarding school at Lamin, which would replace all Christian secondary education. But the idea fell through, because time was not yet ripe for such an ecumenical venture.²³⁹ Slowly, however, the three churches grew closer together and the ground for a Christian Council was prepared.

²³¹ Thompson to Treleaven, London December 29 1931 and January (no date) 1932; Treleaven to Thompson, December 31 1931 and February 18 1932, Box 764 H2709 mf. 1086.

²³² Synod Minutes 1920, Box 240 H2708, mf. 430.

²³³ Synod Minutes 1931, Box 242 H2708 mf. 431.

²³⁴ Synod Minutes 1936, Box 247 H2708 mf. 438.

²³⁵ Synod Minutes 1936, Box 247 H2708 mf. 438.

²³⁶ Treleaven to Ayre, March 6 1936, Box 764 H2709 mf. 1091.

²³⁷ Synod Minutes 1943, Box 254 H2708 mf. 446.

²³⁸ Synod Minutes 1946, Box 256 H2708 mf. 449.

²³⁹ Synod Minutes 1946, Box 256 H2708 mf. 449.

Methodism and Islam

Unlike the Roman Catholics who towards the end of the 19th century, had given up attempting to evangelise the Muslims, the Methodists persisted in their efforts to convert Muslims until the middle of the 20th century. Because the traditional methods of preaching and education seemed not to bring the desired result, different methods of evangelism were contemplated. There were proposals for a medical mission,²⁴⁰ for better training of existing personnel,²⁴¹ for engaging specifically trained personnel,²⁴² for enforcing strict discipline amongst the membership so that they could be more of a witnessing community, etc.²⁴³ But none of these ideas had any result.

Records show that it was not until the 1950s that Methodists in The Gambia took Islam as a religion seriously. In 1924 the Synod wrote that though Islam had claimed some of the indigenous ethnic groups, 'Muhammadanism itself is breaking up under the influence of modern education and modes of thought and life. Because it is a religion of the letter and not of the spirit, it does not progress and it cannot satisfy the needs of our age.'²⁴⁴ This was in line with a world-wide carried prediction that Islam would break down once exposed to modern civilisation and education.²⁴⁵ The Africa Secretary Thompson wrote in 1929:

The Muhammedanism of West Africa is not at present of a fanatical type. The chief reason is that it is so superficial and barbarous. The Muhammedanism which I have seen in our West African Colonies is paganism with the thinnest possible veneer of Islam on the surface. The feelings, convictions and practices of many West African Moslems have not been deeply affected by the change of religion.²⁴⁶

In 1946 the Methodists were still convinced that if they would reach Muslims before they would be educated, Muslims would be easily converted. But 'we are warned that once they get the Koran, the task of evangelisation will be infinitely harder and the Kingdom of God delayed.'²⁴⁷ Lane, like Maude, seems to have been one of the few exceptions to these ideas about Islam. He realised that the mission was using much of its scarce energies and resources in trying to convert Muslims, while neglecting other areas. In 1923 he wrote: 'I am bound to say that since we closed down our futile efforts to convert Muhammedans, we have seen great improvement in our remaining work.'²⁴⁸ Lane, though a young and inexperienced man, was one of the few missionaries who reflected consciously on how to best use the limited resources of the district. Most missionaries rather continued to tread the traditional paths of wanting to evangelise Muslims whose conversion they thought would only be a matter of time. But these traditional paths proved to be a *cul-de-sac* time and again. The relationship with Islam was in need of a thorough reflection and an even more thorough change of policy.

²⁴⁰ Synod Minutes 1923, Box 238, H2708 mf. 428.

²⁴¹ Synod Minutes 1921, Box 236, H2708 mf. 428.

²⁴² Lane to Goudie, Bathurst May 15 1919, Box 762, H2709 mf. 1069.

²⁴³ Thompson to Lane, London May 30 1924, Box 763, H2709 mf. 1077.

²⁴⁴ Synod Minutes 1925, Box 238, H2708 mf. 428.

²⁴⁵ T. Yates, *Christian mission in the twentieth century*, 31.

²⁴⁶ Thompson to Eburne, London December 31 1929, Box 763, H2709 mf. 1084.

²⁴⁷ Synod Minutes 1946, Box 256, H2708 mf. 448.

²⁴⁸ Lane to Thompson, Bathurst August 15 1923, Box 763, H2708 mf. 1076.

8.3 The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas

Background to the creation of the Diocese

The year 1935 was of crucial importance to the Anglican Church in The Gambia. It was the year in which the Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas was created. Its territory included Senegal, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Conakry and Guinea-Bissau. Bishop Olufosoye (1965-1970)²⁴⁹ estimated his area at about 220,000 square miles, having about seven and a half million people living in it, of which about 2000 were Anglicans. Huge as this might seem, it was an improvement to the situation before 1935, when The Gambia and the Rio Pongas had formed part of the Sierra Leonean diocese.

The birth of the diocese is closely linked with the work of the Church Missionary Society and that of the Anglican Church of the West Indies in Sierra Leone. The CMS had been active in Sierra Leone since its inception in 1799. Initially it had focussed on a mission to the Susu, but high mortality rate amongst its missionaries and the arrival of thousands of Liberated Africans and Recaptives caused a shift of focus to the coastal area.²⁵⁰ It was at this point that the West Indian Church stepped in. In 1851 the West Indian Anglican Church was celebrating its 150th anniversary. At the celebration the idea of an African mission was born. Thankful for the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the apprenticeship system shortly afterwards and grateful for one and a half century of the Anglican Church in the West Indies, the idea was born to start an African mission as a thankoffering. Rev. Rawle, Principal of Codrington College, Barbados, suggested the mission: "We look from our windows, straight towards that dark land... She seems to stretch out her hands today and say: 'Come over and help us.'²⁵¹ Thus, in 1855 two missionaries from the West Indian Anglican Church set out for West Africa to start their work. James Leacock, an elderly white priest and John Duport²⁵², a catechist and native of St. Kitts, landed on the shores of West Africa, near the Rio Pongas, in December 1855. Leacock died within a year of arrival but Duport served the Pongas mission – with many ups and downs – until his death in 1873.

Duport and his successors faced many hardships in the Pongas mission. It was very difficult to communicate with both the home board in the West Indies and the Anglican bishop of Sierra Leone, to which the Pongas belonged. Moreover, the isolation from co-workers proved a heavy burden. The myth that West Indians were more resistant to the

²⁴⁹ Rt. Rev. Timothy O. Olufosoye, a Nigerian nationality, was bishop of the diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas from 1965-1970. Facts from *The condition of the Diocese of Gambia and Rio Pongas today*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File.

²⁵⁰ CMS was founded in 1799 by a group of evangelical Anglicans, belonging to the so-called Clapham Sect. The name CMS was adopted in 1813. Initially CMS failed to attract British Anglicans who were willing to offer themselves as missionaries and Lutherans Germans were sent abroad instead. In 1815 the first English went abroad for CMS. See L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 60 ff.

²⁵¹ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 25.

²⁵² Noel Titus has written a biography about J.H.A. Duport. N. Titus, *Missionary under pressure: the experiences of the Rev. John Duport in West Africa*, Caribbean Group for Social and Religious Studies No. 4 1983. See also: D. O'Connor, *Three centuries of mission: the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701-2000*, 75.

climate than Europeans proved false. Many died while serving in Guinea and only slowly a Christian community came into being

By the 1930s the Province of the West Indies was faced with the fact that the Pongas Mission was dwindling and either needed to be closed down or needed to make a new start. The Archdeacon H.T. Julian was appointed to investigate the situation. He recommended that the Pongas Mission needed a bishop of its own to secure and stimulate the vitality and expansion of the work.²⁵³ The Provincial Synod of Bishops to whom Julian reported, concluded that the Pongas should become part of a new missionary diocese, which consisted of The Gambia, French and Portuguese Guinea and Senegal and which had Bathurst as its centre. A request was made to the Archbishop of Canterbury to create this new diocese.

The Bishop of Sierra Leone supported the proposal. As early as 1924 Bishop George Wright of Sierra Leone had indicated that he wanted to be relieved of the responsibility for French Guinea because of practical reasons of language and distance. Wright as well felt that the creation of a new diocese with a young bishop might stimulate mission work in the region. These recommendations convinced the Archbishop of Canterbury of the need for a new diocese. He acceded to the creation of the missionary Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas in 1934, provided the stipend for the bishop was guaranteed for a period of five years and provided there would be money to support the mission work in the area. A joint action of the West Indian Church, SPG and SPCK gathered the necessary funds. In 1935 the English Reverend John C.S. Daly (1935-1951) was appointed to be the first bishop of the new diocese.²⁵⁴

The Anglican Church in The Gambia under Bishop Daly

The Anglican Church in The Gambia had functioned quite independently from the rest of the Diocese for about half a century. When the colonial government had terminated the provision of a colonial chaplain in the late 1880s, the Gambian Anglican Church had requested the Sierra Leone Diocese for a priest to replace him. This request was granted, on the condition that the Anglican community in The Gambia could guarantee the stipend and residence of the priest. This arrangement was still in operation in the 1930s and had brought the Rev. S. F. During to The Gambia. During was in charge of St. Mary's cathedral on Daly's arrival.²⁵⁵ Apart from During there was only one other member of the clergy in The Gambia: a Gambian deacon named H.N. (Leslie) Hunter, who served as curate of St. Mary's Church. Hunter was ordained into the priesthood in 1935; one of Daly's first actions in The Gambia.²⁵⁶ This made Hunter the first Gambian Anglican priest. Hunter did not serve long in The Gambia. After a clash with the

²⁵³ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 15.

²⁵⁴ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 15-23.

²⁵⁵ During was 62 when Daly arrived and retired in 1937. J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091; J. Daly, *The four mitres: reminiscences of an irrepressible Bishop, part II, Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 18.

²⁵⁶ Article from *The Gambia Echo*, June 24 1935, Red File Box (no number), loose papers only, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

missionary George Erle-Drax (1938-1939), Erle-Drax went home with a nervous breakdown and Hunter left The Gambia for Lagos.²⁵⁷

On Daly's arrival in 1935 the Anglican Church had circa 700 members, about half of which were communicant. The church was mainly confined to Bathurst.²⁵⁸ Anglican work outside Bathurst was limited. In 1930 there had been a joint Methodist Anglican project to start a bush school in Sukuta, but the Anglicans pulled out after about a year. There was also an Anglican Church in Basse, which was led by a catechist.²⁵⁹ It seems that the catechist, unlike many of his colleagues who were stationed in the trading towns, sought contacts with the Fula in the region in an effort to evangelise them.²⁶⁰ Later Daly would take up this idea of evangelising the Fula in the Kristikunda project. A second catechist was working at Kinti Kunda, near Kerewan and had started a bush school. In 1935 there were 82 children enrolled, all of whom were Muslims.²⁶¹ This work seems to have disappeared in the late 1930s.

The Anglican Church had some diaconal work in the leper colony just outside Bathurst. There was also an Anglican Primary school in Bathurst, which received new vigour when from 1934 J.C. Faye was attached to the school on part-time basis. In 1938 he left his part-time job with the Methodist Boys' High School and dedicated himself completely to Anglican education.²⁶² Shortly afterwards the 'House of Transfiguration', a hostel for boys (Muslims as well as Christians, some of whom were from Conakry) who wanted to pursue their education, was started in Pignard Street. Headed by Faye and his wife, the school gave young students the opportunity to grow up in a Christian atmosphere.²⁶³ The Anglican primary school continued until 1945 when it was amalgamated with the Methodist primary schools. In 1958 this decision was reverted and St. Mary's primary school again continued independently.²⁶⁴

The main thrust of Daly's ministry in The Gambia was the mission to the Fula. Shortly after his arrival in 1935 he developed a plan to establish a Christian village among the Fula in the Basse region, which would serve as a witnessing community. The story of this Christian village²⁶⁵, Kristikunda, is told below in paragraph 8.5. Due to

²⁵⁷ Daly to ??, Bathurst November 16 1939, Red File Box no. 5, subfile *Bishop's report and handing over notes*, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁵⁸ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 30.

²⁵⁹ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091. This was a church of mixed Methodist and Anglican members, anglicised by During in 1931.

²⁶⁰ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 27.

²⁶¹ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091; J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 27.

²⁶² C. Mudford, *Report on work in the Upper River*, (no date, approximately 1945), Red File Box no. 4, History of Kristikunda, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁶³ In 1942, when Faye was appointed to take charge of education in Kristikunda, the House of Transfiguration was moved to Kristikunda. From 1946 the English secondary school in Kristikunda was also called House of Transfiguration. See paragraph 8.4.

²⁶⁴ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: The Gambia - commissary Canon Alan Grainge, French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea*, Archdeacon Macaulley, 1958, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, 1.

²⁶⁵ A lot of material has been published on the phenomenon of 'the Christian village'. For references see J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Missiology*, II, 203, 204. The type of Christian village

Daly's emphasis on and financial investment in the Fula outreach, other areas of work were somewhat neglected. The parish of St. Mary's had been financially independent for a long time and continued to function without problems. But others areas of the diocese struggled to survive. In 1948 Daly wrote: 'I think that the Rio Pongas itself will have to close as a mission field for the time being...'²⁶⁶ Though this did not happen, it was a sign that the Kristikunda project was to the detriment of other mission stations in the diocese.

Indigenous ministry

One of the things for which Daly can be credited, is that he encouraged several Gambians into the ministry. Leslie Hunter, ordained by Daly in 1935, was already mentioned above. In 1942 John Colley Faye offered for the ministry.²⁶⁷ Faye was ordained deacon in 1948. From 1942 until 1949 he served as educational pioneer and *alkalo* in Kristikunda. As *alkalo* he served on the Kantora Local Authority from 1943 onwards. This was not the first sign of Faye's interest in politics.²⁶⁸ Already before leaving for Kristikunda Faye had served on the Bathurst Town Council from 1940-42. In 1951 Faye decided to leave the full-time ministry and to opt for a political career.²⁶⁹ He founded the Gambia Democratic Party in 1951²⁷⁰ and was elected in the Legislative Council. He was appointed as Minister of the Crown and later from 1954 until 1960 served as Minister of Works and Communications.²⁷¹ In 1963/64 Faye was appointed Gambia High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, after which he retired from politics and dedicated his energies to the church. Faye ministered in the Serekunda parish and later was appointed Provost of St. Mary's Cathedral until he retired in 1982.²⁷² On December 10 1985 Faye died, having been one of the most influential Anglicans of his time.²⁷³

Also other Gambians opted for the ministry during Daly's time. In 1951 Matthias Charles George offered for the ministry.²⁷⁴ He and a colleague from French Guinea, William Yaneh Macauley, were sent to St. Augustine's Theological College

discussed in the literature is however of a different type than that in The Gambia. Mostly, the name Christian village was used for villages where people who had just converted to Christianity lived together as a Christian community to protect them from non-Christian influences. The Christian village as it was built in The Gambia, was a village where Christians went to live in order to evangelise the surrounding Muslim village. The Christian village was established to serve as a witness of life.

²⁶⁶ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 52-56.

²⁶⁷ Red File Box no. 2, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁶⁸ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 51.

²⁶⁹ *Diocesan Newsletter* 1 (January 1952), Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda History continued, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁷⁰ In 1960 the GDP merged with the Gambia Muslim Congress to form the Democratic Congress Alliance, but the DCA lost in the elections and the merger was broken up in 1963.

²⁷¹ S.S. Nyang, 'The historical development of political parties in the Gambia', 14-16.

²⁷² S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 63.

²⁷³ A. Hughes and H. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 64-65.

²⁷⁴ SPG to Coote, London January 27 1951, File Box no. 12, Historical Documents, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

in Kumasi, Ghana.²⁷⁵ Both men were ordained into the priesthood in 1953. Macauley worked for some time in The Gambia and Senegal, after which he returned to Guinea, first as archdeacon (1973-1986) and from 1986 onwards as bishop of the newly established Diocese of Guinea.²⁷⁶ Matthias George served at various places in The Gambia and was appointed archdeacon of The Gambia in 1963.²⁷⁷ He held this ministry until his unexpected death on September 10, 1975.²⁷⁸

In the late 1950s two other people were sent for training. Max Jones and Jacob Williams were sent to Codrington College, Barbados. Jacob Williams, an old student of Kristikunda,²⁷⁹ was priested in 1960 and served in several places in The Gambia, among which Kristikunda and Serekunda until his retirement in the early 1990s.²⁸⁰ Jones was also ordained in 1960. He served as a curate at St. Mary's Cathedral from 1959-1960 after which he was stationed at Kristikunda, ministering to Christians in Bansang, Georgetown, Mansakonko and Dakar. Jones left for the U.S.A. in the mid 1960s.²⁸¹ Another candidate to the ministry, Abraham Benjamin Sonkor died in 1970 while he was training in Ibadan at Immanuel College.²⁸²

The Anglican Church under Bishop Roderick Cote

On April 22, 1951 the Rt. Rev. Roderick Cote (1951-1957) was consecrated as Bishop of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas.²⁸³ Cote had worked as British missionary in Kristikunda since 1941 and knew the Anglican diocese well. His consecration led to a change of policy for the diocese. Cote stated that rather than focussing on outreach, he saw it as his primary task to see that all existing Christians were adequately ministered to.²⁸⁴ In 1953 he said:

²⁷⁵ List of workers in the Diocese 1952, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda History, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁷⁶ Testimonial to services of Mc'Aulay by Benjamin; Letter of Agnes Macauley to Archdeacon George, March 1 1965, Personnel Files, Red File Box no 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul. Personal information given by Dr. F. Mahoney.

²⁷⁷ Letter to Ms. Ethel Ruth Gandy, Banjul November 16 1966, Red File Box 12, Diocesan Historical File, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁷⁸ Elisee to Gyamfi, Banjul September 10 1975, Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁷⁹ Report of the Bishop of The Gambia on his visit to Gamba Saara (no date, possible mid to late 1960s), Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸⁰ Letter to Ms. Ethel Ruth Gandy, Banjul November 16 1966, Red File Box 12, Diocesan Historical File, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸¹ Olufosoye to Donegan, Banjul November 10 1970, Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸² Sonkor was an orphan of Muslim parents and raised by a Christian guardian. He was sent to Nigeria in 1969 and died by drowning. Loose note in Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸³ Red File Box no. 7, Educational issues, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul. Cote had arrived in The Gambia in 1941 and served mainly in Kristikunda. *Bishop's report and handing over notes*, Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸⁴ R. Cote, *Bishop's charge 1952*, Red File Box no. 7, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

The majority of the population of the diocese will not become Christian before Islam has firmly captured it. Our West African brand of Islam is very attractive to the simple African in the bush. He does not have to think, he merely has to perform a few duties and they are not rigidly observed.²⁸⁵

Coote saw this attractiveness of Islam to the African as the main reason why, despite the great input of resources in the Fula mission, the number of Anglicans had remained stagnant for the last fifty years.²⁸⁶ Rather than continuing to spend money and energy on missionary activities, Coote chose to consolidate the existing Christian communities.²⁸⁷ In the Diocesan report of 1953 he stated: 'If we don't minister to our scattered Christians, we shall find them being absorbed by Islam one by one.'²⁸⁸ Hence Macauley was sent to Dakar to pastor the 100 Anglicans there, Christ Church was built in Serekunda and Coote negotiated with the Government for the return of St. Mary's primary school into Anglican hands.²⁸⁹ He also appointed two commissaries, one for The Gambia and one for French Guinea, to act for him while he was absent from that particular part of the diocese. Soon afterwards two diocesan councils were set up to discuss the affairs of the church in that particular region. Thus Coote guaranteed that decisions were not unnecessarily delayed by communication or by his absence. Eventually, in 1985, the Archdeaconry of French Guinea developed into the Diocese of Guinea.²⁹⁰

When Anglicans began to move to Combo, the Anglican Church also began to establish itself in Combo. From the late 1940s onward there was a small – predominantly European – Anglican community in Fajara. The parish was supervised by Fr. Spurling and consisted of about 30 people.²⁹¹ After Spurling left, the attendance dwindled.²⁹² About the same time a church was built in Serekunda. The congregation in Serekunda was small: about 25 members. Because there was no parsonage, a priest travelled from Bathurst to Serekunda to conduct services.²⁹³ In

²⁸⁵ *Diocesan report 1953*, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸⁶ R. Coote, *Bishop's charge 1952*, Red File Box no. 7, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸⁷ Coote to a friend (no name), Bathurst June 22 1953, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁸⁸ *Diocesan report 1953*,

²⁸⁹ Coote to Ms. Oxley, Bathurst March 28 1955, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹⁰ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 61.

²⁹¹ Monthly letter, Easter 1950 mentions that there were 30 communicants in Fajara and 315 in Bathurst, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹² Report on St. Paul's Fajara, 1952/53, Red File Box no. 7, Educational matters, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹³ From 1955 onwards the Methodists in Serekunda were allowed to use Christ Church for worship on Sundays until they built their own chapel, Trinity Church. *Report of the 4th session of the Gambia Church Council*, 6th and 7th January 1955, Red File Box no. 7, Educational matters, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul. Note: the average attendance in Christ Church in 1955 was about 25.

1967 a third chapel was built in the Combo: St. Andrew's church in Lamin. J.C. Faye was appointed a priest in charge of the parish.²⁹⁴

Up country there was the community in Kristikunda, which consisted mainly of missionary workers and students. The congregation diminished when the schools were closed. In Basse the congregation fluctuated with the trade season. During the trade season there was a fairly large community, but outside the season the congregation was almost non-existing. Anglicans that lived in other towns in the Protectorate, such as in Bansang, Georgetown, Kaur, Kuntaur, Mansakonko and Mesembe, were served whenever priests travelled up country.²⁹⁵

Women's work was started in 1947 by the British missionary Mrs. Nancy Sanger-Davies. Her husband worked as an educational missionary in the School of Science in Bathurst and Mrs. Sanger-Davies was asked to start a branch of the Mothers Union in Bathurst.²⁹⁶ In 1956 another Mothers Union worker, Ms. Kathleen Oxley, was sent out to The Gambia. Coote explained that the possibilities of establishing branches of Mothers Union in the diocese would be limited due to the distances, but that

there is a lot of work amongst our women and girls to be done, which would not grow into the production of a new Branch for years, but which desperately needs doing – real pioneer work amongst non-Christian women and girls, as well as Sunday School work and giving guidance over the teaching of Scripture and Religious knowledge in day schools.²⁹⁷

Coote added that he badly needed proper women's workers since the whole of his expatriate staff, clerical and medical, was celibate. And he stressed the importance of women's work in a society, which was predominantly Muslim.²⁹⁸ Gradually over the years, Mothers Union has developed into an influential group within the Anglican Church, with branches in all the larger parishes. The activities of the Mothers Union vary from equipping women with Christian knowledge, to fundraising, development and educational projects.

The Anglican Church and Islam

On several occasions Coote, with his experience in the rural areas, had pointed out that Christians in the diocese were susceptible to the influence of Islam and that only proper Christian education could protect Christians from those influences.²⁹⁹ He

²⁹⁴ Red File Box no. 7, Educational matters, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹⁵ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: The Gambia, commissary Canon Alan Grainge; French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea, Archdeacon Macauley*, 1958, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda History, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹⁶ J. Daly, *The four mitres* II, 45ff.

²⁹⁷ Coote to Mrs. Marjorie Davie, April 4 1956 and Coote to Ms. Oxley, March 28 1956, Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹⁸ Coote to Mrs. Marjorie Davie, November 3 1955, Red File Box no. 5, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁹⁹ *Diocesan report 1953*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

seems to have felt the Muslim presence as a threat to the Christian community and regarded attempts to evangelise Muslims as futile. By building up a strong Christian community Coote hoped to stem the expansion of Islam by spreading Christian influence.³⁰⁰

His predecessor Daly had more liberal views of Islam. He stated clearly that he saw Islam first of all as a heresy and said: 'I cannot believe that the Holy Spirit has sent His Church to West Africa that we should have a confrontation with Islam.'³⁰¹ In retrospect on his time as missionary bishop in several parts of the world, he wrote that his friendships with Muslims, Jews and Buddhists had led him to the conclusion that Peter's words were true: 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right, is acceptable to Him.' The missionary's task, according to Daly, was 'to sit where they sit' and 'leave it to the Holy Spirit to lead these friends in Christ 'into all truth.'³⁰² These words resound Max Warren's theology of attention and his ideas that friendship is crucial in witnessing to Christ.³⁰³ Daly herewith stood in the same Anglo-Saxon tradition as several of his successors in The Gambia who showed a great appreciation for Islam, pleaded for an approach of friendship and dialogue and stimulated the establishment of the Islam in Africa project in The Gambia.

8. 4 Kristikunda: The Anglican experiment of a Christian village

The vision of the Kristikunda project

The diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas, sometimes shortly called the Pongas Mission, was not just created for administrative purposes. It was hoped that by carving out the area from the larger Sierra Leone diocese, missionary work in the region would receive a new impulse. But the new diocese was strongly handicapped by the fact that its newly appointed bishop Daly had no experience in the mission field. He had never been in West Africa nor had according to his own saying, even 'seen a West African'³⁰⁴ before his consecration. Records show that, though he was appointed as a *missionary* bishop under the Archbishop of Canterbury, he initially saw caring for the expatriate community in his diocese as his primary task.³⁰⁵ This changed during an orientation trip in the diocese of Sierra Leone.³⁰⁶ The tour was

³⁰⁰ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: The Gambia, Commissary Canon Alan Grainge; French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea, Archdeacon Macauley*, 1958, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda History, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

³⁰¹ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 55.

³⁰² J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 55-56.

³⁰³ In 2002 a dissertation on Max Warren's views on Muslims and Hindus was published. G.R. Kings, *Christianity connected: Hindus, Muslims and the World in the letters of Max Warren and Roger Hooker*, Boekencentrum 2002.

³⁰⁴ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, I, 28.

³⁰⁵ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, I, 25. Also the expatriate community saw Daly's appointment as an extension of the chaplaincy to officers and army people that had existed since the 1820s. J. Daly, *The four mitres*, I, 28.

³⁰⁶ Daly visited the border area of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

organised by his mentor Bishop George Wright of Sierra Leone and probably took place towards the end of 1935. Among the places visited was Bolahun (in present day Northern Liberia), where the Roman Catholic order of the Holy Cross had a mission station. It was Daly's first encounter with an African rural mission station and the visit shaped his missionary vision.³⁰⁷ Thus the idea for the Christian village of Kristikunda was born.³⁰⁸

In his letter to the English Christian Community, written at All-Saints tide 1935, Daly presented his mission plans:

to find an unworked area in the Protectorate and there to establish a central station with as big a staff as I can afford. At that station I hope to have a central boarding school for boys and girls, a dispensary, a model farm, a training college for catechists and 'bush-school' teachers, and a Church. It is more than probable that it will be twenty years or more before this big plant is completed.³⁰⁹

This letter formed the beginning of a period of fundraising, especially in the United Kingdom and the West Indies. For though the diocese was self-supporting as far as the existing parishes were concerned, there was no money to undertake new work.³¹⁰ Funds for mission, just like the funds for the bishopric, would have to come from abroad.

Meanwhile a time of preparation started. Evangelism had not been a top priority on the church agenda. At Daly's arrival there was a catechist at Kerewan and one at Basse.³¹¹ Neither of them however had great results to show for and their work did not seem to have been part of a larger, comprehensive mission strategy. Yet Daly was full of confidence that his congregation would support his plans: 'There is a large hearted missionary spirit, but it lacks drive, imagination and leadership.'³¹² It was this dormant missionary spirit that Daly was able to arouse. The first people who caught on to Daly's vision were a group of young people, who had been meeting for a regular 'missionary hour' under the supervision of Rev. S. F.

³⁰⁷ 'There were two outstanding impressions, which have helped to shape my own mission. First and foremost was the centrality of our Lord. There could be no mistake about the fact that worship was the most important activity. ... The other impression I got was a sense of disciplined fellowship and purpose in all their Missionary activities: in their ministries of teaching and healing. ... I returned to Gambia with a clearer vision of the Church as a mission. My next task was to remind the Anglicans there that I had been sent primarily to lead them in Mission and to suggest that it was high time for us to pioneer new work for Christ.' J. Daly, *The four mitres*, I, 29, 30.

³⁰⁸ Kristikunda literally means 'Village of Christ'. Kunda is the Mandinka word for 'village', usually connected with the name of the owner or first settler e.g. Sankelekunda. The satellite village, which was built later, received the name Saare Yesu, being the Fula version of 'Village of Jesus'.

³⁰⁹ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091.

³¹⁰ Daly, *The four mitres*, vol. 1, 27.

³¹¹ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091.

³¹² J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives, Box 764, H2708 mf 1091.

During.³¹³ A Youth Conference on Boxing Day 1935 with 'mission' as the overall theme, led to the formation of the 'PEA-group' from which many of the first Kristikunda missionaries came.³¹⁴ PEA was an abbreviation of Prayer, Example and Action.³¹⁵ Many of the participants of the conference were still youngsters in 1935, but the Pea-group became the seed-plot for people who later served in Kristikunda.

Establishment and heyday of Kristikunda

In 1940, three years later than Daly had hoped for, the next major step was taken.³¹⁶ The time had come to allocate a suitable place for Kristikunda. The choice fell on the Fula dominated area in the Upper River Division. Initial negotiations with the chiefs of the Basse district came to nothing, - people were afraid of the changes the mission would bring to the area - but in the end the people of Jaokunda, a traditional Fula village, consented to grant the mission some land.³¹⁷

The plans to start with Kristikunda immediately after the rains that same year (approximately September/October) were thwarted by the outbreak of the Second World War. The sponsors, who had committed themselves to aid in the funding of the project, indicated that they would not be able to keep up the promises due to the precarious situation. But the PEA group, many of them now young adults, was ready

³¹³ Some sources mention Rev. During as the driving force behind the missionary hour, others state that it was Rev. Hunter, deacon and curate of St. Mary's Church. See J. Daly, *The four mitres*, I, 27 and II, 17 mention Rev. During, whereas an article from Daly that was published in the Times in 1934 mentions Henry Newman Hunter as the coordinator. See J. Daly, 'Division of the Diocese of Sierra Leone', *Times* 1934 (no date), WMMS Archives, Box 764 H2708 mf. 1091.

³¹⁴ All people involved in the Kristikunda project, Africans and Europeans alike, were called missionaries.

³¹⁵ S.H.M. Jones, *The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 35. There are a few varieties in what PEA exactly stood for. One source mentions Prayer, personal Example and Active service (see J. Daly, *The four mitres, reminiscences of an irrepressible bishop, part II The Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, USPC 1983, 17).

³¹⁶ J. Daly, *Letter to the English Christians*, All Saints Tide 1935, WMMS Archives Box 764, H2708 mf 1091.

³¹⁷ *Report of the track made in February 1940, meeting up with people in Basse District re setting up a Mission post*, 24-ii-1940, page 5, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970. *Report of the track made in February 1940, meeting up with people in Basse District re setting up a Mission post*, 24-ii-1940, page 2 Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970. The report reads: 'Our hopes were dashed last evening; the people were solid in their opposition to allowing a mission station in the District. (...) First the Seyfu or Paramount Chief spoke very briefly - is not a Fullah by the way but a Sarahuli and a Mohammadan - he said that they had come over at the Commissioners request as most of his people. There were Fullah he had spoken to their headman and ... (eaten away by mice) they were afraid. They were so afraid that if he had not been there to lead and support them, they would have gone and ... (unreadable) and would not have come at all. The commissioner then asked the headman why they were afraid pointing out to them that again that all the mission wanted to do was sit down quietly amongst them and help them in every way possible. There was to be a doctor and dispensers, expert farmers and a school. But no they said, "We have not known anything like this and our forefathers did not know such a thing. We are cattle people and we keep to ourselves and we are afraid of any contact with civilization.'

to move. In consultation with the local church the decision was taken to go ahead with Kristikunda even though funds were low. In order to overcome the financial difficulties, Daly suggested to set up a community along Franciscan lines. He offered to pool his episcopal income of £600 if the young people were prepared to share their labour and expertise.³¹⁸ Six young people agreed to participate.³¹⁹ One was trained as an agriculturist (Charles Bah), another as a schoolteacher, a third acted as a dresser-dispenser (Nelson Camara), a fourth was a carpenter, the fifth was trained as a shoemaker and the sixth was a Brother Juniper.³²⁰ Thus in the latter half of 1940 Kristikunda came into being: an all Christian village in a non-Christian environment, meant to serve as an example of Christian living and service.

The initial buildings of Kristikunda were simple African huts arranged in a circle around the chapel. The total cost of venture was £30. Typical for The Gambian religious setting was the fact that £5 – a sixth of the total budget – was donated by a rich Muslim trader from Bathurst with the note: ‘to help you in the work which you are doing for our country!’³²¹ Despite the initial enthusiasm, the support of the commissioner and the assistance of the neighbouring community, the start of Kristikunda was difficult. The young people were motivated all right but had no experience whatsoever to live a Franciscan-style religious life of having all things in common. To complicate things even more, there was no proper water supply in the village, the soil proved poor³²² and the children were slow in coming to school. When Daly went on leave to England in 1941, the whole project nearly collapsed. Only the intervention of John and Cecilia Faye rescued Kristikunda from an early death.³²³ But, as British missionary John Laughton, who worked in Kristikunda in the 1940s pointed out, the psychological damage done to the young pioneers of Kristikunda could not be erased. For some their dreams were shattered and the experience broke their hearts.³²⁴

³¹⁸ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 19.

³¹⁹ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 37.

³²⁰ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 22.

³²¹ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 21, 22.

³²² A letter from a senior agricultural officer (date unknown – eaten away by mice) survived stating: ‘... that the soil is far from ideal for agricultural purposes. (...) thus in demonstrating improved methods you would be at a disadvantage the whole time in comparing your results with those of your neighbouring peasant farmers who naturally are utilizing land which they have proved to be more fertile. *Letter from a Senior Agriculturalist*, Anglican Archives Bishop’s Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970. And a sceptical Roderic Coote, the second bishop of the Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas, comments on the farming project in Kristikunda in a report on *Islam in West Africa*: ‘The reason why the original plan of the founding of a Christian village failed was because Gambia had no Christian villagers. Taking a townsman and putting a hoe into his hand, doesn’t make him a farmer, anymore than feeding an old man on milk makes him a baby...’ Anglican Archives Bishop’s Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953.

³²³ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 39.

³²⁴ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 39. He says: ‘It is difficult to give a true picture of the years that followed. Some say that the young missionaries had undertaken a task, that of living in a community, that only Saints could accomplish: in many ways it did prove too much for the men. Some say that it was a mistake to introduce the plough for there were too many stumps

It was at this crucial point in time, that rescue came in the form of the Hawkes bequest. Two sisters, the sisters Hawkes, had left a large grant to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and S.P.G. decided that Kristikunda was to be its first beneficiary. Thus in 1942 a new start could be made. The village was moved to a spot where proper drinking water was available, mud-brick houses and St. John's Church were built and the vernacular school system was re-started, now on a wider basis.³²⁵ Also the first European support staff arrived: Cyril Mudford who served as archdeacon and Roderic Coote, were among them. The expatriate missionary staff lived in the satellite village Saare Yesu ten miles from Kristikunda, because the vision was that Kristikunda was to be an all-African village.³²⁶

In same year 1942 John Faye, and his family moved to Kristikunda to take charge.³²⁷ With Faye the House of Transfiguration, an Anglican hostel for students who came to study in the capital Bathurst, moved to Kristikunda.³²⁸ In Kristikunda the House of Transfiguration took the shape of a boarding school for boys from the coastal area that were difficult to handle. In 1944 Daly could proudly report that in Kristikunda and the surrounding area

we have (a) a vernacular school for boys of 8 –12 in Mandingo, (b) a vernacular school for boys and girls (average age 11) in Fullah, (c) a vernacular school for young peasant students (average age 22) in Fullah (though two are Jollof speaking), (d) an English speaking school for Fullahs, Mandingoes, Jollofs and Creoles in which Phonetics and a native language is taught as an extra subject.³²⁹

to be removed and the soils was too rocky: certainly it did break some of their hearts.' Also in later years Kristikunda caused several casualties due to its isolated location and the loneliness that was its result. Roderic Coote in 1958 (only 18 years after the inception!) mentions the name of five European staff members that left Kristikunda scarred: 'Mudford left through bitter disappointment, Carey through physical collapse, Lamb through sickness, Lee on the verge of a mental breakdown and Haythorhwaite through a moral breakdown.' R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: the Gambia, commissary Canon Allan Grainge and French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea Archdeacon Macauley*, 1958, p.2, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³²⁵ A picture of the chapel has survived and can be found in J. Laughton's booklet *Gambia*.

³²⁶ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 43.

³²⁷ Laughton gives an idyllic description of the village in the early days: '...it sounds like an African town, with the women beating their grain and the children laughing and shouting at their games, with all the usual farmyard noises, though they do rarely hear a voice raised in anger; and it has an African Headman. But it is a Christian town. Not everyone living there is a Christian, but it is Christ's law that is obeyed, as far as human frailty will permit, in their daily lives. (...) The Head of Kristikunda, the Headmaster of the vernacular school, their wives and many others, have made real sacrifices for Christ's sake in order to settle at Kristikunda. They are quietly living out the Gospel and it is that which tells. (...) Kristikunda is not perfect but there is the germ of something worthwhile, something that God can use and is using. It is the witness, however faulty, of the life which is African and Christian.' J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 40.

³²⁸ *Report on Kristikunda by the education department*, October 7 1943, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³²⁹ J. Daly, *Notes on memorandum on language in African school education*, 6-6-1944, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4 Kristikunda 1960-1970.

It was especially for this last school that Kristikunda became famous in the 1940s. With the schools the number of inhabitants of Kristikunda grew. In 1948, there were 157 people living in the village, most of whom were students.³³⁰

After the war the medical work received a new impetus with the arrival of William Haythornthwaite, locally known as Kotto Bill.³³¹ He set up a clinic at Saare Yesu, supervised the medical work at Kristikunda and also serviced the surrounding area with a mobile dispensary. In some years the mobile clinic visited more than 75 villages in Wuli and Kantora district.³³² The medical work did much to alleviate the suspicion and opposition to the Anglican presence in Upper River Division and created a lot of goodwill towards Christianity.³³³ When I visited the area in 1998 elderly people in Jaokunda still mentioned the 1940s as the golden days of the area, with adequate medical and educational provisions and important people such as bishops and high colonial officers visiting the village.

Quite soon after the re-start in 1942 it became clear that the Fula were not interested in the gospel. Coote concluded in 1955:

Long before 1945 however, it was quite clear that the Foulah were not going to play. At least two baptized Foulah boys were removed from Kristikunda and kept from growing up as Christians. (...) It was quite clear that the Foulah did not want to send their children to school but it was equally clear that the Mandingoes and others did. Bishop Daly asked me my views about taking in lots of Mandingoes whom he felt only wanted education and not the Christian faith. I said I was in favour of them being admitted. It was a question of that or a tiny school. Also I felt that one couldn't say what difference a few years in the place would make to a Mandingo boy. We have had two baptisms of Mandingoes already, George Sangnia and Paul Sajaw, and there are others who would be baptized if it were not for parental opposition. Although we have not lost sight of the Foulahs and their needs, I certainly no longer look upon Kristikunda as a mission exclusively to the Foulahs, or even principally to the Foulahs. My experience of the Foulahs (...) is that they always sit back and watch what the Mandingoes are going to do before they decide anything. (...) I look at Kristikunda at present as a place which is spreading goodwill towards the Christian faith by means of education and medical services.³³⁴

Thus gradually the aims of Kristikunda shifted. Education, both in vernacular and in English, became the key element of the Christian presence in Kristikunda. The opening of the boarding school for Bathurst boys in 1945, though prestigious, was soon regretted. The costs were enormous and it meant that the Bathurst boys used up the resources of funds and personnel, which were intended for the Protectorate children. S.H.M Jones who wrote a report on Kristikunda in 1955, stated:

³³⁰ J. Laughton, *Gambia*, 39.

³³¹ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 51. Koto Bill means Brother Bill.

³³² C. Mudford, *Letter to the Colonial secretary*, Sept. 3 194? (eaten away by mice) Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4 Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³³³ R. Coote, *Diocesan report 1953*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 2, Subfile Quarterly letter Roderic Coote 1942-1953.

³³⁴ R. Coote, *Bishop's response to the report of S.H.M. Jones 'My visit to Kristikunda' 1955*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4 Kristikunda 1960-1970.

The Boarding school at Kristikunda acquired fame in the early days because of the quality of teaching, the success of the pupils in local and overseas examinations, and not least, its success in dealing with 'tough' boys from Bathurst. The School took on the nature of a Refining and Reforming Agency for boys in Bathurst. The Mission now feels that the success Kristikunda had in dealing with the 'toughs' from Bathurst, has tended to deflect it from its original purpose, which was to minister to the Educational needs of the Protectorate boys.³³⁵

The decline of Kristikunda

In 1949 the decision of 1945 to establish a boarding school was reversed and the boarding school for Bathurst boys was closed.³³⁶ At that time also J.C. Faye left Kristikunda. The boarding facilities for the rural children, called St. John's School, continued up till 1965.³³⁷ Even after the closing of the House of Transfiguration, the costs for keeping up the schools, for continuing the medical work and for maintaining the large staff, both Gambian and expatriate, were out of proportion. In 1955 more than half of the total budget of the diocese, most of which came from the Hawkes bequest, was needed for the maintenance of Kristikunda.³³⁸ Even grants from the governmental education funds could not bring relief. It inevitably led to negligence of other areas. Coote said in letter to a friend in 1953:

When I became Bishop I set myself the task, amongst others, of trying to see that nowhere in my diocese are people left without ministrations of the Church for long periods. I had felt that we were in danger, by our trying to put much of our manpower and resources into pioneerwork, of losing some of those who already belonged to Christ. There were places with as many as a hundred Christians needing the ministrations of our clergy, who were lucky if they saw one of them as often as once a year.³³⁹

Slowly the funds and staff were reduced because there were few tangible results to legitimise this input. Besides, the remoteness of the area and the difficult circumstances of the work had caused several casualties among the staff, who either left physically or mentally ill or were bitterly disappointed with the result of their labours.³⁴⁰ All this did not make working in Kristikunda very popular. In 1958 the last expatriate left

³³⁵ S. Jones, *My visit to Kristikunda, 1955*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970, 2.

³³⁶ R. Coote, *Bishop's response to the report of S.H.M. Jones 'My visit to Kristikunda' 1955*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4 Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³³⁷ A. Yorke, *Report on the Kristikunda school 1966*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4 Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³³⁸ Budgets 1955/56 and budget 1958 Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970. In 1955/56 £3485 out of the total £7516 was meant for Kristikunda and in 1958 £3500 was intended for Kristikunda whereas all other work in the diocese was budgeted for £2700.

³³⁹ R. Coote, *Letter to a friend, June 22 1953*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 2, subfile Quarterly letters Roderic Coote 1942-1953

³⁴⁰ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: the Gambia, commissary Canon Allan Grainge and French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea Archdeacon Macauley, 1958*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970, 2.

Kristikunda.³⁴¹ The death-stroke for Kristikunda came when after a field visit in 1961 the Hawkes Mission Trust decided to terminate its contribution. The reason given was that 'the Society [S.P.G.] as Trustee of the Hawkes Mission Trust, does not consider that the object and ideals of the Mission at Kristikunda are now capable of achievement with the resources at the disposal of the Trust'.³⁴² The grant ended in December 1963. In 1965 the boarding facilities of St. John's were closed. Gradually the buildings dilapidated and in 1966 St. John's church was demolished because it was about to collapse. An education report from 1967 urged the mission to transfer the children to Fatoto school because the station looked like a ghost-settlement and the staff was demoralised.³⁴³ All people except the teaching staff and the students had moved away. But Bishop Olufoseye was not yet prepared to take that final step and wanted to look into possibilities to revive Kristikunda. When in December 1969 there was still no improvement, the headmaster James Baker took the initiative into his own hands and transferred the remaining children to the Fatoto school.³⁴⁴ Thus the story of the Christian village of Kristikunda ended.

Evaluation of Kristikunda

The evaluation of whether or not the experiment of Kristikunda as a Christian village in a non-Christian world was successful depends very much on the perspective one takes. Looking at Kristikunda from a church-growth perspective, one can say that in many senses Kristikunda was a failure. Kristikunda did not bring the envisaged church-growth, which was so spectacular in other parts of Africa. Already in the early 1940s it was clear that neither the Fula nor the Mandinka intended to convert to Christianity. Then again one can wonder whether church growth should be the criterion by which the 'success' of Kristikunda is to be measured.³⁴⁵ On the negative side one can also conclude that Kristikunda did not stop the expanse of Islam. Olufoseye stated that even before Daly had left the diocese in 1951, Islam had spread sufficiently to make it no longer true to speak of the Fula as a pagan tribe.³⁴⁶ It is even possible to say that due to the focus of attention and resources on Kristikunda, other areas of the diocese were neglected and people who were already Christians felt ignored and forgotten and were thus more vulnerable to the influence of Islam.

³⁴¹ St. John Pike, *Letter of the Bishop to J.W. Paul, Government House*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³⁴² St. John Pike, *Letter of the Bishop to J.W. Paul, Government House*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³⁴³ Education report on Kristikunda School, February 23 1967, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³⁴⁴ Olufoseye, *Letter to James Baker, Dec. 1969*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³⁴⁵ In his discussion of MacGavran, Verkuyl questions the validity of the criterion of church growth, emphasising that mission is not only about church growth. He stresses the prophetic task of the church and the need to abide with those churches, which have virtually no growth potential. J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary missiology*, 191, 192.

³⁴⁶ Olufoseye, *Statement spoken at a Gambian Diocesan Association committee meeting (all former Bishops present)*, in the *Bulletin*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File.

Kristikunda was intended as an African Christian village, but the people living in it were mainly Krio. They were town people rather than peasants, highly educated compared to their neighbours in Kristikunda, did not speak the local language and were heavily influenced by Western culture. Though attempts were made to produce material in the vernaculars – Daly wrote a primer in Fula and a vernacular liturgy³⁴⁷ - Kristikunda never became an African village in the sense of the surrounding villages. As such Christianity remained an outsider. Kristikunda, due to its remoteness and isolation also caused many human casualties and made many of the Gambian participants sceptical about the possibilities of evangelism in The Gambia.

This is not the whole story. In other ways the Kristikunda experiment was far from a failure. Kristikunda spread Christian influence throughout the country. In the coastal areas many of the old boys from Kristikunda joined the civil service and reached influential positions in society, where they could spread Christian ethics and practices.³⁴⁸ In the Protectorate education and medical service also promoted Christian influence. The work generated a lot of goodwill towards the church and contributed to harmonious relations and peaceful co-existence even though that was not the first aim of the settlement.³⁴⁹ Besides, Kristikunda offered Christianity in a non-obtrusive and non-offensive way. Cyril Mudford, the archdeacon of the diocese, in one of his letters described the curiosity with which people observed the open-air services he held in Saare Yesu:

As I turned to give the Bidding at the Offertory this morning I noticed outside the open West Entrance, a little group of Africans, neighbours, in flowing robes and red fez that marks a follower of the Prophet. They were standing very still and silently – watching. At the ‘Dominus vobiscum’ before the Sanctus they were still there. When I raised up the ‘Lamb of God’ before my people they had not moved. As I gave God’s blessing to my flock my hand that signed the Cross seemed to take in that still group outside. They were standing there yet when I left the Sanctuary and again when I returned into Church to sing the Angelus with the congregation in thanksgiving for the Sacrifice that had been offered and received. And as at last I moved up again to the Sanctuary to make my own private thanksgiving I turned my head and once more I saw them grouped there in silence outside the Church. That is the gentle manner in which the Holy Spirit is working here. No mass conversions, nor likely to be in a country where almost all the people are nominal Moslems. Something much slower and perhaps much surer. The leaven of Kristikunda is doing its work. ‘Outside’ today wondering reverently at the worship of these Christians; ‘inside’ some day, in Christ’s own time, with the question ‘Sirs, we would see Jesus’ on their lips and in their hearts.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ J. Daly, *The four mitres*, Part II, 40/41. For the liturgy Daly developed see Appendix II.

³⁴⁸ R. Coote, *General observations on churches and stations: the Gambia, commissary Canon Allan Grainge and French Guinea, Senegal and Portuguese Guinea Archdeacon Macauley*, 1958, Anglican Archives Bishop’s Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970, 2.

³⁴⁹ The goodwill was still there when I visited the area in 1998. Re: peaceful coexistence see S. Jones, *My visit to Kristikunda 1955*, Anglican Archives Bishop’s Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970, point 8.

³⁵⁰ C. Mudford, *Random reflections 1942*, in J. Daly, *The four mitres*, II, 48.

Of all people serving in Kristikunda Mudford possibly had the clearest grasp of what it meant to be a Christian witness in a Muslim environment. Elsewhere he states:

...the function of Kristikunda would now appear to be that of an African Christian settlement on community basis, living a normal village life, illuminated and transfigured by the light of Christ. (...) It hopes to teach the Gospel without preaching it and by friendliness and charity to all comers to break ground for the sowing of the Word. (...) It is an inspired effort towards indirect evangelism.³⁵¹

Even though Kristikunda did not enhance mass-conversion, it served as a witness to Christ in a Muslim environment. The witness took the form of with-ness, a qualified presence. Charles de Foucauld, himself a missionary among the Tuareg in Algeria, defined Christian presence as 'being present amongst people, with a presence willed and intended as a witness of the love of Christ.'³⁵² In that sense, Kristikunda, though not intended as such, was as a Christian presence in a non-Christian world.

8.6 Christian political pioneers and the road to political independence

Introduction

It is difficult to say what exact influence the churches exercised in the development of nationalism in The Gambia. Gailey points out that religion did not play a key role in Gambian political life. The attempt to rally the support of the Muslim population by the Gambia Muslim Congress of Garba-Jahumpa proved a failure, while at the same time many Muslims supported the Christian led United Party and the People's Progressive Party of the ex-Muslim Jawara. Gailey gives three reasons for the separation of politics and religion in The Gambia. First of all, he states that the political parties in The Gambia were mainly personality oriented rather than based on a specific political programme or a religious background. Secondly, he states, that in The Gambia the extended family system over-rides religious differences. Many families, especially those in the Colony, had both Muslim and Christian members. Thirdly, Gailey observes that in The Gambia the Muslim community in the time, leading up to independence had little contact with the Pan-Islamic movement that advocated the merger of religion and politics.³⁵³

The contribution of the churches on the road to independence was mainly in the field of education. Through the provision of education for all social layers of the population, irrespective of their religion, the Christian churches equipped people that contributed significantly to the political life of the country. Otherwise, Christian individuals, rather than the churches as organisations functioned as catalysers for independence.

³⁵¹ C. Mudford, *Report on work in Upper River*, (date approximately 1945) Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

³⁵² Charles de Foucauld's definition as found in M. Warren, *A theology of attention*, 68.

³⁵³ H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 200, 201.

Christian politicians

Christians had played a role in politics since the beginning of colonialism in The Gambia. The Christian Wolof and Krio in Bathurst were among the best-educated people in the country and many of them served as civil servants. Also the British colonial government professed itself as a Christian government; the Anglican chaplain was a government employee and the Anglican Church was the official state church.

Already in the 1870s the senior Methodist member J.D. Richards and some other prominent Akou from Bathurst, such as Joseph Reffell, Harry Finden and Samuel J. Forster had been politically active. When the British government contemplated the cession of The Gambia to France, Richards and others drew up a petition signed by 500 people to object to the proposal.³⁵⁴ This same J.D. Richards (†1918), a staunch Methodist, in 1883 became the first African member of the Legislative Council.³⁵⁵ When Richards proved too critical of the British government, the more moderate Samuel John Forster Sr. (†1906), a prominent Anglican, replaced him in 1886. Forster served on the Legislative Council until his death in 1906. His son Samuel John Forster Jr. (1873-1940) who was a barrister succeeded him. Forster Jr. was appointed by Governor George Denton to the Legislative Council in 1907 and served there until his death in 1940.³⁵⁶

Though the Legislative Council was little more than an advisory group, it still meant that from the beginning of African participation in the government, Christians played a part. At least one of the members was a Christian, representing the African Christians from Bathurst, but at times also the representative of the trading community and the member nominated by the Bathurst Urban District Council were Christians. It is hard to trace what their actual influence has been, but it remains a fact that Gambian Christians participated in the country's politics right from the start.

Also the Bathurst Trade Union was initiated by a Christian. Though not a political party as such, this politically influential movement in The Gambia was formed by Edward Francis Small (1891-1958) in 1928. Small came from Methodist background, worked for a while for the Methodist Church and remained a Methodist throughout his life. Possibly Small's Methodist background – Methodism's beginnings are closely linked with advocacy for workers' rights – contributed to his political consciousness. Small was also involved in the establishment of the Gambia Native Defensive Union, later the Gambian branch of the larger National Congress of British West Africa

³⁵⁴ J.Gray, *A history of The Gambia*, 437 ff. Also the Wesleyan missionaries and some leading Gambian trading companies voiced their protests and in the end the proposal was discarded.

³⁵⁵ A. Hughes; H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 148. There is some inconsistency in the sources. The Legislative Council was re-installed in The Gambia in 1888 when the colony became again independent from Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, Hughes and Gailey mention that Richards was appointed a Legislative Member in March 1883. Also his successor J.S. Forster is said to have been a member of the Legislative Council before 1888. Either the two men served as Gambian representatives on the Legislative Council in Sierra Leone, but the sources do not indicate such a representation or Hughes and Gailey also use the word 'Legislative Council' for the interim administrative committee which governed The Gambia from 1866-1888. A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 71 and 148.

³⁵⁶ For S.J. Forster Sr. and Jr. see A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 70, 71.

(NCBWA), founded in 1920 in Accra, which advocated the independence of the British colonies.³⁵⁷

Also some of the key politicians in the 1950s were Christians. The name of J.C. Faye, an Anglican priest, was already mentioned earlier.³⁵⁸ His close competitor was the Wolof Roman Catholic barrister P.S. Njie who formed a political party, the United Party.³⁵⁹ Also Dawda Jawara (1924-), the leader of the other important political party, the People's Progressive Party had links with the Christian community. Born on Georgetown Island as the son of a prosperous Mandinka farmer, Jawara was sent for education to Bathurst. He went through Muslim Primary School after which he underwent Christian education in the Methodist Boys High School and Achimota College in Ghana. After his return to The Gambia in 1954, Jawara worked as a veterinary officer in the Protectorate. In 1955 he converted to Christianity in order to marry Augusta Mahoney, daughter of the influential Akou Sir John Mahoney. A few years later he was one of the co-founders of the People's Progressive Party and eventually became Prime Minister when The Gambia became independent on February 18 1965. Though Jawara in later years reverted to Islam – he divorced Augusta Mahoney in 1967³⁶⁰ and shortly afterwards married Chilel Njie, daughter of Modou Musa Njie, he maintained his contacts with the Christian community though his popularity decreased among the influential Christian families.³⁶¹ Apart from these leading politician numerous civil servants, both Christians and Muslims, had received their training and education in Christian schools and sometimes also in Christian families.³⁶²

Concluding it seems fair to say that individuals rather than the churches as institutions brought Christian influence to the Gambian politics. The only attempt to establish a religion based political party, the Gambia Muslim Congress, proved a failure. Politics was personality oriented and many of the first politicians were Christians. Richards, father and son Forster and Small were all prominent church members. It is sometimes suggested that the Methodist system of lay preachers contributed to the participation of Gambian Methodists in politics. Preaching in the pulpit was a training for people to speak in public, an exercise that was more than welcome in a political career. The churches' main influence on politics was indirectly via the education of individuals. Nearly all leading politicians in the 1950s and 1960s such as P.S. Njie, J.C. Faye and D.K. Jawara, received their education in Christian schools and continued to have good contacts with the Christian leadership and vice versa. Garba-Jahumpa seems to have formed one of the few exceptions. He had an entirely Islamic education. Thus, indirectly, by educating the future politicians of the

³⁵⁷ Small was co-founder of the NCBWA.

³⁵⁸ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 64/64; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 194.

³⁵⁹ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 132; H.A. Gailey, *A history of The Gambia*, 195.

³⁶⁰ This divorce was supported by the controversial Dissolution of Marriage Act 1967 and is discussed in paragraph 9.5.

³⁶¹ A. Hughes and H.A. Gailey, *Historical dictionary of The Gambia*, 98-100.

³⁶² There was a custom that boys (mostly Muslim) from the rural areas were invited to stay with (often) Akou families in Bathurst during the time of their high school.

country and many of its civil servants, the churches contributed to the formation of the independent nation of The Gambia.

8.7 Conclusion

For the churches in The Gambia the period under discussion was one of high hopes and bitter disappointments. The strife for independence, which swept through West Africa from the late 1920s onwards, also affected The Gambia. The churches made their first steps on the road to autonomy as well. The Methodist Church became an independent district in 1916 and the Anglican Church of The Gambia became a diocese with the Rio Pongas in 1935. The Roman Catholic Church became a mission *sui juris* in 1931 and in 1957 received the status of a diocese under the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. But financial self-sufficiency and the development of an indigenous ministry proved difficult.

Politically and economically the period under discussion was a difficult one. Both World Wars and the economic malaise in the 1930s had their effect on The Gambia. For the churches it implied that limited money and personnel were available for mission work. The Methodist Church was financially on its own during the period under discussion and struggled to maintain its position. All the money that was raised locally was needed for the upkeep of the schools. The financial situation of the Anglican Church and the Roman Church improved after World War II. The Hawkes Trust and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith respectively made large resources available for evangelisation work. This enabled the two churches to set up extension projects in the rural areas among the Fula, the Serer and the Jola. Schools, medical programmes and translation work supported the outreach work. The outside funding however made the extension work very vulnerable. When the Hawkes Trust withdrew its support in 1961, Kristikunda had to be closed down, because diocese itself had no finance to maintain the work.

Initially the prospects of the new evangelistic endeavours seemed bright. Kristikunda flourished and received wide appreciation and the Roman Catholic work at Basse and Fula Bantang seemed encouraging. Also the Jola in Foni seemed to be open to the gospel. Quite a few, especially young, people who came into contact with Christianity through the Anglican and Roman Catholics schools in the Protectorate were interested in the Christian faith and some were even baptised. But the mission work did not lead to the large number of conversions. In those cases where Christianity seemed to grow, such in Basse, Bwiam, Kristikunda and Njongon, the pressure from the Islamic community also became stronger. Many of the Muslim converts reverted to Islam. The pressure on converts from the African traditional religions to Christianity also increased and some changed their Christian faith for Islam in order to better fit into the Gambian society. The hope that in the first fifty years of the 20th century the expansion of Islam could be stemmed by the conversion of the adherents of African traditional religions to Christianity proved vain. Restricted financial means and a large dependency on missionary workers limited the impact that Christianity could make. Besides, Christianity continued to be regarded as a religion of foreigners, while Islam spread by intermarriage,

socialisation and social pressure. Gradually the churches realised that no mission strategy, however creative, could reverse this growing influence of Islam. Christianity in The Gambia would always remain a minority. This awareness slowly prepared the ground for ecumenical co-operation.

The theological positions of the Christian churches regarding Islam and Muslims varied. The Roman Catholic Church had abandoned the idea of trying to evangelise Muslims around the turn of the 20th century and focussed on evangelisation of the adherents of African traditional religions. But most of the groups they had chosen to evangelise, had been islamised before the Roman Catholic outreach work started. Only after Vatican II a conscious reflection on how to relate to Muslims began to emerge. The Methodist Church maintained its position that Muslims needed conversion but little reflection was done on past experiences that Muslims tended to resist conversion. No attention was given to the training of evangelists, catechists or ministers in the field of Islamic Studies. Only Lane seemed to have realised that the relations with Islam called for a different approach and pleaded that the scarce resources of the church were used for the evangelisation of the adherents of African traditional religions.

In the Anglican Church the Kristikunda experience led to a reflection on the relation of Islam as well. Daly, who was worked in The Gambia in the hey-day of Kristikunda, was positive about Islam. He regarded Islam as a Christian heresy and saw the church's task towards Muslims to be one of friendship and attention and 'leave it to the Holy Spirit to lead these friends in Christ "into all truth"'.³⁶³ Coote, having worked in Kristikunda under difficult circumstances, was wearier of Islam. He regarded Islam as a threat to the Christian community and hoped to stem the influence of Islam by strengthening the existing Christian communities.

The main influence of Christianity in the Gambian society was by means of education. From the late 1950s onwards the churches abandoned the idea that the schools were an instrument to recruit new members. Having observed the pressure on young adolescent Christians who had been baptised in school, the Roman Catholic leadership decided to refrain from baptising young people during their school years. Students interested in the Christian faith could receive pastoral supervision but always in consultation with their families. The establishment of schools, both in the urban and in the rural areas, created a lot of good will towards Christianity and they were a means to spread Christian values and ethics. Many of the former students were appointed to high positions in the society and most Gambian politicians were trained in the Christians schools. The schools also offered a relatively secure forum for Christians and Muslims to meet and get acquainted. Many life-long friendships between Muslims and Christians were started in Christian schools. When from 1945 onwards the Government started to take over the schools, the churches lost one of their most important instruments of Christian service to the country. This meant that churches had to look for new ways of Christian diakonia and presence in order to maintain the Christian influence in the society.

³⁶³ J. Daly, *The four mitres II*, 55. In line with Max Warren, he advocated a theology of attention towards Muslims and did not deny that Muslims as well had a grasp of God.

Another important theme on the agenda of the churches was the raising of an indigenous ministry. For different reasons, both the Roman Catholic and the Methodist Church struggled to establish an indigenous ministry. Racism, the low prestige of the ministry, the limited possibilities for a life-long ministry amongst the small Christian community, made many stop on the way or leave the ministry after ordination. In at least two instances racism thwarted the career of two bright men: Edward Small and Thomas Jobe. Possibly these men, because of their capacities, formed a threat to the authority of the resident missionaries and ways were found to dispose of them. The Anglican Church did somewhat better. There were a number of vocations in the 1950s and 1960s and several of these people, such as Matthias George and Jacob Williams, served for a great number of years. There are no records of racial discrimination of Gambian priests in the Anglican sources. The co-operation with their missionary colleagues seems to have been cordial.

Ministry in a small Christian community has its limitations as the examples of this period have shown. Conflicts between two members of the staff or between staff and members of the congregation easily affect the atmosphere in the church. The limited number of stations makes it difficult for people to develop themselves and to grow both personally and professionally while serving in the ministry. Also the fact that the ministers and priests serve among their own relatives and friends has its complications. Part-time ministry, non-stipendary ministry and exchange programmes might to some extent offer a solution to these problems.

During the period under discussion the model of expansion continued to dominate the attitude of the churches. Both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Church actively engaged in church planting in the rural areas. The Methodist Church lagged behind in its outreach programmes, not because it did not share the vision, but because it lacked the funds. One thing had changed however. Muslims were no longer the primary object of evangelism. The extension work geared towards traditional believers. Kristikunda was set up as outreach programme, with the aim of converting traditional believers among the Fula to Christianity. Yet the form Kristikunda took was mainly diaconal: witness was done in the form of education, of medical service and of agricultural development. However, the Fula did not become Christians. But rather unexpectedly the main impact and unexpected side effect of Kristikunda was that it became an example of a Christian presence in a Muslim environment. Kristikunda was successful in its non-offensive witness to the Muslim community and people in the villages still remembered the project as a testimony to the love of Christ. Unintentionally, Kristikunda became a model of presence.

In the first half of the 20th century the schools formed the main means of evangelisation among Muslims and at times it is hard to distinguish between the models of expansion and diakonia in respect to education. Until the middle of the 20th century they were closely intertwined. During the period under discussion however, the Roman Catholic Church realised that education could no longer be used as a means of evangelism and the schools were continued for the sake of serving the uneducated and as a means of spreading Christian influence. Education now truly became diakonia and the schools formed a meeting place for young Christians and Muslims to meet and get to know and respect each other. In a sense the schools became place where the model of dialogue could be lived out.

When the government started nationalising the schools, which had formed the most importance area of service of the churches to the society, all three churches protested. Though the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church reluctantly surrendered their schools, they later re-engaged in education, which was still considered to be the main instrument of diakonia in the society. Gradually the model of diakonia replaced the model of expansion in relation to Muslims. The mainline churches no longer aimed at converting Muslims to Christianity but at spreading Christian influence in society and creating goodwill towards the Christian community.

9. TOWARDS A GAMBIAN CHURCH: 1966-2000

9.1 Introduction

'The synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture but also of faith. A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully lived out. (...) However, inculturation is not just a technique of evangelization – a communications tactic, as it were. Taken to its logical conclusion, inculturation demands a different model of the Church.'¹ These words from Aylward Shorter's *The African Synod: a personal response to the outline document* also applied to the Gambian situation. It was exactly with a 'different model of the Church' that the churches in The Gambia were preoccupied in the period after 1965.

On the eve of Independence it had become clear that the Christian community was and would remain a small minority in a predominantly Muslim society. Slowly but surely the self-perception of the mainline churches began to adapt to this reality. A process commenced in which the Gambian context began to shape the church and its agenda and the first outlines of a Gambian church began to emerge. Church unity played a key role in this process of contextualisation. The inauguration of the Gambia Christian Council in 1966 (paragraph 9.6) can be seen as starting point of the churches' realisation that ecumenism was of key importance to a church in a minority situation. Reflection on the role of Gambian Christian churches in society, in political and social issues and its relation to the Muslim community happened from the late 1960s onwards at the GCC rather than at the denominational level. The General Secretary of the Gambia Christian Council Acy Peters stated in 1999: 'The church cannot survive if we don't act as one. Our strength is in unity. Only if we act as one church, there is hope for the church in The Gambia.'²

Also the West African context had its impact on The Gambia. The neo Charismatic-Pentecostal wave that had started in the 1970s affected The Gambia in the 1980s and led to the emergence of Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches and Christian ministries (paragraph 9.5). The appearance – and success – of these groups was in several ways a challenge to the established churches. In a certain way, these churches were a criticism of the complacency of the mainline churches regarding inner change, Christian ethics and attention for evangelism. They also claimed to be more African in style of worship. They focussed on young people and gave them the opportunity to function in leadership positions. It might be fair to say that the theology of these Christian groups, their liturgy and their involvement of young people had a substantial influence on the life of the mainline churches. Gradually mutual respect and appreciation is growing between the mainline and the newer churches.

¹ A. Shorter, *The African Synod: a personal response to the outline document*, 52.

² Interview with Ms. Acy Peters, Kanifing January 29 1999.

Meanwhile the mainline churches focussed on the consolidation of the established community. Contextualisation, indigenisation of the ministry and the formation of lay leadership became key activities of the mainline churches. The Roman Catholic Church (paragraph 9.2) developed its Gambia Pastoral Institute, the Methodist Church (paragraph 9.3) organised courses for Local Preachers and the Anglicans (paragraph 9.4) ran the Anglican Diocesan School of Evangelism, which groomed lay readers and evangelists within the diocese. Inculturation, though recognised as an important field of work, did not receive much substantial attention. Often the fact that there were too many ethnic groups in the church was used as an justification to postpone a conscious reflection on the inculturation of theology and liturgy. The ethnic diversity of the church increased after 1965 when there was a large influx of refugees from Guinea-Bissau and Casamance. Many of these immigrants converted to Christianity after arrival in The Gambia. This underscored the Muslim argument that Christianity was first of all a religion of 'foreigners'.

A third important theme on the agenda of the churches was the relation with Muslims. By 1965 it was evident that traditional methods of evangelism were not appropriate for the Gambian situation. Neither preaching nor education or diaconal programmes had led to church growth. Consequently, the question was raised how then to witness to Muslims. These practical questions arising from the Gambian context coincided with a world-wide renewed theological interest in Islam which resulted in a review of the Christian attitude towards Islam. The Second Vatican Council had described Muslims as people who are looked upon with esteem, adoring the one merciful and living God.³ And the Anglican Bishop T.O. Olufosoye stated that members of the Christian churches should try to bridge the gap between them and 'our Muslim friends.'⁴ Though several decades later than the mainline churches, the emerging Evangelical churches have also started to reflect on how to witness to Muslims. This reflection has happened mainly on the level of the evangelical platform, the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia (paragraph 9.7). The Billy Graham campaign organised by the EFG in 1995 promoted 'Operation Andrew', a form of friendship evangelism. The Gambian evangelical Pastor Modou Sanneh, himself a former Muslim, said in 1999: 'People will not go to the church, so we must go to them. We must go to people consciously, going to spend time with them, to show concern, to share resources. Friendship and being neighbourly is key in our witness.'⁵ All this has led to special programmes and courses, organised by the Gambia Christian Council, focussing on the study of Islam and on the relations with Muslims. For that reason a special 'adviser for Christian Muslim Relations' was appointed.

The churches in The Gambia have gradually begun to address issues relating to the Gambian context and have begun to work towards a future in which the church

³ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 218.

⁴ T.O. Olufosoye, *The condition of the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas today*, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

⁵ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing February 1 1999.

in The Gambia would truly be a Gambian church.⁶ This ninth chapter closes with a conclusive evaluation, which reflects on the question whether the churches in The Gambia have become a contextualised Gambian church (paragraph 9.8).

9.2 The Roman Catholic Church in the second half of the 20th century

The growth of the Roman Catholic Church: the Manjago factor

The period after 1965 was one of relatively large expansion for the Roman Catholic Church.⁷ The number of Roman Catholics rose from 5000 in 1960⁸ to an estimated 35.000 in 1999.⁹ There was also an increase in the visible presence of the Roman Catholic community in the country: schools, development programmes and churches multiplied with several hundred percents thanks to an influx of personnel (different religious orders settled in The Gambia during these years)¹⁰ and funds. Statistics show for example that in 1954 the Roman Catholic Church owned 10 primary schools and 2 high schools, in which a total of about 1554 children had enrolled.¹¹ In 1996 the Roman Catholic Church had 54 nursery schools, 21 primary schools, 7 secondary schools and 10 skill centres, with a total enrolment of more than 20.000 pupils, excluding those in the skill centres.¹² Unnecessary to say that the majority of the students benefiting from the education were Muslims. The third area of growth was less visible for outsiders, but it was nevertheless present. It was a growth in depth. After Independence there was a slow but sure growth in the understanding of what it meant to be a minority church in a pre-dominantly Muslim society. Themes like self reliance, indigenous ministry, inculturation, lay participation, ecumenism and Christian-Muslim relations started to dominate the church's agenda as a sign that the church was taking root in Gambian soil.

⁶ Because many of the people mentioned in this chapter are still alive or their near relatives are still alive, I have been reticent in giving too many personal details or evaluations of their work or ministry.

⁷ This increase does not necessarily imply an increase of the percentage of Christians in The Gambian population. On the contrary, the average growth percentage of the Gambian population is higher than the increase of Christian community, meaning that percentage wise Christianity is declining in the country.

⁸ Annual returns 1959/1960, Annual returns, Boite 4I1.1a, File III.

⁹ In 1979 the number had more than doubled to 11.332. Ten years later, in 1989 the number had again nearly increased by a hundred percent: there were 19.374 baptised Roman Catholics and 2705 catechumens. *GPI Newsletter*, 3/4 (1978), 3; W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 85. Note: the statistics are based on the Parish reports to the Pastoral Assembly of December 1989; Interview with the late Fr. Vincent Comer, Kanifing February 11 1999. Note: Fr. Vincent Comer was the Vicar General in 1999. He died in 2002.

¹⁰ The Presentation Sisters came to The Gambia in 1968, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy in 1982, the Marist Sisters in 1985, the Christian Brothers in 1988, the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1990 and Sisters of Mercy in 1993. See *GPI Newsletter*, 7/2 (1983), 2; 10/2 (1986), 2; 12/2 (1988), 8; 18/4 (1993), 4; 18/1 (1994), 5. Note: due to the displacement following the Civil War in Nigeria four ex-Nigerian missionaries were stationed in The Gambia. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 65.

¹¹ Annual return 1954, Annual returns, Boite 4I1.1a, File III.

¹² *GPI Newsletter*, 20/10 (December 1996), 18-19.

The numerical growth of the Roman Catholic community after Independence had several causes. First of all, there was an increase in personnel and funds invested in evangelism, which aided church growth. Secondly there was the natural growth of the community due to a high birth rate. Thirdly and most importantly there was an outside factor which caused the growth of Christianity in The Gambia: an influx of refugees due to unrest in the sub-region. From the middle of the 1960s onwards a guerrilla war was fought in neighbouring Casamance. The aim was to attain independence from the northern part of Senegal. Groups of Jola and Karoninka, a Jola related group,¹³ arrived in The Gambia as a result of the unrest in Casamance. Some of these people were actual refugees, who were driven away from their homes. Others were migrants and migrant workers, coming to seek work or to farm in a more stable environment. Another, far larger group of refugees in the 1960s came from Guinea-Bissau where a war of independence was fought against the Portuguese coloniser. Large numbers of Manjago, Mankaign, Mansuanka and Balanta settled in The Gambia towards the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their relative well-being attracted others to migrate to The Gambia. Thus the migration process continued. After the independence of Guinea-Bissau in 1975 most of these people did not return to their country of origin but settled permanently in The Gambia.¹⁴ The number of Manjago, the largest group among the Guinea-Bissau immigrants in The Gambia, was estimated at about 17,100 in 1998, most of whom are Roman Catholics.¹⁵

Most of these refugees and migrants from Casamance and Guinea-Bissau were neither Muslim nor Christian on arrival in The Gambia.¹⁶ However, they had been exposed to the Christian faith by a long Roman Catholic presence in their areas. In Guinea-Bissau and the Zinguinchor region in Casamance the exposure to Christianity dated back to the 16^e and 17^e centuries, in the inaccessible Karoni land the contact was of a later date. Through their acquaintance with the Roman Catholic Church some of these people were nominally associated with the Roman Catholic Church, but had continued their traditional practices at the same time. Few of them were actually baptised Christians on arrival.¹⁷ Most of the newcomers still adhered to their traditional religions.¹⁸

¹³ There are about 1200 Karoninka in The Gambia. See: www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Gambia. Date: June 4 2002. Note: the influx of refugees from Casamance still continued up till the date of writing this thesis. With every upsurge in violence, new groups arrive in The Gambia. Many find a place to live with their families, others live in UN refugee camps in places like Sifoe.

¹⁴ In Africa with its many nomadic and semi-nomadic groups the borders are conceived much more fluid than for example in Europe. People migrate from one area to another because of war, lack of rain or better pasture, live there for a period of 10 or 20 years and migrate again when the living conditions deteriorate.

¹⁵ www.ethnologue.com/. Date: June 4 2002. In the older version of the SIL ethnologue, the number of Manjago was estimated at 14,100. The number of Mankaign was about 1200 in each count. See also: www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Gamb.html. Date: August 9 2001. No figures are given for the Balanta and Mansuanka.

¹⁶ Fr. Nestor Jarjue, 'A message to priests and catechists, *GPI Newsletter*, 4/18, 5-6.

¹⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, 16/6, (1992) 16-17.

¹⁸ *GPI Newsletter*, 16/5 (1992), 9 and 16/6 (1992), 16-17.

After settling in The Gambia, the immigrants discovered that where being a traditionalist in their country of origin had been quite acceptable, this was not at all the case in The Gambia. There it relegated them to a third class citizenship.¹⁹ This was underscored by the fact that they were forced to live in satellite villages, just outside the main – Muslim dominated – village because they reared pigs for livelihood. Thus their integration into the Gambian society was slow. Their habits of palm wine tapping and pig rearing made it difficult for them to become Muslims as a means of integration. Therefore many turned to the alternative of becoming Christians. It was the influx of these people groups into the church that caused the growth of the Roman Catholic community from the 1960s onwards. Much of the Roman Catholic outreach work done in the 1960's, 1970s and 1980s was geared towards evangelising these people, rather than the indigenous Gambian people. Presently most parishes in the country have a considerable number of parishioners from ethnic groups, originating from Guinea-Bissau.

The presence of these groups within the Christian community has also brought along some complications. Exactly because of their low social status, due to their habits of palm wine tapping, pig rearing and the long adherence to traditional religion, they have formed an obstacle for other ethnic groups to join the Christian community. The Evangelical Church of The Gambia had a community of Mandinka Christians, converts from Islam, who, when there was an influx of Balanta Christians, refused to worship with what they called 'pig rearing alcoholics.'²⁰ The Roman Catholic Church has had similar experiences. Other ethnic groups look upon Manjago, Balanta and Mankaign Christians with disdain and people of a Muslim background do not care to fellowship with them.²¹ This influx of people from Guinea-Bissau into the churches has also seemed to underline the conviction amongst the Muslim community that Christianity is mainly and first of all a religion of and for foreigners.

In the early years of the arrival of the Guinea-Bissau immigrants, the Roman Catholic mission did not explicitly target the newcomers to The Gambia. This was partly because it was not clear that they would become permanent settlers. Besides, the church was still actively engaged in evangelising Gambian ethnic groups. The Manjago and Karoninka were more or less encountered 'by accident'. Fr. Andrew Carroll, exploring the Kartong area more or less 'found' the Karoninka people and discovered they were open to Christianity.²² In Basse, at the time that the Fula were starting to revert to Islam, the Manjago, Mansuanka and Karoninka began to settle. Quite naturally, since the missionary infrastructure was in place, the attention gradually shifted to them.²³

Njongon on the north bank can be used as an exemplary case study. Work in the Niimi district on the north bank had been extremely difficult. The work was

¹⁹ Fr. Nestor Jarjue, 'A message to priests and catechists, *GPI Newsletter*, 4/18, 5-6.

²⁰ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

²¹ Interview with Fr. Michael Casey, Darsalami January 19 1999.

²² W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 60.

²³ Fr. Peter Gomez, 'Around the Diocese: St. Joseph's Parish Basse, *GPI Newsletter*, 19/6 (June 1995), 16-18.

initiated by Meehan in the 1920s but had been restricted to mission work at Mbolett. In the last chapter it was described how hopes had been high that the Serer of Niumi might accept Christianity. But the work at Mbolett proved difficult and in 1943 the station was closed down. In 1959 an effort to restart the work was made by Bishop Moloney. He reopened the school in a changed location: the village of Njongon. In the meantime, many of the Serer had become Muslims. It was not until 1965, when Njongon received a resident priest in the person of Fr. Matthew Corrigan (1947-1969), that the work really seemed to make progress.²⁴ Corrigan visited the surrounding villages, encouraging the elders to send the children to school. Gradually the children came and enrolled in the school programme. While in school, quite a few of the young Serer felt attracted to Christianity. They were baptised in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Things seemed so promising that in 1973 St. Michael's Church was built in Njongon.

It is generally believed that Advent 1973 formed a turning point in the developments in the Niumi district. It was the time that the church building at Njongon was blessed. A large crowd came from Banjul to celebrate the occasion. It seems that this large Christian presence alarmed many of the Muslim elders in the Njongon region because from that moment on the enthusiasm for Christianity started to wane. It is generally believed that Muslim elders began to discourage the young Serer in their Christian faith and about 90 percent of the converts went back to Islam.²⁵ As a result of this exodus, the resident priest was withdrawn and Njongon came under supervision of the Farafenni parish.²⁶ The Farafenni parish priest visited Njongon about once a month and teachers (among whom Paul Kujabi) led the worship on the intermediate Sundays.²⁷ Though the residential priest was re-stationed elsewhere, not all Roman Catholic activity was stopped. An effort was made to maintain the Christian presence in Niumi through the school and small development projects, such as village gardens. For a while there was a clinic, run by the Cluny Sisters but it was closed down because of finance.

It was this presence of the mission that attracted the Manjago in the area to the Roman Catholic faith and gradually a new Christian community came into being. In 1995 there were about 500 Roman Catholics, mainly Manjago, scattered over the region in about 10 villages, with a team of 2 priests, 2 Cluny Sisters and 3 catechists supervising the mission and pastoral work.²⁸ But Njongon was still considered a difficult station: 'The work of evangelising on the North Bank can be slow and difficult. The Christian groups are scattered over a wide area and transport is not easily available.'²⁹

The Njongon story exemplifies a pattern, which seems to be characteristic of rural mission work in the twentieth century. In the earliest stage of the mission work an attempt is made to evangelise the indigenous people, most of who are of Muslim

²⁴ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 61.

²⁵ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellision, March 4 1999.

²⁶ Farafenni is about 150 kilometres further inland and a journey from Farafenni to Njongon, the roads and the ferry being what they are, would take at least half a day.

²⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, 8/2 (February 1984), 9.

²⁸ 'Around the Diocese: Niumi (Njongon)', *GPI Newsletter*, 19/2 (February 1995), 10-11.

²⁹ 'Around the Diocese: Niumi (Njongon)', *GPI Newsletter*, 19/2 (February 1995), 10-11.

background. The response is usually slow but through the schools some young people feel attracted to Christianity and are baptised. In the next stage family and social pressure revert this development. Nearly all converts relapse to Islam. The mission station is not withdrawn but kept open as a sign of Christian presence and diakonia in the midst of a Muslim environment. The third stage of development is that newcomers from traditional religious background settle in the region and feel attracted to Christianity. They become the focus of mission work. Thus a Christian community formed. Often this community is somewhat isolated from its Muslim environment and has little interaction – because of the living habits of these newcomers – with the Muslims around them. It seems a given fact that very few Christians in contemporary The Gambia are from a Muslim background.

There was at least one Roman Catholic parish that has formed a clear exception to this pattern: Kunkujang Mariama. The Kunkujang mission is different from other stations in that it was founded particularly with the Manjago people in mind. Two Manjago families, Lees and Paul Mendy started the village of Kunkujang in 1937.³⁰ In the late 1960s Fr. Jack Sharpe (1965-) came into contact with the village while doing evangelism work in the Gunjur area. He decided to join the Manjago in Kunkujang in 1972.³¹ Through contacts with the Swedish Margareta Edenius the village of Kunkujang and the work among the Manjago steadily developed. In 1972 a bush school was built, soon extended by a teacher's house and a small clinic. Later in the 1970s there were small development projects, like the purchase of some cows and a plough to aid in agriculture, some European pigs to improve the local breed and a car for transport into the urban area. In the 1980s there was a large housing project in which the mud-block houses replaced the traditional palm leaf Manjago huts.

Also the surrounding villages benefited from the Kunkujang Project. Nine small catechetical schools were built in the 1980s in the environment of Kunkujang, which prepared children for primary education in Kunkujang. A scholarship programme, funded by the Swedish Margareta Edenius Fund, supported children who wanted to continue their education after primary level. In 1997 the establishment of a Junior Secondary School extended the educational programme in Kunkujang.³² In the 1980s Kunkujang also became the seat of the Manjago Pastoral Institute, where liturgical and catechetical materials were translated into Manjago. Manjago versions of Bible portions, the Catechism and hymns were produced and catechists working among the Manjago were trained on monthly basis.³³ In 1987 Kunkujang received its nickname Kunkujang Mariama, when a Marian Shrine was

³⁰ Entry January 5 1937, Journal de St. Marie de Bathurst IV, 19241-1958, Boite 4i2.4. Note: there had been Manjago in The Gambia at least since the early 19th century and possibly earlier. The Manjago men came to Banjul to look for work as sailors, an area in which they seemed to specialise. In Banjul they came in contact with the Roman Catholic Church and many were baptised as a result.

³¹ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 64.

³² M. Edenius, *Margareta Edenius Gambia: the years from 1970-1990 and 1990-1996*. A leaflet printed for fundraising purposes. See also *GPI Newsletter*, 21/10 (October 1997), 7.

³³ *GPI Newsletter*, 8/8 (1984), 5; 3/10 (1979), 2 and 3/5 (1979), 2.

opened in the village.³⁴ Yearly thousands of Christians, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, journey to Kunkujang to attend the Kunkujang pilgrimage.³⁵

Opinions about the Kunkujang project vary. On the one hand, it is generally felt that the Kunkujang project has improved the living circumstances of the Manjago involved. It has given them access to education and medical care and a place, which can be called their own, rather than having to live at the edge of a Mandinka or Fula village. In that sense Kunkujang, as an all Manjago village, has given the Manjago a sense of belonging in the Roman Catholic community. On the other hand, the Kunkujang project was and is funded entirely with money from abroad and is therefore very vulnerable once the funds decline. The upkeep of the schools, the teachers' salaries, the scholarship programme all depend on outside sources and it seems unrealistic to expect that similar funds can be raised locally. Apart from the financial aspect, there is another reason why people have their reservations about the project. Kunkujang as a nearly all-Christian village is an abnormality in the Gambian reality where Christians and Muslims have always lived together. Because Muslim children attend the schools the concept of a Christian village has changed somewhat. But it remains a fact that the creation of a Christian village, heavily funded from abroad, isolates the Manjago involved from the real Gambian interreligious life.

Financial sustainability

Sustainability is not just a problem with regard to Kunkujang Mariama. The Diocesan evaluation of 1996 signalled that financial self-reliance was going to be the main problem for the Gambian Roman Catholic Church to tackle in the near future.³⁶

³⁴ *GPI Newsletter*, 12/1 (1988), 6. Before the Gambian Marian shrine at Kunkujang was opened, Gambian Roman Catholics used to go on pilgrimage to Popenguine in Senegal. After some debate the site of Kunkujang was elected for a Marian shrine in The Gambia to enable people to make a yearly pilgrimage in their own country. Note: the site was not chosen because of any Marian appearances. Also the villages of Abuko, Darsalami and Kartong were listed as potential places for the Marian Shrine. *GPI Newsletter*, 10/9 (1987), 17.

³⁵ *GPI Newsletter*, 15/1 (1991), 4.

³⁶ *Report on the evaluation of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa*, January 1996 (not published), 13. Another important theme that was addressed by the Diocesan Evaluation was that of a collaborative ministry between clergy and laity. The recommendations made were an attempt to address the issue of the priest-centred structure of the parishes. The evaluation recommended more collaboration between the leaders, both lay and ordained, within the community and suggested the introduction of deaneries to promote inter-parish co-operation and solidarity. The theme of collaborative ministry was not new. In 1976, at a missionary meeting in Lamin, a start was made with the development of a pastoral plan for the Diocese, which had the active participation of the laity in mind. The aim of the plan was "an effort to make the Gambian Church an evangelising church, so that the witness of individual Christian lives and the collective witness of our community may draw men of goodwill to faith in Christ and in His Church. Lay people exercise a very special form of evangelism. Their special role is to bring the Spirit of Christ into every part of life... work, home, sport, politics, education etc.; their family life should be that of a 'domestic church' into which the gospel is brought and from which it is proclaimed.' Two years later another meeting was convened, this time with the laity represented, to discuss the plan. The Diocesan Pastoral Parish Plan was ratified in 1979.

From the 1960s onwards there has been a large input of personnel and funds, poured into The Gambia from abroad. New mission stations/churches were opened in all larger towns in the rural areas: Brikama (1961), Farafenni (1982), Bansang (1989), Bakoteh (1992) and Soma (1994).³⁷ A special Diocesan Development Office was opened in 1977. This office developed into the organisation of Caritas two years later.³⁸ In 1984 Caritas was involved in food programmes, agricultural work, well digging, small fundraising programmes such as bee-keeping and sesame oil production, medical supplies and village libraries for primary schools.³⁹ Major investments in funds and personnel also occurred in education. More than 50

As a result of the plan, parish councils were inaugurated in the 1980s and representatives of the parish councils were seated in the Diocesan Laity Council (1983) to discuss issues regarding evangelism. But the effectiveness of the Diocesan Laity Council in mobilising the laity has been questioned. Another attempt to mobilise the laity has been the introduction of 'basic cells'. The local parishes were divided in 'small Christian communities,' which were to act as basic Christian cells for evangelism and pastoral care. Gabisi, in a study about the participation of the laity in the Diocese, has recommended the use of existing age groups as an effective means and an instrument of formation to strengthen the laity. Another way of involving the laity in the life of the Diocese has been the use of the sodalities. The societies of St. Martha's (1973), St. Vincent de Paul (1968), St. Peter and St. Paul (1988), the Legion of Mary and the various third orders of the religious congregations each have endeavoured to involve the laity in pastoral care, diaconal service, youth work and devotional gatherings. The youth organisations of Young Christian Students and the Catholic Youth Volunteers received a similar task. It has been commented however that these organisations, such as the St. Anthony of Padua Friendly Society, are in need of a modern face-lift in order to participate effectively in parish life. A final attempt to involve the laity in the life of the parish has been the training of people to participate in the Sunday services, such as the lay readers and the lay ministers of the Eucharist. Though many initiatives have been taken to promote the participation of the laity in the life of the parish, the impact made so far is limited. Gabisi in his thesis of 1995 spoke about the inertia of the laity and the need of the formation and mobilisations of the laity to help them execute their responsibilities and rights within the parishes. For more information see: *Report on the evaluation of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa*, January 1996, 2; W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 71; *GPI Newsletter*, 2/8 (1978), 3; *GPI Newsletter* 2/5 (1978), 2; 7/10 (1983), 2; 9/8 (1985), 5-6; 21/10 (October 1997), 18-19; 21/11 (November 1997), 17; T. Gabisi, *The participation of the lay faithful in the life of the Church in The Gambia: a perspective from c. 225*, a thesis submitted for a masters degree to the Department of Sacred Scripture, Canon Law Unit, in the Faculty of Theology, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 1995; Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999.

³⁷ *GPI Newsletter*, 19/2 (February 1995), 6; 19/4 (April 1995), 18-19; 19/5 (May 1995), 19-20; 20/2 (February 1996), 19-20; 21/7 (July 1997), 13. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 60. Note: Brikama has grown from a small parish in the 1960s to the second largest parish in 1999. A Sacred Heart priest from Niore du Rip in Senegal first supervised Farafenni. Mass was held in John Sambou's compound. After that Irish Spiritans visited the parish until in 1982 Fr. Flynn was appointed resident priest.

³⁸ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 65; *GPI Newsletter* 2/1 (1978), 2-5. Note: Another Roman Catholic development organisation, the American based (and funded) Catholic Relief Services has been active in The Gambia since 1964. W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 84; www.africanculture.dk/gambia/ngo_oz.htm. Date May 12 2002.

³⁹ *GPI Newsletter* 8/7 (1984), 15-18. Note: 1983 some 33.000 mothers and children (many of them through schools) participated in the Caritas food programme.

villages were supplied with nursery schools and also the number of primary and secondary schools went up. This implied more buildings to maintain and more people on the payroll. Also the clerical staff rose considerably: the number of priests increased from 4 in 1946 to 23 in 1970. This meant that in the 1970s, before the influx of immigrants, the proportion of priests to Roman Catholic parishioners was about 1 to 350. In 1990 there were still 21 priests, five of whom were Gambians, but the number of parishioners per priest had increased considerably. In the 1990s there were about 1500 Roman Catholic to one priest. By 1999 the number of Gambian priests had mounted to fourteen.⁴⁰

From the late 1970s onwards also the number of catechists and religious working in the parishes steadily increased. In 1979 a policy stated that 'our aim is that each village with Christians or potential Christians will have its own catechist. These need not be full time, but should have received at least a basic training. The community must attempt to support this catechist.'⁴¹ Thus the number of catechists gradually increased to a total of about 50 catechists in 1999, some full-time and some part-time.⁴² The costs were mainly borne by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith.⁴³ Only three of the parishes were self-supporting in 1999. All others were supported by a subvention from the bishop.⁴⁴ With the missionary personnel gradually phasing out, it is expected that funds coming from abroad will also decline.⁴⁵ Finance or more precisely self-reliance therefore will be the main question that the Gambian Roman Catholic community will have to face in the near future if it wants to proceed with work at the level it is at the moment.

The active involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the Gambian society through development programmes and education has created a lot of goodwill for the Christian – and more specific for the Roman Catholic - community. It has formed a non-threatening presence in the society and has given a disinterested service to many of the very poor.⁴⁶ In the field of education alone, the contribution

⁴⁰ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 85-86. Note: In March 1999 the number of Gambian priests had increased to 10 with 2 more ordinations for later that year. Three more candidates were training in the Senior Seminary in Ghana which would bring the total up to 15 in 2003, providing the three will persevere. Than there will be at least a gap of five years before any ordinations will take place. See *GPI Newsletter*, 22/10 (December 1998), 17; Interview with Fr. Vincent Comer, Kanifing February 11 1999.

⁴¹ *GPI Newsletter*, 2/2 (1978), 5.

⁴² Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁴³ In 1998 there was a shortfall of 48119.00 dalasis (about 4800 USD), despite the fact a special collection was instituted for catechist work (which raised 6265.70 dalasis which equals about 620 USD) and the larger congregations were taxed for 5000 dalasis on yearly basis for the work. *GPI Newsletter*, 22/6 (June 1998), 10; Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁴⁴ Interview with Fr. Vincent Comer, Kanifing February 11 1999.

⁴⁵ Interview with Fr. Vincent Comer, Kanifing February 11 1999. Note: in 1999 there were 7 Irish Holy Ghost Fathers in the diocese, 3 Spiritans from the West Africa Foundation and 3 Nigerian priests of the Missionaries of St. Paul.

⁴⁶ See address of the President D. Jawara on the occasion of the reception of the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to The Gambia on February 1980, *GPI Newsletter*, 4/7 (1980), 5. 'The Roman Catholic Church has, since its establishment in The Gambia, played a prominent role in the

has been impressive. Not only have many children benefited from education in Christian schools, also the mentality regarding education has changed. The fact that most parents nowadays pursue education for their children (both male and female), can be credited for a large extent to the work of the Christian Churches in the country. If the churches, and particularly the Roman Catholic Church, want to continue to serve the society in this way, they will have to work hard on their resources. If this proves to be too costly, the churches will have to think about a way to be present as a Christian community in different manner, in order to avoid complete marginalisation.

Inculturation

A second important theme addressed by the Diocesan evaluation is the topic of inculturation.⁴⁷ Its importance is underscored by the fact that it was one of the themes of the African Synod in 1996. Generally speaking one can say that reflection on the topic of inculturation in the Roman Catholic Church in The Gambia is still in its infancy stage. Joan Burke's distinction between 'inculturation from the bottom-up' and 'inculturation from the top down' might be helpful here.⁴⁸ With 'inculturation from the bottom up' Burke means the process of inculturation that automatically comes about once a person within a certain cultural setting hears and receives the gospel.⁴⁹ This internal process results into – sometimes unconsciously - inculturised interpretations of concepts and practices in people's lives. Burke's study on the inculturation of the concept of 'sisterhood' is a reflection on this lived, existential inculturation from the bottom up. Inculturation from the top-down according to Burke, is the conscious and academic reflection on the theological base of inculturation and on the contextualised practised reality of inculturation.⁵⁰

When Burke's distinction is applied to The Gambian situation, it becomes clear that the 'inculturation from the bottom-up' has been part of the Gambian reality since the arrival of Christianity. Name-giving ceremonies (*ngente*), marriage ceremonies, burials, the celebration of charities on the eight and the fortieth day after

social and cultural development of our community. From its earliest years, the Mission was actively involved in caring for the sick and needy in Banjul, while at the same time offering a basic programme of primary and vocational education. These modest, though invaluable educational facilities gradually evolved into a full school programme, offering instruction from kindergarten to secondary school.'

⁴⁷ The recommendation was: 'Many parishes are not fully aware that inculturation is a difficult and delicate task, since it raises the question of the Church's fidelity to the Gospel and Apostolic traditions amidst the constant developments of the local culture. To address this difficult and delicate task, it is recommended that experts on inculturation should be invited to facilitate a workshop in the Diocese and to offer recommendations to promote the process of inculturation.' *Report on the evaluation of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa*, January 1996, 2.

⁴⁸ J.F. Burke, *These Catholic sisters are all mamas!: towards the inculturation of sisterhood in Africa, an ethnographic study*, Brill, Leiden 2001, 193.

⁴⁹ For the role of the receiver in the process of spreading the gospel see also L. Sanneh, 'The horizontal and vertical in mission', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 7/4 (1983), 166.

⁵⁰ J.F. Burke, *These Catholic sisters are all mamas!*, 193ff.

someone has died and other 'rites of passage' all show signs of this inculturation from below. Also the understanding of the Eucharist, the celebration of all-Saints Day, the role of the clergy have clearly been marked by the Gambian context. Inculturation from below is taking place. It has been there since the arrival of Christianity and the process will continue as long as the Christian community exists.

A different story can be told about the inculturation from 'the top-down'. The academic reflection on inculturation processes taking place and the stimulation and instigation of new developments, is still a sensitive issue in the Gambian Roman Catholic Church, though attempts have been made to start the process.

The most important step forward towards an inculturation of Christianity from above has been the development of an indigenous ministry. For a long time the catechist had been the only Gambian contribution to the ministry. In the 1970s it was realised that, considering the valuable contribution of the catechists in the evangelism work of the church, a proper training programme should be arranged. This task was taken up by Sr. Cecilia LeNova and Fr. E. Grimes (1980-1993) who started with a training course for catechists in 1979 at the Gambia Pastoral Institute and the Manjago Pastoral Institute in Kunkujang.⁵¹ Over the years the training and supervision of the catechists have developed into a three-year training programme to qualify as a catechist, followed by an on-going formation after the basic training.⁵² The recognition of the contribution of the catechist is also reflected in the fact that they have become part of the parish team.

The participation of Gambian women in the religious orders was the next step in the indigenisation of the ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. The first Gambian woman who completed her noviciate in the 20th century was Sr. Jeanne Therese Ndeye. She made her final profession in the Congregation of St. Joseph of Cluny in August 1968.⁵³ In 1973 the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary received their first Gambian member when Sr. Madeleine Mendy was professed into the order.⁵⁴ Gradually others followed. Especially the Presentation Sisters have had quite a few Gambian vocations. In 1994 there were 12 Gambian sisters, while several others were doing their noviciate.⁵⁵

The Presentation Sisters have worked seriously on the topic of inculturation and integrated local symbols and rituals in their profession ceremonies. They have chosen to make use of items, such as beads, a calabash and a wrapper, which are used at marriage and birth ceremonies, to exemplify the meaning of the vows taken. The novice making her first profession is wrapped in a *malan* (a piece of woven cloth) by the sisters of the community. In the Gambian cultures the *malan* is used to

⁵¹ *GPI Newsletter*, 3/3 ((1979), 3; Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁵² Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999. The ongoing training of catechists consists of 3 programmes a year: a spiritual retreat of one week, a spiritual week on practical issues like marriage etc and a summer course of three weeks on systematic and practical theology.

⁵³ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 63.

⁵⁴ *GPI Newsletter* 22/10 (October 1998), 5.

⁵⁵ *GPI Newsletter* 18/1 (1994), 5. Note: In 1998 it seemed that the vocations into the religious orders had come to a standstill; there was only one Gambian girl in formation. *GPI Newsletter* 22/10 (December 1998), 17.

welcome a new-born child into the community. Family members pick up the newborn baby and wrap it in a piece of cloth as a sign that the community is enfolding the child and henceforth will protect it. Thus the sisters of the community, the new family of the novice, enfold the new novice in a *malan* as a sign of welcome and protection. The female members of the family of the novice decorate her with beads. Traditionally female relatives decorate a bride on her wedding day with beads as a sign of fertility. The white and red beads that the novice receives from her relatives – white for purity and red for sacrifice – signify the spiritual motherhood of the novice. A calabash is given to the novice as a sign of communion, because the calabash is often used to eat or drink. The calabash is also symbol of receptivity. Just like the calabash, which is empty in order to be filled, the novice has to empty herself in order to be a recipient of the needs of people. At the final profession the novice is decorated with red, white and black beads. The addition of black beads to the string signifies death. For, as one of the sisters said, 'if we really love, we have to die.'⁵⁶

The third stage of the indigenisation of the ministry in the Roman Catholic Church was the development of an indigenous priesthood. The vocations for the priesthood received a new impulse with the opening of St. Michael's Junior Seminary in Fajara in 1972. The seminary was put under the direction of Fr. Pierre Sagna, who later became the bishop of St. Louis in Senegal. Two of the 19 boys who entered the seminary in 1972 actually became priests 13 years later. In 1985, Fr. Tony Gabisi and Fr. Peter Gomez were ordained into the priesthood.⁵⁷ They became the first Gambians to be ordained into the priesthood in 52 years. This was something of a breakthrough. Two others, Fr. Edu Gomez and Fr. David Jarjue were ordained in 1987. Though people still had their reservations about the priesthood, they started realising 'that seminary did not equal death.'⁵⁸ When the first candidates continued their ministry healthy and happily, others started to offer for the priesthood, though many have stopped along the road. In 1999 there were 14 Gambian priests: Tony Sonko (1989), Pascal Mendy (1995), Tony Secka (1995), Emile Sambou (1997), Antoine Sambou (1997) Gabriel Mendy CSSp (1997), Bruno Toupan (1997), Joe Karbo (1999) and Michael Ndecky (1999). One of them, Gabriel Mendy became a Spiritan. Finally, a decisive move towards the indigenisation of the priesthood has been made. The next step will be a Gambian bishop.⁵⁹

Inculturation from above in other fields has been limited. The mass has some Gambian elements in the form of dance, local instruments and hymns in the vernacular. The liturgy is in Wolof but it is merely a translation of the existing liturgy and no attempts have been made to adapt the format and the content of the liturgy to the

⁵⁶ Interview with Sr. Sarian Gomez, Kanifing March 4 1999. Note: at the Regional Chapter of the Presentation Sisters work is done on initiation rites and the question how that can be applied to the religious vocation.

⁵⁷ W. Cleary, *Reaping a rich harvest*, 63.

⁵⁸ Interview with Fr. Tony Gabisi, Kanifing February 9 1999. People seem to have made an association between 'seminary' and 'cemetery'.

⁵⁹ The Gambian bishop at the time of writing (2002) is Bishop Michael Cleary, born in 1925 and consecrated in 1985. Expectations are that his successor will be one of the senior Gambian priests. Fr. Tony Gabisi and Fr. Peter Gomez were appointed as vicar general in 1998. *GPI Newsletter*, 22/6 (June 1998), 4.

Gambian setting. Besides, there have been complaints that the Wolof used in the liturgy is imported from Senegal rather than an original Gambian product.⁶⁰ In Kunkujang work has been done on Manjago translations. Some workshops on inculturation, for example on the relation between the *ngente* and baptism, have been organised but have not led to any concrete results.⁶¹ Though generally the need for inculturation is felt, there is a hesitation among the Gambian priests and sisters to approach the topic.⁶² Some have used the large variety of ethnic groups in The Gambia as a reason why inculturation is slow and difficult.⁶³ Others feel too young and too inexperienced in theology and cultural anthropology to touch the highly sensitive and delicate issue of inculturation.⁶⁴ Also the fact that in the past the missionaries have scorned the traditional rituals and values might have something to do with this hesitation to address the issue among the Gambian theologians.⁶⁵

One of the Gambian priests, Fr. Tony Gabisi described inculturation as follows: 'Africanisation stands at a deeper level than the mere replacement of one element with another. We must not reduce it to mere external or accidental changes. Africanisation is the quality of Christian life lived by people in Africa.'⁶⁶ But this is exactly where the crux of the problem lies. Many have observed that the majority of the Gambian Christians (and the Gambian Muslims) live a double life, a life at two levels: one is the Christian level; the other is the level of African traditional religions. So far there has been very little guidance in how to integrate these two levels of Christian doctrines and the religious and cultural traditions and values that already existed into a holistic life.⁶⁷ Inculturation and contextualisation continue to be areas in which much work needs to be done.

Christian Muslim Relations

Christian Muslim relations was another topic addressed by the Diocesan evaluation. Since the arrival of Christianity in The Gambia, Christians and Muslims had been living side by side. Throughout history Christians and Muslims have joined in each other's festivities and laboured side by side on the work floor or in the fields. From the middle of 19th century onwards Muslim children increasingly participated in Christian education. This so-called dialogue of life has been part of the Gambian reality for centuries.⁶⁸ The non-threatening coexistence was to some extent disturbed

⁶⁰ *GPI Newsletter* 5/3 (1981), 2; 9/11 (1985), 9ff.

⁶¹ *GPI Newsletter* 20/7 (June 1996), 4.

⁶² Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁶³ Interview with Fr. Tony Gabisi, Kanifing February 9 1999.

⁶⁴ One of the Gambian priests, Fr. Edu Gomez, has pursued the concept of *mbolo* (a united group) as a model for ecumenism in a thesis for a Masters degree, but not much has been done with the idea in practice. E. Gomez, *Ecumenical dialogue in The Gambia: a pastoral evaluation*, thesis submitted to the department of pastoral theology of the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 1997.

⁶⁵ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁶⁶ *GPI Newsletter* 3/9 (1979), 7.

⁶⁷ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁶⁸ In one of the newsletters the story is told of Francis Demba. Francis Demba was a boy of 17 from Darsilami. Francis' parents were both Muslim, but Francis had opted for the Christian way of life and had completed the second stage of preparation for baptism. He died

by missionary activities of both Islam and Christianity in the 19th and 20th century. The 'race for Africa' in which both Islam and Christianity have attempted to win the majority of Africans for their religion, affected The Gambia as well. The 19th century *jihads* popularised Islam in The Gambia and the social pressure on the adherents of African traditional religions to convert to Islam has increased in the 20th century. On the Christian side missionaries in the 19th and first half of the 20th century had participated in the rush for the conversion of the traditional believers and had attempted to persuade Muslims to become Christians. Though they gradually accepted that Muslims were not willing to become Christians, they continued their efforts to influence young Muslims via education at least until the 1960s or 1970s. All this has strained the good relations.

It was, therefore quite an adjustment for both the Christian and the Muslim community when suddenly Christians no longer regarded Muslims as 'objects of conversion' but as 'children of Abraham' and 'pilgrims on the same journey of seeking to do the will of God.' Muslims have distrusted dialogue as a new method of evangelisation and Christians were not altogether sure whether dialogue would imply the end of mission or whether it was a renewed form of mission. Besides, the cordial relationships had only been one level of contact. At another level many Christians have a deep-seated fear of Islam and have felt threatened in their existence. With rising anxiety they have observed the growing influence of the Muslim community in the society⁶⁹ and had seen Christian girls 'being taken away' in a Muslim marriage. Many Christians have felt that they were discriminated against when it came to jobs and scholarships.⁷⁰ Thus, the call to 'dialogue' came unexpected for many Christians.

The theological revaluation of Islam in the Roman Catholic Church began with the Second Vatican Council. The Council stated that Roman Catholics looked with esteem upon Muslims 'who adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men.'⁷¹ Christian Muslim relations started to gain priority on the agenda when Pope John Paul II proved a fervent promoter of Christian Muslim relations. The *GPI Newsletter* regularly published the addresses of John Paul II on Christian Muslim relations to sensitise the Gambian Roman Catholics on the issue.

In the Gambian context Bishop Michael Cleary (1953-) acted as a stimulant for Christian Muslim relations. Cleary, successor to Bishop Moloney and consecrated on March 21 1985, saw it as one of his prime tasks 'to be a sort of small bridge' between Christians and Muslims. At his consecration he stated:

To the Christians of other Churches, I greet you and promise to promote the close harmony and dialogue which exists among the Christian Churches here in The Gambia.

unexpectedly at the age of 17. When the Muslim elders came for the burial ceremony, Francis' parents insisted that their son, and only boy, had not 'converted' to Islam and they contacted the Catholic leaders to arrange for a Catholic burial. *GPI Newsletter*, 8/1 (January 1984), 7.

⁶⁹ *GPI Newsletter*, 19/4 (April 1995), 3.

⁷⁰ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 4 1999.

⁷¹ P. B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, 218.

I greet in a special way my many Moslem friends who are here today. (...) We have shown in The Gambia, that Moslems and Christians can live in a close esteem for one another and respect each other's belief. This country is an example to the rest of the world of respect for freedom of religion and the very happy relationships that exist between those who believe in One God, Lord of us all.

Moslems and Christians have a fundamental belief in the Providence of God and the Brotherhood of Man. I feel that we should stress what we have in common and not our differences. It seems to me that those who stress the differences do a disservice to religion and do not have the approval and commendation of our Creator and Lord.

I spent the best years of my life working in St. Augustine's High School where two third to three quarters of the pupils were always Moslem. I taught many lessons there in Maths and History but in the process I learned more important ones. I left that school with the conviction that all religion – *all* religion – is a sham, hypocrisy unless it stresses those great beliefs we have in common – peace, justice, unity and the moral life.

If I have any ambition in life it is to be a sort of small bridge between Islam and Christianity and between Catholicism and other Christian denominations. I hope never to lose this conviction that while there are many noble virtues, the primary one is charity, expressed in practice in a tolerance and acceptance of one another and our beliefs and a total lack of discrimination on the ground of belief. This to me, is the beginning of charity, the acceptance of all men as brothers and sisters, and it is on this charity that you and I will be judged when the day of reckoning comes. One of our saints used to put it nicely: 'In the evening of life, you will be judged on love.'⁷²

Cleary has been much more than 'a small bridge between Islam and Christianity'. He has worked hard to promote Christian Muslim relations in all aspects of his pastoral work. In his radio and television speeches, he has always addressed both Christians and Muslims and appealed to both groups to work together for justice and peace in the nation. He has wholeheartedly supported the Gambia Christian Council programmes on Christian Muslim relations⁷³ and stimulated the efforts of people, such as Sr. Catherine Jarra and Fr. Robert Ellison, to pursue further studies in the field of Christian Muslim Relations in order to assist the diocese in this area. He has encouraged his priests to visit Muslim leaders during their major feasts and to hand them the Id-al-Fitr letter of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to serve as a topic for a conversation. Christian Muslim relations has also become part of the syllabus for the training of catechists and teachers of Religious Knowledge.⁷⁴

Also at less obvious occasions Cleary has stressed the importance of good relations with Muslims. At the ordination of Gabriel Mendy as a Spiritan priest in 1997, he stated that:

The plan of salvation does not just include Christians but 'all those who acknowledge the Creator', among whom are the vast majority of people in this country. Muslims profess to hold the faith of Abraham and together with us they adore the one merciful God, our judge on the last day. Treat all your Muslim brothers and sisters with great

⁷² *GPI Newsletter*, 5/ 7 (1981), 4-6.

⁷³ See below in paragraph 9.6.

⁷⁴ Also the Methodist Local Preachers School and the Anglican Diocesan School for Evangelism have included Islamic Studies and Christian Muslim relations in their syllabus.

respect and fraternal charity, remembering that we are all pilgrims seeking the same destination.⁷⁵

The visit of Pope John Paul II to The Gambia in February 1992 was not just an apex in the life of the Roman Catholic community in The Gambia. It also gave an extra impetus to the pursuit of Christian Muslim relations. In nearly all his addresses the Pope underlined the importance of nurturing the good relations that existed in The Gambia. He stated: 'I know that I have come to a country which has a proud tradition of peaceful coexistence amongst its people, a country in which the ideals of tolerance, justice and freedom are held in the highest regard.' He stressed that Christians and Muslims were all pilgrims 'like Abraham on the same journey of seeking to do God's will in everything' and that they needed to work together for the betterment of the Gambian society.⁷⁶ The cordial reception of the Pope by the Muslim community has strengthened the good relations between the two religious communities and has taken away some of the suspicion.

The importance of the theme was again underscored when the African Synod of 1996 chose Christian Muslim relations as one of the five main themes. Also on the region level Christian Muslim relations was on the agenda. AECAWA, the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa, has dealt intensively with the theme of Christian Muslim relations. One of their documents from 1986, which stressed both the need for tolerance, co-operation and respect and the right of the Christians to practise their own religion in freedom and to be treated as full citizens, is added as an appendix.⁷⁷ Gambians in leadership positions like Sr. Catherine Jarra and Fr. Tony Gabisi have started to discuss openly some of the pastoral problems, such as Christian Muslim marriages, springing from the interaction in a religiously pluralistic society. Articles on the topic have appeared in the *GPI Newsletter*.⁷⁸ Recently, a document of the Spiritan congregation called "*The hope within us*": *our mission to the Muslim world*, has been published. It states:

Whether in dialogue of life or social collaboration, our primary motive must always be that of healing past mistakes and opening bridges of understanding, respect and friendship among each other. At the same time, we can never exclude the hope that some may indeed come to explicit faith in Christ. The dividing line here is a very fine thread... We need to be scrupulously honest about our intentions. And so we try to live the mission of the Church in a world of religious pluralism in such a way that it be clear that dialogue must never be motivated by the desire to undermine another religious group.⁷⁹

Slowly but surely the Roman Catholic community has become aware of the need to be tolerant and to respect people of other faiths. Gradually there is a growing awareness among the Roman Catholic community, and the Christian community at

⁷⁵ *GPI Newsletter* 21/12 (December 1997), 14.

⁷⁶ The visit of Pope John Paul II is described in a special edition of the *GPI Newsletter* of February 1992.

⁷⁷ Fourth Plenary Assembly of AECAWA, Lagos 20-27 October 1986: Communiqué, Resolutions and Recommendations. See Appendix II.

⁷⁸ *GPI Newsletter* 22/7 (July 1998), 10 ff.

⁷⁹ R. Ellison; J.M. Jolibois, "*The Hope within us*": *our Mission to the Muslim world*, 94.

large, that nurturing good relations with the Muslim community is not an option but a must for a Christian minority community like that of The Gambia. The Christian community rather is called to seek the encounter with Muslims in order to be a credible witness.

9.3 The Methodist Church in the second half of the 20th century

Autonomy: developing an indigenous ministry

One of the main topics which has preoccupied the Methodist Church in the second half of the 20th century was the quest for autonomy and the development of an indigenous ministry. In the era that a wave of independence swept through the African continent and the African churches, the Methodist Church in The Gambia continued to be a district of the British Methodist Conference. Financial sustainability and the raising of an indigenous Gambian ministry proved the major obstacles on the road towards autonomy.

In the 1950s the future had seemed quite promising with two young Gambians, Ernest Stafford and Ian Roach, ordained. But soon it became clear that neither of them opted for a life-long ministry in The Gambia. Stafford applied for an exchange with Ghana after having worked in The Gambia for about 5 years. After the initial exchange period had expired, he stayed on in Ghana. Later he retired from the ministry to pursue a political career in Ghana. Also Roach went on an exchange programme after an initial term in The Gambia. Just like Stafford he did not return to The Gambia, but continued to work in the West Indies after the exchange programme had terminated. Roach and Stafford returned to The Gambia when the Synod appealed to them to take the chairmanship. In 1979 Ian Roach was inducted as the first Gambian Methodist District Chairman and General Superintendent. He served for a period of four years and then – to the disappointment of the Synod - indicated that he wanted to step down.⁸⁰ He left for England in 1984 and died there in 1990.⁸¹ Meanwhile, Stafford was called in from Ghana and was groomed to succeed Roach. He served as chairman from 1984 until 1989 after which he as well retired in England.⁸² After the retirement of Stafford there were no other Gambian candidates who could take over. Of the three possible Gambian ministers, who were ordained at the time, the Rev. Richard Wilson had left for the USA while the Rev. Francis Forbes was nearing retiring age. The third Gambian minister, the Rev. Charles Mendy, did not meet the qualifications needed for a General Superintendent: he had not yet travelled 10 years in the ministry.⁸³ All three men were senior candidates, having worked with the government, before they offered for the ministry. Realising the future complications of having an indigenous ministry of just

⁸⁰ Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, March 10 1999.

⁸¹ Synod Minutes 1990, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸² Stafford superannuated in 1990. Minutes Synod 1988, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸³ Minutes Synod 1988, Methodist District Office, Banjul. Note: Forbes served in The Gambia until he superannuated in 1990 and then left for England. He returned to The Gambia in 1998 and served for a while as minister in charge of Wesley Church, Banjul.

senior candidates, the Synod pronounced an embargo on accepting further senior candidates.⁸⁴ Meanwhile two expatriates, the British missionary John Stedman (1989-1994) and the Ghanaian Titus Pratt (1994-), whose father had headed the Gambian Methodist Church from 1974 until 1977, led the church.⁸⁵

Gradually however a Gambian ministry began to evolve. In 1989 two people candidated for the ministry: the senior Bankole Coker who had served as an evangelist in Georgetown after retiring from government service and Joseph Gomez, a young Manjago who had served as evangelist in Western Division.⁸⁶ The Synod of 1992 accepted Mrs. Olufemi Cole Njie as a senior candidate for the non-stipendiary ministry. Her ordination in 1997 made her the first Gambian female minister.⁸⁷ In 1994 a young Akou man, Charles King, was accepted as a ministerial candidate. He was sent to Ghana for training.⁸⁸ In the next year François Mendy, who had already served the Methodist Church for nearly 20 years as a district evangelist, was proposed as a candidate to the ministry.⁸⁹ In 1997 the principal of Gambia High School, Willie Carr offered for the non-stipendiary ministry, while Michael Jabang, a Karoninka who worked in special education at the Learning Disability Unit of the Methodist Primary School, was also accepted as a ministerial candidate.⁹⁰ Two others offered for the ministry that year: Mrs. Hannah Faal, a member of the Gambia Methodist District but residing in England, started ministerial training in England and a young Akou called Theophilus Mahoney who had just finished high school. In 1999 two other young men, Shaka Ashcroft and Banni Manga, were sent for training in ministerial formation to England.⁹¹

Many candidates of the younger generation have received their first formation at the Methodist Local Preachers' School. The school was revived in the late 1980s and intends to train lay people to lead services, both in the towns and in the rural areas. The school, which met and continues to meet on Saturdays, offers basic theological training to lay people. Promising candidates are encouraged to contemplate offering for the ministry. Through this school, which is convened at different venues in the country, the Methodist Church has been able to train nearly 70 lay people who are qualified to lead worship and to preach.

With a considerable number of lay people who are theologically trained and an equally considerable number of people ordained and some more candidates in the pipeline⁹² the Gambian Methodist Church is preparing itself for a time in which it will be able to function without ministerial assistance from abroad. The abundance

⁸⁴ Minutes Synod 1988, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸⁵ Titus Pratt arrived in The Gambia in 1991. The term of his chairmanship will end in 2003.

⁸⁶ Minutes Synod 1985, 1988, 1989. Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸⁷ Minutes Synod 1992, 1998, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸⁸ Minutes Synod 1994, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁸⁹ Minutes Synod 1995, Methodist District Office, Banjul. Note: François Mendy had already received theological training in the past when he attended a four year course at the Bible College of the Assemblies of God in Senegal.

⁹⁰ Minutes Synod 1998, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁹¹ Minutes Synod 1999, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁹² Mrs. Mathilda Mendy and Mrs. Lucy Safoe have offered for the ministry in the course of 1999.

of ministerial candidates is part of a larger move toward autonomy of the Gambia Methodist Church. Other preparations for autonomy have also been made.⁹³ The Synod has appointed a committee to work out a church constitution, while the Finance and Audit committee has been studying possibilities for improving the financial sustainability of the church. The World Church Office in London wholeheartedly supports the Gambian Methodist Church in its pilgrimage towards autonomy and hopes are raised high that before long the Methodist Church will reach its long awaited independence.

Education: sustainable private schools or service to the poor

Minority churches like those in The Gambia have often understood their role and meaning in society as one of service.⁹⁴ They are too small to influence society in other ways. Nevertheless, through diaconal projects like education, medical assistance and development work these churches were able to influence the society beyond their numbers. Society has appreciated these services. However, with the gradual financial failure to upkeep the developments projects and with the nationalisation of education and medical services, several churches have found themselves in an identity crisis regarding their attitude towards the larger society. Most of the churches in The Gambia so far have attempted to maintain their development-, medical- and educational projects at the level of the past, searching continuously for new sources of finance within and without the country. This however seems to be fighting a losing battle.

This attitude can be best exemplified by the Methodist approach towards education in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Methodist primary and high schools were taken over by the government. This deprived the church from its influence in education. The only remaining school in the 1950s was the Preparatory and Kindergarten Departments of the Girls High School, because these were not included into the newly formed schools.⁹⁵ Over the years however, the Methodist educational programme increased again. The Preparatory and Kindergarten Department of GHS gradually developed into the Methodist Primary School. In 1990 a special unit within Methodist Primary School was initiated for children with learning disabilities, which developed into a separate school. Another primary school was started in Marakissa. The church also started several nursery schools in the greater Banjul area.⁹⁶

⁹³ Minutes Synod 1998, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁹⁴ T. Mitri, 'Religious communities in minority situations', *PROCURA Newsletter*, Vol. 2/6 (Nov./Dec. 1993), 1-5. Mitri defines the concept of minority as 'social groups characterised by ethnicity, religion or language marked by numerical inferiority'.

⁹⁵ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 227.

⁹⁶ According to the Methodist Synod report of 1985 there were 4 nursery schools in that year: one in Bakau, one in Lamin (run by Wesley Women's Auxiliary) and two in Banjul, the Bethel Nursery in Stanley Street and the Methodist Nursery School in Dobson Street. Minutes Synod 1985, Methodist District Office, Banjul. All of them were run on a combination of school fees and a government subvention. Note: the Lamin nursery school was closed down in 1987. Minutes Synod 1988, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

With the gradually declining influence of the Methodist Church in Gambia High School, the dream of a new Methodist High School was kindled. The Synod of 1991 presented a report on the feasibility of starting a Technical High School.⁹⁷ This idea gradually developed into the establishment of the Methodist Academy, a private fee-paying high school in September 1995.⁹⁸ The success of this private, expensive but sustainable, high school, led to the decision to change Methodist Primary School from a normal mission school into a private primary school, which could serve as the seedbed for future Methodist Academy candidates.⁹⁹

With these prestigious high quality schools the Methodist Church has increased its influence in the educational field. It seems only fair to say the Church was not just driven by motives of pride and melancholia. Problems with the payment of the educational subventions by the government also made a reflection on the future of Methodist education a bare necessity.¹⁰⁰ But it must also to be said that the establishment of expensive prestigious private schools has alienated the Methodist Church from its educational tradition of catering for the poor. The church already has an elitist reputation because the majority of the members are well to do Akou. Therefore, the church should reflect consciously what effect the establishment of expensive private schools has on its reputation and its witness in society. No doubt, the establishment of an exclusive academy is a way to influence the future leadership of the Gambian society and will create goodwill towards Christianity. But it also seems to imply that quality education is only for the rich who can afford it.

Tareq Mitri distinguishes two main theological attitudes among minority churches. The first one is the survivalist attitude, which tries to maintain its former influence by resisting plurality amongst its members, by trying to find more money to build schools, churches etc. and by compensating a feeling of social and/or political inferiority by developing a religious superiority. The other attitude Mitri describes is the missionary attitude. Based on the metaphors of Jesus about the leaven and the salt, it represents the choice of being a witness to Jesus Christ in society by an outward looking attitude, focussing on others rather than being preoccupied with oneself. He describes this attitude as one of kenotic presence. He concludes by saying: 'The survivalist plays it safe: you do not want to risk anything. The witness-oriented Christian risks: he may lose. But note what Jesus says about those who wish to save their lives.'¹⁰¹ It would seem that the Methodist Church by its decisions for future policies is all too often guided by the memories of what is conceived its 'glorious' past of schools, hospitals and development projects. Therewith, at least in the educational field, they run the risk of losing out on the people and the objectives for which these projects were meant.

⁹⁷ Minutes Synod 1991, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁹⁸ Minutes Synod 1996, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

⁹⁹ Minutes Synod 1999, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes Synod 1998, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹⁰¹ T. Mitri, 'Religious communities in minority situations', *PROCMURA Newsletter*, 2/6 (Nov./Dec. 1993), 2.

The Marakissa outreach programme

Outreach and extension work was an important theme on the agenda of the Methodist Church in the second half of the 20th century. Both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church had put much effort and energy in rural outreach from the 1930s onwards, the Methodist Church had been obliged to hold back due to financial constraints. Though the situation eased somewhat after the Second World War, no large and systematic outreach programme was set up. Combo, directly south on the mainland of Banjul, was the only area outside Banjul, where the Methodist Church had congregations. This situation changed in the 1960s the Methodist Church more or less by chance became involved with a village in Western Division, only about 45 kilometres from Banjul which developed into their centre for rural outreach: Marakissa.

The first contacts of the Methodist Church with Marakissa were coincidental. The Medical Research Centre in Fajara had selected Marakissa as a survey village for research into the eye disease Trachoma. A Methodist layman from Banjul, Mr. Edwards, who was involved in the programme, was struck by the extreme poverty of the village and the large number of people suffering from malnutrition and a variety of diseases. He contacted the minister in charge, the Rev. Ian Roach, and the voluntary district agent for the Combo, Mr. Emmanuel J.C. Rendall, and interested them for the well being of the Marakissa people. In the 1960s Marakissa was a village of about 500 people from different ethnic groups. The majority of them were Jola but there was also a considerable number of Manjago.

Edwards' concern for the Marakissa people resulted in an outreach programme of the Methodist Banjul congregation to the Manjago people, which in later years broadened to include Karoninka and Balanta people.¹⁰² Regular visits were paid to the village and a team of Banjul members and interpreters endeavoured to improve the living conditions of the Manjago where they could. The names of Ian Roach, Emmanuel Rendall, Charles Mendy, William Coker and Mrs. Esther Sarr are connected with these early years of Methodist outreach in Marakissa.¹⁰³ Initially the assistance was provisional. Some first aid was given and cookery classes were organised to combat malnutrition. When it became clear that a lot of diseases in the villages were caused by a lack of vitamin C, a village garden project was set up and fresh fruits, collected in the Banjul congregations on Sundays, were distributed to supplement the diet. Gradually the work became more and more institutionalised. The deaconess Sr. Helen Davie (1964-1968), who had been appointed to organise the Sunday School work, started literacy classes in Marakissa from 1965 onwards. In the late 1960s a school was built and a teacher appointed.

Methodist medical work, dormant since 1940, received a new impetus with the appointment of Sr. Blyth Brown to Marakissa in 1967. It resulted in the opening of a small clinic later that year.¹⁰⁴ Clinics were also held in the surrounding villages of Marakissa. The clinic was extended several times. In the late 1980s, a nutrition unit

¹⁰² The contacts with the Karoninka date from about 1970 whereas contacts with the Balanta are much more recent, possibly from 1995 onwards.

¹⁰³ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 220-221.

¹⁰⁴ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 222 and 237.

complemented the regular medical work,¹⁰⁵ while in the 1990s dental care was added to the services. When the Cluny Sisters of Darsalami started a mobile clinic, an ecumenical co-operation developed between the two clinics to make work in the region more cost effective.¹⁰⁶ The funding of the clinic has remained a problem. Though small fees were asked from the patients, they did not cover the costs for personnel and medicine. The government grant, mainly in medicine, is small while some of the longstanding donors, like ICCO from The Netherlands,¹⁰⁷ have withdrawn from The Gambia, due to their policy to concentrate on certain areas and countries.¹⁰⁸ Yet the Methodist Church struggles to keep the clinic open in order to provide medical services to the very poor.

Evangelistic work among the Manjago was put on the agenda in 1966. In that year a young Christian Manjago from Dakar, Jean Bass, visited the village to preach.¹⁰⁹ He was engaged by the Methodist Church as an evangelist for the area and served for a few years in the Western Division. His work was underscored by the translation work of John and Gillian Karlik, who had studied Manjago during their stay in Guinea-Bissau. Though the Karliks only stayed one year in The Gambia, they were able to produce a translation of the Gospel of Mark.¹¹⁰ After Bass departure, Bernard Mendy was appointed as his replacement. François Mendy was employed as district evangelist in 1978¹¹¹ and has served the area ever since, playing a crucial role in the Methodist outreach in the Western Division. François Mendy offered for the ministry in 1995 as a senior candidate and was ordained in 1999.¹¹² He is still active as a minister among the Manjago. Another Manjago has also entered the ministry: Joseph Gomez. He first served as an evangelist and in 1989 he was sent to Sierra Leone for theological training. He was ordained in 1995.¹¹³ The outreach in Western Division has resulted in the establishment of congregations. Church buildings were opened in Marakissa (1968 and rebuilt in 1984), Kassakunda

¹⁰⁵ Synod Minutes 1988, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹⁰⁶ Synod Minutes 1993, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹⁰⁷ ICCO stands for Interkerkelijk Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingsprojecten, which in translation means the Interchurch Committee for the Co-ordination of Development Projects.

¹⁰⁸ Synod Minutes 1994. ICCO withdrew from the clinic and the Methodist Agricultural Programme due to their policy to concentrate on working in a limited number of countries. Since The Gambia was not among the concentration areas, funds were terminated. The clinic continues to receive assistance in kind from the World Food Programme through Caritas.

¹⁰⁹ Jean Bass was a young French speaking Manjago from Dakar who spent his holiday in 1966 preaching to his people in Marakissa. When the Methodist Church in The Gambia became aware of the activities of Bass, he was asked to join the staff as district evangelist. B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 222.

¹¹⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 223. The Karliks are still involved in Bible translation work and closely associated with the Manjago translation work, though John Karlik has become handicapped because of a stroke. The United Bible Society, which stationed a co-ordinator Robert Koops in The Gambia in 1995, supervises the Manjago Bible translation and with the Methodist Church organises classes for young people to learn to read the Manjago Bible translation.

¹¹¹ Interview with Ansumana Mendy, Brikama February 10 1999.

¹¹² Synod Minutes 1995, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹¹³ Synod Minutes 1989 and 1995, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

(1990), Sifoe (1988), Banjankoto (1994), Nyofelleh (1997)¹¹⁴ and Brikama (1995) and there are contacts with a large number of other villages.¹¹⁵ Western Division is still the most important outreach area of the Methodist Church. Due to their focus on traditionalists the Methodists did little reflection on their relation to Islam as a church, but rather participated and reflected on Christian Muslim relations at the level of the Gambia Christian Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia.

Methodist outreach work received a new dimension with the setting up of the Methodist Mission Agricultural Project (MMAP) in 1979.¹¹⁶ This agricultural project was mainly funded by WCC and ICCO and had its headquarters in Brikama. In its early years, MMAP focussed on villages in Western Division, but gradually the project extended itself to Foni, Macarthy Island Division and the North Bank Division and opened centres in Bani¹¹⁷ and Kerewan.¹¹⁸ The headquarters in Brikama consisted of an office and an orchard for seedlings and seed production and concentrated on fruit tree improvement. On the north bank MMAP workers were also engaged in projects to stop the desertification of the country by means of tree planting. Palm oil refinery and well digging to provide villages with clean drinking water were also core activities. MMAP has also supported village garden projects and has endeavoured to stimulate income generating projects.¹¹⁹ Especially sesame oil production proved lucrative. Sesame was a relatively easily grown cash crop, which until recently was offered merely in raw state to the international market. With the purchase of oil presses by development organisations such as MMAP and the Catholic Relief Services, farmers could loan the presses in exchange for a level on the produce and thus offer the produced oil rather than the seeds to the international market, which multiplied their income considerably.

Funding has been one of the main problems in recent years for MMAP. Like the clinic, MMAP is struggling to find a way in developing sustainable projects in order to continue their service to the society.

¹¹⁴ A small worship centre was built in Nyofelleh in 1983, which fell down during the rains in 1984. For a while the Nyofelleh congregation went over to the Church of Pentecost but in 1995 the congregation went back to the Methodist Church. Interview with Ansumana Mendy, Brikama February 10 1999.

¹¹⁵ Synod minutes of 1985, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1995 and 1997, Methodist District Office, Banjul.. Note: the opening of the Church in Sifoe in 1988 was celebrated by the baptism of 100 adults and children. More recently there have also been contacts with villages in Foni.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Ansumana Mendy, Brikama February 10 1999.

¹¹⁷ Outreach work in Bani and Georgetown started with the stationing of an evangelist, Mr. Bankole Cooker (Coker candidate for the ministry in 1989) in 1987. This led to the baptism of a considerable group of Mansuaka (originally from Guinea-Bissau) in the early 1990s in Bani, Jamali and Georgetown. In 1999 after 3 seasons of drought, which caused the groundnut crops to fail, many of the men re-migrated to Guinea-Bissau in search of income, leaving the women and children behind. The experiences in Central River Division can serve as an example of the difficulties and fluidity of congregations, which are for a considerable part formed by semi-nomadic people. Synod Minutes 1987, 1989, 1993 and 1999, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹¹⁸ Synod Minutes 1985, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

¹¹⁹ Synod Minutes 1985, Methodist District Office, Banjul.

9.4 The Anglican Church in the second half of the 20th century

The state of the Diocese

In 1965 the Nigerian Timothy O. Olufosoye¹²⁰ succeeded the Englishman St. John Pike¹²¹ as bishop of the diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas. He met the Anglican Church in a situation, which was far from easy. Finance was limited and mainly coming from abroad, while the Anglican parishes were few and scattered. Olufosoye described the condition of his diocese as follows:

Its sheer size – over 220.000 square miles embracing five separate and different countries and containing over 7½ million people. It's comparative poverty – 85% of its total budget is begged from outside sources. Not one parish can pay a priest's stipend, the Bishop is entirely supported from outside grants. (...) We have no work in Portuguese Guinea or in the Cape Verde Islands at all, and as I am writing we have closed down (let us hope temporarily) our only station in the Republic of Senegal. In the Republic of Guinea, there is nothing going on in Dominghia, Fallanghia, Farringhia or Kindia. In The Gambia, Basse, Kumbul and Kristi-Kunda Churches were closed down before my time and the buildings are lying in ruins. (...) The countries within the Diocese area all Muslim countries and out of the total population of seven and a half million, 85 percent are Muslim. There are not more than 3 percent who are Christians and the Church has been working in The Gambia for over a century now. The attitude is that we have 'toiled all night and caught nothing'.¹²²

Taking into account that work had been going on for more than 100 years, the diocese was indeed small: twelve parishes with about 3000 members. Banjul and Conakry were the only two substantial churches in the diocese. The others were 'little Christian Islands in a great sea of Islam'.¹²³ Considering that more than half of the parishes were in The Gambia, the work of the Anglican Church in the rest of the diocese was negligible. During Daly's time nearly all funds were used for Kristikunda and especially the parishes in Guinea had suffered. Nearly all, except Conakry, had disappeared.¹²⁴ Occasionally a priest from The Gambia visited the congregation in Senegal.¹²⁵ For this immense territory Olufosoye merely had 4 priests Matthias George, Jacob Williams, Martin Benjamin¹²⁶ and Ismael Lemaire.

¹²⁰ Timothy O. Olufosoye was bishop of the Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas from November 4, 1965 until December 4, 1970. He died in February 1993.

¹²¹ St. John Pike was bishop of the Diocese of The Gambia and the Rio Pongas from 1958 to 1963 and had worked as a missionary in Kristikunda from 1947 to 1953.

¹²² T.O. Olufosoye, *The condition of the Diocese of Gambia and The Rio Pongas today*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹²³ T.O. Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹²⁴ M. George, *Archdeaconry report 1967*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹²⁵ The last record in the archives about a visit to Senegal was in 1962 when Rev. Max Jones visited Dakar. Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Red File Box no. 4, Personnel File.

¹²⁶ It seems that the Gambian priest Fr. Alex Yorke succeeded Benjamin in Guinea in 1969. Benjamin had then served the diocese for 45 years. Yorke offered for the ministry in 1967 and was ordained in 1969. He later left the ministry. Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul,

These men worked in different parts of the diocese at different times. In addition, there was one deacon in the person of J.C. Faye. There is no record of catechists or evangelists working in The Gambia at the time, though there seem to have been some in Guinea.¹²⁷

In 1967, the main Gambian centre of the Anglican Church was in Banjul, in St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, with about 200 communicant members. Apart from St. Mary's there were four other parishes: a small decreasing community in St. Paul's Church in Fajara, Christ Church in Serekunda which consisted mainly of people who migrated from Banjul, St. Andrew's Church in Lamin and a joint fellowship of Anglicans and Methodists in Mansakonko. A priest or the bishop occasionally visited the scattered Anglicans in Georgetown, Bansang, Kaur and Kuntaur. St. Cuthbert's Church in Basse was described as derelict and no attempt was made to revive the work there.¹²⁸ Only in the mid 1980s the work in Basse and Kumbul was revived. In the early 1990s a priest was stationed in Basse.¹²⁹

In 1970 an outreach project was started in the staunch Muslim town of Farafenni, renowned as a difficult place to work. An Anglican Training Centre was set up and model farm was established.¹³⁰ Initially many young Akou from the coastal region went to the school in Farafenni. This seems to have been an attempt to take away the wariness of local people against the school, which they suspected to be a method of converting their children to Christianity. From the late 1970s onwards however, young people from the north bank started to enrol.¹³¹ The emphasis of the school was on skill training in subjects like metal work, carpentry and sewing. Gradually ATC grew into the largest secondary school in Farafenni.¹³² An attempt to extend the school by a model farm failed. The water supply was irregular, the climate harsh and the buildings and fields withered. In 1998 an attempt was made to revive the farm.¹³³

The Farafenni mission was a difficult station. The climate was hot, the living conditions harsh and the response to evangelism minimal. In the 1980s, Fr. Fred

Red File Box no. 5, Personnel File; M. Millard to M. Frederiks, South Ockendon, January 10 2003.

¹²⁷ Personally communication from Dr. F. Mahoney, March 2003.

¹²⁸ M. George, *Archdeaconry report 1967*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹²⁹ In 1999 the Basse parish was small and consisted mainly of Sierra Leonean refugees. A resident priest and an evangelist co-ordinated both the parish and the development work.

¹³⁰ S.H.M. Jones, Report on a visit to the Anglican Training Centre at Farafenni, *The Trumpet: The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia Quarterly Newsletter*, Vol. 1/6 (October-December 1998), 13.

¹³¹ Interview with James Baldeh, Basse November 24, 1998.

¹³² In the late 1990s ATC has had great financial difficulties in keeping the school open. The cost of running school and maintaining the buildings was high and the income from fees very low. In 1999 it was considered to hand the school to the government. D. Bonsay, Anglican Training Centre, *The Trumpet: The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia Quarterly Newsletter*, Vol. 1/6 (October-December 1998), 15.

¹³³ O. Usen, The agriculture desk of Anglican Mission Development Ministries: activities at the Anglican mission farm, Farafenni, *The Trumpet: The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia Quarterly Newsletter*, 1/6 (October-December 1998), 11.

George and the resident evangelist James Baldeh, a Fula convert from Islam, made regular visits to the surrounding Fula villages of Dutubullu, Gunjur and Jallow and a nearby Mandinka village but people were slow to respond. Some were interested in the Christian faith, but only a few were willing to show it publicly by attending church services.¹³⁴ The Church of the African Martyrs, built in the late 1970s, only has a handful of members, the majority of whom are teachers and students from ATC. Very few of the Farafenni residents have joined the church.

Indigenisation of the ministry

The development of an indigenous ministry in the Anglican Church in The Gambia had been quite successful in the post-war period, especially compared to the other two mainline churches. Henry Mensah, John C. Faye, George Williams, Matthias George, Max Jones and Alex Yorke were all Gambian priests. But with some aging, one deceased and two having left the ministry, it was difficult to find successors to these men. Olufosoye complained: 'Many people come forward for the priesthood, but they are not the type of person we really want: some only see it as a job; some have an academic background, which "only" qualifies them to be trained as evangelists though genuinely called.'¹³⁵ The only candidate who was accepted during Olufosoye's time, Abraham Sonkor, drowned in Ibadan in 1970 while training for the priesthood.

Olufosoye's successor, Bishop J. Rigal Elisée (1972-1986) was more successful. He groomed the first Gambian Anglican bishop: Solomon Tilewa Johnson. Johnson was ordained in 1981 and served in both urban and rural areas. He was a parish priest for a while in Farafenni before he proceeded to Durham university to obtain a degree in theology. In 1990 he was elected bishop. Johnson was consecrated bishop of The Gambia on February 2 1990 in the Independence Stadium in Bakau.¹³⁶ In 1996 two young Gambian men, who had trained in Ibadan, Nigeria were ordained into the priesthood: Francis Rigobert and Jacob Cole. Rigobert left the country in 1997, after he had been deprived of office in January of that year.¹³⁷ In 1997 the Diocesan School of Evangelism, originally designed to train lay people as evangelists and lay readers, was restructured and became a means of locally training ministerial candidates. In 1999 four people were ordained as deacons. One of them was the bishop's wife Priscilla Cole-Johnson, who later became the first female Anglican priest in The Gambia.¹³⁸ These developments have guaranteed a sufficient number of Gambian Anglican priests to serve the church in The Gambia.

¹³⁴ Interview with James Baldeh, Basse November 24, 1998.

¹³⁵ T.O. Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹³⁶ *Souvenir programme of the consecration and enthronement of the Rev. Solomon Tilewa Johnson*.

¹³⁷ S.T. Johnson, *Bishop's Charge*, Banjul 1998, 7.

¹³⁸ Priscilla Johnson is since 2001 priest in charge of Lamin parish. <http://umc.org/o2/july/305.htm>; Date: December 11, 2002. In the same year her husband was made archbishop of the Province of West Africa.

<http://www.africaexpert.org/people/data/person12586.html>. Date: December 12 2002.

Anglican Mission Development Ministries

The Anglican Church had been active in development work since the 1940s. Kristikunda for example had an agriculturist among the staff. Later in 1970 a model farm at ATC in Farafenni was set up. The farm was geared towards field crops in the rainy seasons, however there were also projects like rearing cattle and chicken, grinding grain and sesame seed, palm-oil production, bee-keeping and an orchard.¹³⁹

In 1993 all development activities of the diocese were brought together under the umbrella of the Anglican Mission Development Ministries, because the development wing had grown beyond the Farafenni farm. The civil war in Liberia, started in 1989, had brought large numbers of refugees to The Gambia. In co-operation with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Anglican Church had got involved in emergency relief and refugee work. When many Liberians began to return to their home country in the early 1990s, the rebel activities in Sierra Leone started. From 1995 onwards, when the situation in Sierra Leone deteriorated, many Sierra Leoneans flocked to The Gambia. A refugee camp was set up near Basse and many Gambian Serahuli who had worked in the diamond mines in Sierra Leone, returned to their home villages in Central River Divisions, accompanied by the Sierra Leonean families. At the same time, the fighting in the Casamance flared up, resulting in many Jola, Karoninka and Manjago families fleeing to the safer region of The Gambia. When in 1998 a *coup d'état* took place in Guinea-Bissau, the number of displaced people increased again, The Gambia still being a safe haven.

In 1998, AMDM co-ordinated refugee-work in camps in Arankolikunda, Kitty, Sifoe, Kwinella, Fatoto and Basse and aided refugees who have shelter with family or friends. Food aid, tents, blankets, essential drugs, but also registration of people for the refugee status, attempts to help people reintegrate with work and school etc. have been part of AMDM's work.¹⁴⁰ Up till 1998 Johnson himself acted as the Director of AMDM and Chairman of the AACC/WCC Continental Committee for Refugee and Emergency Services.¹⁴¹ Johnson also had many civic appointments in The Gambia, such as Chairman of the Independent Electoral Committee (1997-2000) which supervised the democratic elections in The Gambia after the 1994 *coup d'état*.

The AMDM ministry among the many refugees in The Gambia is a truly impressive diaconal project of the Anglican Church and indeed 'witness through service to those in need'. The funding for this project however, comes mainly from UNHCR and other sources from abroad. Of late AMDM has also focussed on Aids related programmes.

¹³⁹ In 1974 Mothers' Union started an educational outreach programme in Banjulunding in the form of a nursery school. Personally communication of Dr. F. Mahoney, March 2003.

¹⁴⁰ R. Stober, 'AMDM Sources for Funds for Refugee Work', *The Trumpet: The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia Quarterly Newsletter*, Vol. 1/6 (October-December 1998), 10.

¹⁴¹ <http://www.africaexpert.org/people/data/person12586.html>. Date: December 12 2002.

Inculturation

Coming from a Nigerian context, where the Yoruba had a high regard for their culture, Olufosoye realised the importance of the inculturation of the gospel. He saw the lack of inculturation as one of the main problems in his diocese. The situation in the diocese was complex because of the immense territory with its diverse languages and cultures. Olufosoye counted not less than six main languages (with 3000 people only!) and several other minor languages: 'Apart from English and French, we also work in Soso, Mandinka, Fullah and Wollof, a selection of the languages of the Diocese. There are also Jola, Serere, Manjago, Bambara, Sarahuli, Coniaji, Balantar and many more.'¹⁴² Additionally, Olufosoye pointed out that Islam had been able to become part of all these cultures involved, whereas Christianity had not:

Islam is not indigenous to West Africa, and in point of fact the form it has adopted here is in many ways unorthodox. Christianity on the other hand seems to have been so terribly rigid. (...) The African people have got to produce an African Church and those in authority must not be worried if it involves some extra ordinary things. One must watch doctrine to see that it remains Christian, but one must not tie it down to a Western form of expressing itself. I think we have got to have a bit more faith in the Holy Spirit, and leave Him and Africa to get on together.¹⁴³

Despite the fact that Olufosoye had noted the problem, not much happened to change the situation. The Gambian part of the diocese was and remained dominated by the Akou, an anglophone and Western oriented people. The few Wolof and Fula who had become members, had adapted to this situation.

Over the years the theme of inculturation and contextualisation of the gospel became increasingly more important on the worldwide theological agenda. The Anglican Church revisited the topic in the 1990s. Meanwhile the Diocese had become much smaller.¹⁴⁴ From 1985 onwards the diocese consisted of The Gambia only. No major change had taken place in the Akou orientation of the church. Nevertheless, the topic of inculturating the liturgy was discussed. The co-ordinator of the United Bible Society Robert Koops on request prepared a paper for the Diocesan Liturgy Committee, called *Liturgy, Evangelism and Language: Keeping the horse before the cart*. In the paper he pointed out that inculturation and translation of the liturgy were two different things.

¹⁴² T.O Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records. Olufosoye stated: 'We are very lonely... there are linguistic problems. Travel ten miles from our Cathedral and there is another tongue entirely, and the people have no service book in their language so it is going to be very difficult for Christianity to take root in these areas, because there is no hymnbook, no prayer book, nothing.'

¹⁴³ T.O Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹⁴⁴ In 1982 the old Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas became the Diocese of The Gambia and Guinea, though there had been no work in Cape Verde for a long time and the parish in Senegal dwindled. In 1985 Guinea became a separate diocese and the diocese was henceforth called 'the Diocese of The Gambia.'

The first thing to note is that the phrase 'translating the liturgy' makes two important assumptions that we need to examine right from the start. The first is that there are speakers of Gambian languages in our congregations. The second is that what they need is the English liturgy transferred over into these languages. For the sake of discussion I would like to query both of these assumptions before we go too far. First, are there substantial numbers of Wolof, Fula and Mandinkas in the Anglican Church? My impression is that while there may be a few Wolofs, there are very few Mandinkas, and even fewer Fulas. The few that have come into the church have more or less Anglicanized themselves and turned their backs, so to speak, on their own cultural and linguistic tradition. For whom, then, would a Fula or Mandinka liturgy be written? I can only assume that the Diocese somehow hopes that speakers of Fula, Mandinka, and Wolof will join the church in future. Perhaps it is felt that using a liturgy in their language will attract them. This may well be so, but the concept needs to be pushed a little further. That brings us to assumption number two, namely, that what such converts need is a carbon copy of 'our' (English) liturgy in their language.¹⁴⁵

Koops proceeded to point out that the majority of Fula, Wolof and Mandinka were Muslims; therefore, any inculturation of the liturgy, which aimed at attracting people to the Christian faith, should be 'Islam-sensitive'. He stated: 'As we think of liturgy in other languages, then, I think it appropriate that we begin at the beginning with the question: What sort of liturgy is appropriate for Christians who are coming from an Islamic background.'¹⁴⁶ Koops suggested some adaptations of the liturgy to include the use of ablutions, the exchange of the *salam*, the use of mats rather than benches, the chanting of the scripture texts rather than the reading and using the format of the Muslim morning prayer as an order of worship.

Koops' idea that inculturation in the Gambian context meant being sensitive to Islam, was not new. Others, both within and outside the Anglican Church, had proposed similar suggestions. The Baptist Mission in Farafenni had already pursued this policy. They had left their initial attempt of evangelising Muslims with the help of a dental clinic in 1995 and had decided that they just wanted to form a Christian presence in Farafenni. In order to be acceptable to their Muslim environment they began to change their worship into a Muslim sensitive style. A round African hut was built, with the direction towards the East, where people sat and prayed on mats, men and women separated, all leaving their shoes outside.¹⁴⁷ Also the Anglican evangelist and former Muslim James Baldeh, who had co-operated closely with the Baptist Mission in the past, had voiced similar ideas. He suggested that in order to reach the Muslim Fula, the church might have to adapt the way it was present in the Fula society. He suggested that the church needed to go out to the people, to visit them in their houses and attend their rites of passages. He suggested that playing traditional Fula music and bringing the church to the house or the public domain, rather than expecting people to come to the church, might be a step forward. He also

¹⁴⁵ R. Koops, *Liturgy, Evangelism, and Language: keeping the horse before the cart*, a paper presented to the Anglican Diocesan Liturgy Committee, March 18 1996, 1.

¹⁴⁶ R. Koops, *Liturgy, Evangelism, and Language: keeping the horse before the cart*, a paper presented to the Anglican Diocesan Liturgy Committee, March 18 1996, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Report of the EFG seminar 'Evangelization of The Gambia by A 2000 and beyond', October 31 1998.

suggested the use of mats and Arabic as ways to contextualise Christianity in a Muslim Fula society.¹⁴⁸ But for the Anglicised Akou community in Banjul these ideas were considered too far-fetched and no steps were taken to develop the idea. It is remarkable that the discussions on inculturation in the Anglican Church in The Gambia seem not to have taken into account the inculturation of the gospel into the Akou culture and language. And yet the Akou form the largest group in the Anglican Church and have a distinct culture and language of their own.

Ecumenism

Olufosoye was a visionary in many ways. He clearly saw the need for ecumenism in a country that was predominantly Muslim. It seems that one of his first accomplishments in The Gambia was taking the initiative to establish a Christian Council. Already in the year of his arrival, he and his Archdeacon George visited the heads of the Methodist and Roman Catholic Church to discuss the possibility of a Gambia Christian Council.¹⁴⁹ Both churches responded positively and Olufosoye was invited to draft the constitution. He acted as the first honorary secretary of the Gambia Christian Council.¹⁵⁰

Anglican Bishops and Islam

Islam had always preoccupied the Anglican Church. Both Daly and Coote had reflected on Islam. Olufosoye described the Anglican parishes as 'little Christian Islands in a great sea of Islam'. No wonder that most of the Anglican bishops reflected on ways to witness to Muslims. Olufosoye was no exemption to this tradition. Coming from Nigeria, he had grown up in a context where Christians and Muslims, sometimes violently, lived together. Olufosoye however was a supporter of the irenic approach and promoted understanding of and respect for Islam and good relations with Muslims:

One way in which we members of the Christian Church try and bridge the gap between our Muslim friends is by having regular meetings, a kind of forum under the auspices of the Christian Council of The Gambia. In a humble and sympathetic way, we try to look objectively at the Muslim religion as never before, studying their beliefs, their hopes, their aspirations; because they too are anxious to make converts among the Christians; the modern approach to Mohammedanism is, first of all, to appreciate what is good in their religion.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Interview with James Baldeh, Basse November 24, 1998.

¹⁴⁹ T.O. Olufosoye, *Report of the proceedings of the 7th and 8th sessions of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of The Gambia and All Saints church Conakry, 1965/66*, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 7.

¹⁵⁰ T.O. Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records. For more information about the Gambia Christian Council see paragraph 9.6.

¹⁵¹ T.O. Olufosoye, *The Condition of the Diocese of Gambia and The Rio Pongas today*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

The same Olufosoye advocated the need for a special worker on Christian Muslim relations and in 1967 he contacted the Islam in Africa Project in Nigeria for advice.¹⁵² He said:

Islam is our biggest obstacle, and that presumably means our biggest challenge. I feel that the great thing we could do for Christ in this diocese with our meagre strength and slender resources, is to evolve a new and effective technique to work amongst Muslims. Obviously, conventional methods get nowhere at all. In this connection I am in communication with the Islam in Africa Committee in Nigeria for advice. (...) In most Muslim countries people find a great gulf fixed between the Christian Church and the Muslim community which they simply cannot bridge.¹⁵³

Olufosoye's successor Elisée supported this idea. In 1986, he became instrumental in bringing an IAP worker to The Gambia.¹⁵⁴ Also the present bishop Johnson places the theme of Christian Muslim relations high on his agenda. Many of his speeches, both in The Gambia and elsewhere, mention the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in The Gambia.¹⁵⁵ In a presentation to the 1998 Lambeth Conference Johnson described the theological position of the churches in The Gambia regarding Islam as follows:

The Christian Church is a presence in The Gambia, which is very predominantly Muslim. Aggressive evangelism is uncommon, and not encouraged by the mainline churches. There are remarkably peaceful relations between the two faiths, and interaction at all levels. Genuine conversions from Islam to Christianity are not common; and rapid conversions following intensive evangelism have been shown to evaporate over time. Conversion through material incentives have also proved not to last. However, there are signs that the constant Christian presence – bearing witness through service to those in need and development work; the interaction between people of both faiths; and the exposure of a large part of the populations to Christianity through mission schools; as well as the tradition of rural Muslim children being sent to urban Christian families for upbringing and formal education – can have a gradual, but profound effect. Although, as noted, open declarations of conversion are rare, it is quite possible, or even likely, that hearts can be turned quietly but surely. Although the situation is one of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue and Islamic instruction for churches, it must also be emphasised that this does not imply any degree of compromise on the part of the Church. We proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ daily – in action and word – leaving the job of conversion to the Holy Spirit of God. Any compromise in our own faith would not bring us closer to our Muslim brothers and

¹⁵² Report from John Crosley, 1969, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 7, Islam in Africa Project File.

¹⁵³ T.O Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, no date, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records.

¹⁵⁴ Letters from Hilman to Elisée, January 27 1978 and Elisée to Bannerman, March 23 1978, Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 7, Islam in Africa Project File. See also paragraph 9.6.

¹⁵⁵ S.T. Johnson, *Christian relations with Islam: The Gambia*, presentation made to the plenary session, 1998 Lambeth Conference; S.T. Johnson, *Bishop's Charge*, Banjul 1998, 11

sisters, but further away, as they lose respect for weak faith – whether their own or another.¹⁵⁶

9.5 The emergence of ‘new’ Christian groups and churches in The Gambia

Background to the ‘new’ Christian groups in The Gambia

Independence in The Gambia ushered in a new phase in Christianity. The colonial government had been quite conservative in its policy of allowing new Christian groups and churches to establish themselves in The Gambia. World Evangelism for Christ (WEC) for example, had applied for residence visas for missionaries under the colonial government but the request was not granted.¹⁵⁷ The government of independent Gambia was more open to the settlement of organisations and institutions – Christian and non-Christian – which were willing to assist in the development of the country. After Independence, gradually new Christian groups were allowed to work in The Gambia. Among them were WEC, the Baptist mission, the Seventh Day’s Adventists, the Glory Baptist Church and the Korean Presbyterian Church.¹⁵⁸

In line with developments in the larger African continent, The Gambia had its share of the so-called ‘new Charismatic and Pentecostal wave’.¹⁵⁹ This movement started affecting the churches in The Gambia from the late 1970s onwards.¹⁶⁰ C.

¹⁵⁶ S.T. Johnson, *Christian Relations with Islam: The Gambia*, presentation made to the plenary session, 1998 Lambeth Conference, 4.

¹⁵⁷ A. McLaren, *Evangelisation in the Gambia through social work*, paper presented at the EFG seminar ‘Evangelization of The Gambia by A 2000 and beyond’, October 31 1998.

¹⁵⁸ www.africanculture.dk/gambia/ngo_oz.htm. May 16 2002. The Baptist Mission is mainly an NGO which focuses on dental work, rural development and non-formal education. In Farafenni they are endeavouring to establish a church for (Mandinka) Muslim converts, which tries to be sensitive towards Muslim practices. The church has no benches or chairs, people pray on the mat, men and women sit separately etc. Only a few people have joined the fellowship. C. Austin, ‘Discussion on rural church planting’, EFG seminar ‘The evangelisation of The Gambia and beyond’, Serekunda, October 31 1998. In the late 1980s another Baptist group of American Southern Baptists started work in The Gambia. They established the Glory Baptist Church in Jeswang. Next to the church is a small nursery school, which was gradually extended to a primary school. Recently a junior secondary school has been started. When the American missionaries left, the Glory Baptist Church was headed for several years by the Ghanaian pastor Carruthers Donkor. He left in 1998 for further studies and afterwards returned to The Gambia.

¹⁵⁹ P. Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role*, Hurst & Company London, 1998, 31ff. Gifford notes that Pentecostalism as such is not new to Africa. Many of the AIC’s were Pentecostal Churches. He distinguishes a new type of Pentecostalism since the 1970s which distinguishes itself from the older Pentecostal spirituality by sometimes calling itself charismatic. I have borrowed this terminology and used the terms Pentecostal and Charismatic in this paragraph as an interrelated, indicating the new Pentecostal movement appearing since the 1970s.

¹⁶⁰ P. Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role*, 33 ff.; S.W. Jabang, *A comparative study on the Ghanaian Pentecostal concept and practice of deliverance versus the Gambian experience*, a thesis submitted to the School of Theology and Mission, Central University College, Accra Ghana February 1998, 28.

Omenyo has pointed out that these newer Charismatic Pentecostal groups can not easily be classified because of scholars do not agree over the criteria with which to distinguish these groups from each other. Omenyo distinguishes between African Instituted Churches, classical Pentecostal churches, neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches.¹⁶¹ He however does not distinguish between neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and evangelical churches. This thesis uses the terms Charismatic and Pentecostal as equivalents for what P. Gifford calls 'the new Charismatic Pentecostal wave', while classical Pentecostalism will be used for Pentecostal churches that came into being in the earlier parts of the 20th century. Evangelical churches in this thesis are churches that stress the importance of 'being born again' while not over-emphasising the need for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The neo-Pentecostal wave was not the first encounter with Pentecostalism in The Gambia. Unlike some other countries along the West Coast, African Instituted Churches had not exercised much influence in The Gambia. But at least two African Instituted Churches made an attempt to establish themselves in The Gambia, one of which was of a clearly classical Pentecostal strand. In 1934 a missionary bishop of the National Episcopal Church of Christ Mission, called Mr. Dymonall, visited The Gambia and preached in Banjul. The leaders of the mainline churches strongly objected to this 'African polygamist Church' and Dymonall seems to have left the country soon afterwards.¹⁶² The group 'St. Michael's Band of the Holy Ghost Tabernacle' made a more lasting impact. This Pentecostal group came to The Gambia in 1925 and settled in Grant Street, Banjul. The fellowship meetings with much singing, clapping, dancing and praying aloud, seemed to have attracted many Methodists and Anglicans. The Pentecostal revival of the group also influenced the atmosphere of the Methodist Church in the 1930s. Its style of worship and singing was introduced in the Methodist class fellowships and livened the atmosphere.¹⁶³ St. Michael's Band of the Holy Ghost Tabernacle was still active in The Gambia in the 1960s but shortly later it seemed to have disappeared.¹⁶⁴

Factors that led to the spread of Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal Christianity in The Gambia

At least two independent factors can be identified that sparked off a new type of Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal Christianity in the 1970s. First of all, a number of Nigerian and Ghanaian Pentecostal Christians came to The Gambia as petty traders,

¹⁶¹ C.N. Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: a study of the development of charismatic renewal in the mainline churches in Ghana*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer 2002, 6, 93.

¹⁶² Treleven to Ayre, Banjul May 31 1934, Box 764 H2708 mf. 1091. There are no further details known about the person of Dymonall or his church.

¹⁶³ Interview with Rev. Francis Forbes, Banjul March 16 1999.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of the 6th Gambia Church Council (Anglican Church), October 19 1960, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul. Very little information about the groups is available. No names of its leaders in The Gambia have been transmitted.

teachers or businessmen. They organised prayers meetings at their houses.¹⁶⁵ An important example of this influence in the rural areas was the Ghanaian Pentecostal, James Oppong-Antwi. Oppong-Antwi was teaching at the Methodist Primary School in Marakissa. Though worshipping at the Methodist Church in Marakissa, he was a Pentecostal by conviction. Outside the school hours, he met with the young people from the Marakissa area and encouraged them to meet for prayer and Bible study. At these meetings Oppong-Antwi taught them the importance of 'being born-again' and of receiving the Holy Spirit. At a Friday night during prayer fellowship, one of the young people, Bidwell Mendy, received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.¹⁶⁶ This event brought into being a fellowship of young people, seeking – and to some extent receiving – that specific experience.

These young people, mainly of Methodist background, formed a sort of Pentecostal nucleus in the Marakissa area. They were zealous to lead a 'holy life', to evangelise the surrounding villages and to disciple others into this Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷ Due to their emphasis on speaking in tongues and prophesying, the elders and ministers of the church looked at the group with suspicion and some sepsis. Attempts of the young people to get the churches approval for their evangelisation campaigns resulted into nothing. This was partly due to the attitude of the young people who were openly judgmental and condemning the lifestyle of the elders. It came to a clash. Efforts to integrate the movement within the Methodist Church failed. As a result some of the young people withdrew from the Methodist Church and eventually became members (and leaders) of the newer churches. Others, however, remained with the Methodist Church and eventually became leaders there.¹⁶⁸

A second factor in the emergence of a neo-Pentecostal Christianity in The Gambia were the youth organisations and in particular Youth For Christ. The work of YFC was initiated by the visits of a YFC singing group from Ghana, the Joyful Ways Singers Incorporated. They came to The Gambia at the invitation of the Evangelical Outreach Committee.¹⁶⁹ The first visit in 1978 led to a Bible study

¹⁶⁵ S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, a research paper for The School of Theology and Mission, Central University College, Accra Ghana, 1997, 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Pastor Bidwel Mendy, Brikama February 26 1999; interview with Pastor William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Pastor William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Pastor William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999. Note: Bidwell Mendy eventually became a pastor in the Church of Pentecost while William Jabang became a pastor at Abiding Word Ministries. Others, like John Jibba, Alex Colley, Michael Jabang etc. have stayed within the Methodist Church and have become local preachers and youth leaders there. Over the years the mainline churches have been able to better accommodate the charismatic zeal of the young people and have changed their style of worship somewhat and have become more open to the contribution of young people to the leadership of the church.

¹⁶⁹ The Evangelical Outreach committee was formed by a group of Christian leaders from the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, Scripture Union and World Evangelism for Christ. The group came together for prayers and organised activities to evangelise The Gambia. For more information on the Evangelical Outreach Committee and the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia see paragraph 9.6.

group called the Joyful Way Bible Club, led by two Ghanaian workers George and Margaret Wood.¹⁷⁰ A second visit was made a year later. During this visit young Gambians started to respond to the singing and to the altar call by dedicating their lives to Christ.¹⁷¹ After the second visit, the Joyful Way Bible Club developed into YFC, Gambia. Initially two women, the WEC missionary Sr. Anne Kelland and the Gambian Methodist Mrs. Femi Cole-Njie, co-ordinated the work of YFC. Soon afterwards Eddy Carrol was appointed as a full time YFC worker.¹⁷² Mrs. Cole-Njie later became the first Gambian woman to be ordained in the Methodist Church.¹⁷³

By the end of the 1970s YFC was firmly established. YFC meetings were organized in Bakau Methodist Church every Sunday evening.¹⁷⁴ This fellowship brought together young people from different denominations. Gambian students, who had experienced Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, also joined the group.¹⁷⁵ The different style of worship and singing within the YFC meetings attracted many young people. Also the space given to young people to develop themselves as leaders was new. All this gave way to a new version of Christianity, which was less formal and less European. It is generally believed that the YFC meetings and their prayer sessions for the revival of Christianity in The Gambia played a crucial role in the emergence of the Charismatic, evangelical movement in The Gambia and in the development of an indigenous Christian ministry.¹⁷⁶

Other visits of Evangelical groups stimulated the development of an Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in The Gambia as well. In 1979 Calvary Production Ministries Incorporated paid a visit to The Gambia and outreach meetings were held in the Anglican Church in Serekunda and attracted many people. In 1986 the Operation Mobilisation ship 'The Doulos' docked in Banjul and organised meetings and distributed literature. In 1987 Douglas Millers and his Gospel Band from the USA visited The Gambia. They were invited by the Anglican Church. YFC director Eddie Carroll invited the evangelist Kwesi Ansah of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana to The Gambia in 1988 and Abiding Word Ministries hosted the visit of Pastor Idem Ikon that same year. All these visits have – in their own way – contributed to the growth and influence of a different type of Christianity in The Gambia. This has not only led to the establishment of the so-called Evangelical, Pentecostal or Charismatic Churches in The Gambia, but has also

¹⁷⁰ A. Kelland, *How it all began*, a paper on the history of the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia, (s.a., approximately 1993); S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, 3.

¹⁷¹ S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, 2-3.

¹⁷² Eddie Carrol, Michael Touray and John Jibba respectively have acted as YFC full time workers.

¹⁷³ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

¹⁷⁵ S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, 2

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999; Interview with Pastor William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999.

affected the spirituality of the mainline churches, including that of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁷⁷

The more open policy of the Gambia government after Independence and the neo-Pentecostal wave has brought a large variety of groups to The Gambia. Most of the new groups only have a limited membership. It would be impossible to describe all these groups separately. Therefore only the largest of these groups are discussed below. The order is chronologically rather than according to their theological stance.

World Evangelism for Christ and the Evangelical Church of The Gambia

World Evangelism for Christ was one of the organisations that had been active in the promotion of a more evangelical type of Christianity in The Gambia. Its work led to what became the first Evangelical Church in The Gambia.

Since 1935 WEC had been present in Senegal, focussing mainly on work among the Jola and the Fula in the Casamance.¹⁷⁸ In 1958 an attempt was made – probably initiated by WEC missionaries from the Casamance – to establish a WEC mission among the Jola in Sibanor in The Gambia. But the effort failed: the missionary involved in the Sibanor work died unexpectedly¹⁷⁹ and the colonial government proved unwilling to issue residential permits to WEC missionaries.

In 1966 a second, more successful attempt was made. Three German nurses, working for WEC, were granted visas to do medical work in The Gambia. Shortly later they also received permission to preach. They used the medical work as a means of ‘reaching out’ to people. Two of the nurses, Sr. Ruth and Sr. Hanna, developed the so-called German Clinic at Pipeline, Fajara, while the third, Sr. Maria, went to work in Sibanor.¹⁸⁰ Gradually the work of WEC extended and more mission personnel came in. Clinics were opened at Somita (1970), Jarrol (1976) and Nemekunku (1978) while agricultural and rural development programmes were begun at Somita (1970) and Kampant (1986). In 1992 a youth centre was established at Wellingara. Skill training classes were organised at Wellingara and Kanifing. In 1989 WEC’s focus on outreach work in the rural areas resulted in the closing of the Fajara Clinic, which was situated in the urban area.

In the middle of the 1970s the WEC developed a central focus on the country’s largest ethnic group: the Mandinka. The Mandinka literacy and translation programme became one of WEC’s prime activities.¹⁸¹ This combined programme of literacy and translation served a double function. It taught people to become literate by teaching them to read and write in the vernacular while at the same time material

¹⁷⁷ Since the early 1990s a group of people in St. Theresa’s Church in Kanifing meet regularly for prayers meetings and call themselves a charismatic renewal group.

¹⁷⁸ www.wec-int.org/senegal/index.htm, May 16 2002.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing February 1 1999; interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

¹⁸⁰ A. McLaren, *Evangelisation in the Gambia through social work*, paper presented at the EFG seminar ‘Evangelization of The Gambia by A 2000 and beyond’, October 31 1998.

¹⁸¹ Presently WEC in co-operation with Peace Corps in The Gambia has published dictionaries and grammars in Wolof and Mandinka and they have a living database for Wolof and Mandinka vocabulary. See: www.africanculture.dk/gambia/langabot.htm. Date: May 16 2002.

was gathered for Bible translation work. In 1989 this resulted in the completion of the Mandinka translation of the New Testament. In 1999, in close co-operation with the United Bible society, most of the Old Testament had also been made available in Mandinka.¹⁸²

The work of WEC led to the foundation of an Evangelical church. Initially the WEC missionaries had been worshipping in the mainline churches, but gradually the fellowships at the mission centres developed into a church, called 'The Gambia Evangelical Fellowship.' In 1976 a small mud brick building in Bundung was erected. In 1981 two Gambian elders were appointed: Modou Sanneh, a Jola convert from Islam and Pa Chicks da Silva.¹⁸³ A year later one of the elders, Modou Sanneh was ordained as the first pastor of the Gambia Evangelical Fellowship. That same year the church was registered. In 1990 its name was changed into the Evangelical Church of The Gambia.¹⁸⁴ Presently the church has about 250 members in nine parishes.¹⁸⁵ About one third of the membership is Gambian. The Gambian membership is concentrated in the rural areas, a result of WEC's literacy and development outreach programme. In the urban areas however, the majority of the members come from other Anglophone West African countries.¹⁸⁶ In 1999 the church had 6 pastors, five of who were Gambians. Pastor Matthias George – son of the Gambian Anglican Fr. Matthias George - was the chairman of the ECG in 1999.¹⁸⁷ Pastor Modou Sanneh, the first pastor of the ECG and its chairman for many years, resigned in 1995 and started the Evangelical Reformed Church of The Gambia in 1998.¹⁸⁸

Deeper Christian Life Ministries

The ECG is an Evangelical church, which came into being in The Gambia. Other churches came from abroad, sending missionaries to establish the congregation. Some churches, like the Seventh Day Adventist Church (1977)¹⁸⁹ and the Baptist

¹⁸² A. McLaren, *Evangelisation in the Gambia through social work*, 1. In 1993 the books of Joshua, Esther, Ruth and Jonah were completed. See *EFG Newslink* 1/3 1993, 1. Note: the translation work is done in cooperation with the United Bible Societies.

¹⁸³ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing February 1 1999.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing, February 1 1999. The reason for the change of name was the fact that it resembled too much to the name of the Evangelical Platform: the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia (see paragraph 9.5).

¹⁸⁵ Talinding, Bundung, Sibanor, Welingara, Kampant, Lamin, Nemekunko, Jarrol, Sukuta and Kanifing. Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

¹⁸⁶ The majority of the ECG members are from Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria. Nevertheless, thanks to the literacy and development work of WEC ECG also has a fair number of Gambian members, coming from Jola, Fula, Wolof and Mandinka background.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing, February 1 1999.

¹⁸⁹ www.adventistyearbook.org/view_AdmField.asp?AdmFieldID=Gambia. Date: May 16 2002. According to the website the SDA-Gambia had in May 2002 a membership of 548, divided over 3 churches, one of which is in the rural area (Farafenni). The church has one ordained pastor. Presently this is a Ghanaian, called Pastor Adjei Kwei. The SDA also has a development programme called ADRA. SDA does not participate in ecumenical activities and is neither a member of the GCC nor of the EFG.

Mission (1982)¹⁹⁰ came from Europe and America, but the most of the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches came from countries along the West Coast of Africa. The first Charismatic-Pentecostal church of the West African strand that started in The Gambia was Deeper Christian Life Ministries (DCLM). It had started in 1973 as an interdenominational Bible study group of about 15 people at the College of Education at Lagos University, Nigeria. Its founder was William Folorunso Kumuyi, a lecturer at the College of Education. Kumuyi was a member of the Apostolic Faith Church. In 1975 he was expelled because, according to his church's regulations, he was not allowed to teach or preach. A Saturday Faith Bible School and revival meetings attracted many people and the movement spread rapidly. In 1982 Sunday worship was started and the movement evolved into the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC). From Nigeria the church spread throughout the West Coast of Africa.¹⁹¹

DCLM arrived in The Gambia around 1984 when two Nigerian members of DLBC, Sr. Comfort Ette and Sr. Mercy, came to The Gambia because of work.¹⁹² The two women started a DCLM prayer fellowship in their house. Comfort Ette married a DLBC church worker Pastor Thomas Ayorinde and both developed the ministry in The Gambia. In 1999 Deeper Christian Life Ministries had home-cells in Banjul, Serekunda, Latrikunda, Esau/Barra, Brikama, Soma and Basse. The main centre of Deeper Christian Life Ministries is located in Latrikunda where about 200 people gather together for fellowship. Most of the DCLM members are Nigerians.¹⁹³

Christian Mission Fellowship

In the same period another Nigerian organisation came to The Gambia: the Christian Mission Fellowship. It started in Nigeria in 1981. In 1983/84 CMF sent John Adeniji to The Gambia as an interdenominational church worker to assist the existing Gambian churches in their outreach to non-Christians. Adeniji became a member of the Evangelical Church of The Gambia and did evangelism work in the rural villages, sponsored by CMF Nigeria. By 1991 a need for church planting was felt.¹⁹⁴ Because this implied a change of policy, different from the mandate given to John Adeniji, he was recalled to Nigeria. In the same year another missionary, Chinedou Meribole was sent out. He informed the heads of churches about the new character of CMF. He started with a small fellowship of 4 converts in Serekunda and some work at Brufut. In 1995 a church building was dedicated in London Corner, where most of the members were living. In the same period work was started in Bansang,

¹⁹⁰ www.africanculture.dk/gambia/ngo_oz.htm. Date: May 16 2002.

¹⁹¹ M.A. Ojo, 'Deeper Life Bible Church of Nigeria' in P. Gifford, *New Dimensions of African Christianity*, Sefer Ibadan 1993, 161-186. Interview with Pastor Fred Amoah, Kanifing March 8 1999.

¹⁹² Interview with Pastor Francis Forbes Jr., Serekunda January 26 1999. Note. According to Pastor Forbes DCLM had started as a fellowship before he went to university in 1983, while the present DCLM national overseer Pastor Fred Amoah gave 1984 as date of arrival. Interview with Pastor Fred Amoah, March 8 1999.

¹⁹³ Interview with Pastor Fred Amoah, Kanifing March 8 1999.

¹⁹⁴ Many converts went back to Islam when there proved to be no regular fellowship led by Adeniji or did not feel at home in the existing churches to which they were referred. Interview with Chinadou Meribole, Serekunda February 22 1999.

up river, and a school was begun in Serekunda. The CMF in The Gambia is still small, but most of the approximately 60 members are Gambian, many of them being former Catholics. Also the leadership is mostly Gambian. This enabled CMF to hand over the leadership into Gambian hands. Meribole is now involved in evangelistic work, using The Gambia as a base of operation for work in wider Senegambia region.¹⁹⁵

West Africa Mission

Another mission came from Korea. In 1987 the Korean Presbyterian Church started its work in The Gambia and it appointed Rev. Lee Jai Hwan as its missionary. The mission was called West Africa Mission (WAM) and registered with the government in 1991 as a programme for education and rural development.¹⁹⁶ Unlike most new churches, WAM opted to have its centre outside the urban area, just outside the town of Brikama. In 1988, the Canaan Youth Centre was opened, where different types of education and skill training are taught.¹⁹⁷ The Centre offers a carpentry and metal workshop, secretarial courses and a nursery school teacher-training course, which is combined with a Bible school. Most of the students come from the rural area and use the boarding facilities of the school. WAM has an impressive and well-equipped centre with a good car park. The 1998/1999 crisis in the Asian economy, however, has affected the cash flow of the West Africa Mission.

WAM strongly emphasises evangelism in the rural areas. Regular evangelism tours through the country are made and the Mandinka version of the Jesus-film is shown in the villages, followed up by discussion and further visits. Evangelism is also conducted via the nursery schools, which have been started in the rural areas, such as in Abuko.¹⁹⁸

C. Omenyo and D. Choi mention that one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of the Korean missions in West Africa is their inability to adjust to the local culture.¹⁹⁹ Partly this is true for WAM as well, because they form a relatively closed – and ethically strict – community. Nevertheless, they are members of the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia and participate in ecumenical events. Certainly not true for the Gambian situation is Omenyo and Choi's observation that the Koreans do not sufficiently speak the vernaculars. Pastor and Mrs. Lee are renown for their knowledge of Mandinka. All other Korean missionaries receive an intensive language training on arrival. The Sunday services, which are conducted at

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Chinedou Meribole, Serekunda February 22 1999. In 1999 the Gambian leaders were Paul Mendy, Peter Jatta and Sang Pierre Mendy.

¹⁹⁶ C. Omenyo and D. Choi, 'Korean missionary enterprise in West Africa 1979-1999: a preliminary study', *Exchange*, 29/3 (July 2000), 221. Note: West Africa Mission did not get registered with the government until 1991. See: www.africanculture.dk/gambia/ngo_oz.htm May 16 2002.

¹⁹⁷ According to Omenyo and Choi the Koreans sees socio-economic activities as integral aspects of their missionary work. C. Omenyo and D. Choi, 'Korean missionary enterprise', 219-220. Note: there is a Korean fish factory in Brikama called the Galilee fish factory. Korean Christians run this factory but there doesn't seem to be a relation with WAM.

¹⁹⁸ C. Omenyo and D. Choi, 'Korean missionary enterprise', 222.

¹⁹⁹ C. Omenyo and D. Choi, 'Korean missionary enterprise', 224.

Canaan, are in Mandinka. Koreans still form the leadership of WAM but attempts are made to establish an indigenous leadership.

The Church of Pentecost

In the same period as the West African Mission, also the Church of Pentecost came to The Gambia. Like Oppong-Antwi the Church of Pentecost that established itself in The Gambia was of Ghanaian origin. In 1987/88 an evangelist of the Church of Pentecost, Kwesi Ansah, was invited by YFC to hold revival meetings in Bakau. Many of the young people who participated YFC Sunday evening fellowships in Bakau, attended. A problem arose when Ansah started to re-baptise young Methodists and Anglicans. The mainline churches protested and the issue was taken up at Gambia Christian Council as well as at immigration level but no measures against Ansah were taken. Soon after the incident, he returned to Ghana. On 1988 the Church of Pentecost in Ghana sent a new missionary to The Gambia: Apostle Steven Baidou.

In its early days the Church of Pentecost met in the Brikama Car Park in Banjul. Later the members moved to Kairaba Avenue. In 1988 the Church of Pentecost was involved in another incident. It occurred in Nyofelleh and Jalangbanta, Western Division, which involved the Church of Pentecost. The Methodist Church had a fellowship in Nyofelleh and in 1983 a small mud-brick church was built. When the building collapsed in 1984 no funds were available to rebuild the structure. In 1988 the Church of Pentecost began work in the village and promised the congregation a building. Thereupon most of the congregation consisting of about 50 people, became members of the Church of Pentecost. A similar thing happened to the Methodist congregation in Jalangbanta.²⁰⁰ In Bundung the Church of Pentecost took away most of the members of the ECG Bundung Church.²⁰¹ These incidents have strained the ecumenical relations with the Church of Pentecost.²⁰²

By 1999 the Church of Pentecost was firmly established in The Gambia. The church has 27 assemblies all over the country.²⁰³ In some villages the church has started nursery schools. The membership in 1999 was 1314 baptised members of whom approximate 500 were Gambians.²⁰⁴ In 1999 the Church of Pentecost had 5

²⁰⁰ One of the reasons given for this change to the Church of Pentecost was the fact that pastor of the Church of Pentecost at the time, Pastor Alex Ajure, regularly visited the villages (about twice a week) and encouraged people to lead a Christian life. Interview with Ansumana Mendy, Brikama February 10 1999. Note: Ansumana Mendy is a Methodist from Nyofelleh! In 1995, most of the members in Nyofelleh went back to the Methodist Church.

²⁰¹ Interview with Pastor Modou Sanneh, Kanifing February 1 1999.

²⁰² Presently there is gentlemen's agreement between member churches of the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia that there will be no proselytising amongst each others members. Members that want to change churches need a letter of referral from the church they are leaving. The Church of Pentecost is a member of the EFG.

²⁰³ Among which are: Churchill's Town, Ghana Town, Kairaba, Banjul Assembly, Akan Assembly, Wolof Assembly, Lamin, Bundung, Manjaikunda, Bunkilling (near Gunjur), Jalangbantang, Sifoe, Brikama, Soma, Sitakotta, Japineh and Basse.

²⁰⁴ Note: the Church of Pentecost follows the policy of first baptizing a candidate, after which he or she is introduced to Christianity through teaching. Most of the 500 Gambian members

pastors, 3 of who were Ghanaians and 2 were Gambians. Two other Gambian pastors were in training. All four Gambian pastors are Manjago.²⁰⁵

Abiding Word Ministries

The last church that needs to be highlighted is the Abiding Word Ministries. AWM is a Charismatic church from Gambian origin, started in November 1988 by Francis Forbes Junior. According to his own saying, Forbes was born again in 1979 and soon afterwards felt called into the ministry.²⁰⁶ While studying biochemistry in Nigeria, he fellowshipped with Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and realised that the established churches in The Gambia were in need of a revival.²⁰⁷

On his return to The Gambia in 1988, Forbes started a fellowship with 8 people at the YMCA²⁰⁸ premises in Kanifing. Though they did not advertise their meetings, soon they became known and people started to join the Sunday services. In the initial days of AWM about 80 percent of the people attending were young people from the mainline churches, most of who were YFC members. This led to strong protest from the mainline churches, not in the least because Forbes himself is the son of a Methodist minister, the Rev. Francis Forbes Senior. Father and son seem to have held together in this stormy period. Forbes Jr. has continued with AWM, often seeking advice from his father.²⁰⁹

In the early years, AWM organised large evangelism tours and healing and deliverance campaigns and had a rather confrontational stance on Islam. But gradually it dawned on the leadership that evangelism without follow up was a waste of time and resources. And since there was neither the finance nor the manpower to do the follow up, from 1992 onwards the prime emphasis of ADM changed to teaching and edification of the congregation. Evangelism was still important but was now more understood as a comprehensive approach. It combines

are Manjago, though there are some Fula and Mandinka converts from Islam as well. Interview with Pastor Bidwell Mendy, Brikama February 26 1999. Mendy remarks that the conversion of Muslims to Christianity puts a burden on the congregation because the ex-Muslims are usually rejected by their families and must be maintained by the church.

²⁰⁵ Victor and Bidwell Mendy are already pastors in the Church of Pentecost, while Simon and Decenti Mendy are undergoing training in Ghana. Interview with Pastor Bidwell Mendy, Brikama February 26 1999.

²⁰⁶ Forbes dedicated his life to Christ at the second visit of the Joyful Way Singers and became a member of YFC afterwards. Also in his later years he continued the good relationship with YFC and many of his initial members came via YFC. Interview with Pastor Matthias George, Kanifing January 27 1999; Interview with Pastor Francis Forbes, Serekunda January 26 1999; S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, a research paper for The School of Theology and Mission, Central University College, Accra Ghana, 1997, 3.

²⁰⁷ Forbes mentions the lifestyle of the members of the mainline churches (drinking, extra marital affairs, in-house fighting etc) as reasons for the need of a revival. Interview with Pastor Francis Forbes, Serekunda January 26 1999.

²⁰⁸ The YMCA came to The Gambia in 1975 and the YWCA was established in 1988. Both are engaged in skill training and development work. www.africanculture.dk/gambia/ngo-oz.htm. Date May 12 2002.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Pastor Francis Forbes, Serekunda January 26 1999; Interview with Rev. Francis Forbes, Banjul March 16 1999.

a spiritual message with development of the nation and seeks to witness by the moral example of the members. Forbes outspoken views on societal issues, weekly to be heard on TV and the FM radio stations, are part of this comprehensive evangelism view.²¹⁰

Forbes has indicated the importance of the guidance of the Ghanaian Dr. Mensah Ottabil of the International Central Gospel Church²¹¹ to AWM. Ottabil's statement that when seed is growing it doesn't make noise, became a leading principle for the later years, in which AWM – according to Forbes' own statements – gradually matured. Echoes of Ottabil's 'black consciousness teachings' can be heard in the preaching of AWM pastors.²¹² Ottabil has visited AWM on various occasions and AWM pastors have been sent for training to Ottabil's School of Theology and Mission, Central University College in Accra, Ghana. Despite Ottabil's influence on Pastor Forbes, AWM is in many ways a European oriented church: the music and instruments used in the church come from Europe and the worship is in English, rather than in the vernacular. The majority of the members of AWM (about 300 in total) are non-Gambians, mainly Sierra Leoneans, Ghanaians and Nigerians. The church leadership, however, is for about 75 percent Gambian and attempts are made to increase this.

The success of the new churches and the relations with the mainline churches

The above survey of new churches in The Gambia is by no means complete. Especially during the 1990s many churches, AIC's, Pentecostal, evangelical and mainline churches have established themselves in The Gambia. The names of the Assemblies of God, the Good Seed Mission, the Apostolic Faith Church, the Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Living Faith Bible Church, the Victory Church, the Light House Christian Fellowship Church, the Redeemed Church of Christ and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in The Gambia could be added to the list. Most of these groups are relatively small and have a membership, which is mainly non-Gambian.

An important and influential para-church organisation that needs to be mentioned is the Banjul Bible Training Centre, established by Rev. Bert Farias in The Gambia in 1994. In 1998 it was handed over to Gambians. In 1999 the Director was the Rev. Alieu Bayo.²¹³ The Banjul Bible Training Centre offers a one-year Bible courses of a Pentecostal blend. The school meets every Saturday for classes. The BBTC is especially influential in the mainline churches, because many members of the Methodist Church and Anglican Church attend the Bible School and bring back Pentecostal spirituality to their churches.

There are various reasons why this new type of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has attracted so many people, especially young persons. P. Gifford

²¹⁰ Since 1998 Forbes has a weekly half hour programme on the TV, in which he comments on societal issues.

²¹¹ For information on Mensah Ottabil see P. Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role*, 79ff.

²¹² Interview with William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999.

²¹³ S.W. Jabang, *Emergence and establishment of Pentecostal/charismatic churches in The Gambia*, 3.

distinguishes at least four.²¹⁴ Firstly, he observes that leadership positions in the mainline churches are reserved for the older generation. These newer churches on the contrary, create space for young people to exercise responsibility. Secondly, the newer churches address issues that preoccupy the youth, such as marriage: the church is a place where a potential marriage partner may be met. Also the type of music played in the church – though of a western type – appeals to the younger generation; it is participatory and is often quite professionally performed. Thirdly the churches make use of the media and technology, which attract young people. Fourthly there are socio-economic factors which draw people to the newer churches, which proclaim a faith gospel. Gifford defines the Faith Gospel as:

According to the Faith gospel, God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith.²¹⁵

A Gambian pastor has suggested that the ideas of the Faith Gospel link up with the African spirituality according to which suffering is caused by offending the ancestors and the spiritual world at large. Well-being on the contrary is caused by harmony with the spiritual world. A good spiritual life therefore will give birth to all kind of blessings.²¹⁶ The extensive ministries of the Faith Gospel also generate economic activities. Its programmes boast people's self-confidence to undertake new initiatives.

For The Gambian situation the style of worship and the space for participation during the service have certainly led to the growth of these churches. The responsibility given to young people has also appealed to many. It has led to a relatively large percentage of indigenous – and young – pastors among the new churches. Attention for the fact that illness, misfortune and poverty might not only have material but spiritual dimensions as well, might well have tuned in with the African traditional spirituality. More research into this area is necessary.

All these aspects, which have led to the growth of the Charismatic-Pentecostal Churches, can now also be seen – in a more moderate form – in the mainline Protestant churches. In that regard the mainline churches have learned from the challenge the Charismatic-Pentecostal Churches have posed to them.

It is clear that many of the members of the new churches are non-Gambians and many of the Gambian members were Christians of the mainline churches, mainly Catholics, before they joined the new Charismatic churches. In that sense the new wave of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches has hardly contributed to the growth of Christianity in The Gambia.²¹⁷ This noted, it should be said that the Pentecostal Charismatic wave has contributed to the splintering of Christianity into a

²¹⁴ P. Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role*, 88ff.

²¹⁵ P. Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role*, 39.

²¹⁶ Interview with William Jabang, Banjul January 1 1999.

²¹⁷ IC/IF subcommittee meeting minutes June 11 1994. A letter addressing this issue was added as appendix to the minutes.

large number of denominations. In a country where Christianity forms such a small minority, this large diversification is a hindrance to the Church's united witness to society and the Muslim community.²¹⁸ Another point of critic is the contextualisation issue. Possibly due to the large number of expatriates in these churches, little attention is given to the contextualisation of the gospel message in the Gambian setting. Neither music, nor liturgy, nor language is Gambian. The Gambian element is mainly represented in - and restricted to - the participation of Gambians in the leadership.²¹⁹

9.6 The formation of the Gambia Christian Council

General Background

By the 1960s it had become clear that the Christian community would remain a small minority in a predominantly Muslim society, even though it was numerically still slowly growing. It was also evident that this small community, if able to play any role in public, would have to speak with a united voice.²²⁰ Thus slowly the need for ecumenism dawned on the churches in The Gambia. This growing awareness gained momentum with the Second Vatican Council where ecumenism was one of the major themes. In The Gambia its impact was immediate. On March 21 1966 one of the most important events in the 20th century history of Christianity in The Gambia took place: the founding of the Gambia Christian Council. The Council included not just the two main Protestant churches but also the Roman Catholic Church.²²¹

The decision to establish a Christian Council indicated a major shift in the thinking of the churches. In the past the churches had mainly seen each other as competitors. In the 1920s the Roman Catholic Church still saw stemming the advance of Methodism as its primary aim and more important than 'the conversion of the

²¹⁸ Some remarks about the newer churches and Islam are made in paragraph 9.7.

²¹⁹ S.W. Jabang, *A comparative study on the Ghanaian Pentecostal concept and practice of deliverance versus the Gambian experience*, a thesis submitted to the School of Theology and Mission, Central University College, Accra Ghana February 1998, 28.

²²⁰ T.O. Olufosoye, *Bishop's charge: report on the proceedings of the 7th and 8th sessions of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas (St. Francis chapel, Gambia and All Saints Church Conakry, 1965, 1966*, Red File Box no. 7, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court, Banjul.

²²¹ The Roman Catholic Church has participated from the start as a full member. The reason for this was that in a situation like the Gambia, a Christian Council would not be credible if the Roman Catholic Church, presently representing more than 75 percent of the Christians in the country, would not participate. The initiative to establish the Council seems to have been carried widely. A Roman Catholic source states that Bishop Moloney after he came back from the Second Vatican Council, initiated talks about founding a Christian Council. See Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing March 5 1999). Other sources seem to point to Bishop Olufosoye of the Anglican Church as the prime mover. See: T.O. Olufosoye, *Bishop's charge: report on the proceedings of the 7th and 8th sessions of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas (St. Francis chapel, Gambia and All Saints Church Conakry, 1965,1966*, Red File Box no. 7, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court, Banjul.

blacks.²²² In the late 1930s relations between the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church, at one time quite cordial, had become strained. The Anglican Bishop Daly had 'made it abundantly plain (...) that he can have no dealings with 'Chapel People'²²³ and the Methodist Synod of 1936 stated: 'We view with considerable misgiving the establishment of an Anglo-Catholic Church on the foundation of what was a low Anglican Church in this place.'²²⁴

There had also been undercurrents of a different nature. As early as 1943 the Methodist Synod expressed the wish for a Christian Council. The letter to the Missionary Committee in London states: '...we feel the need for a Christian Council to which we could refer our problems, from which we could receive guidance, and by which a more effective representation could be made to Government.'²²⁵ At the grassroots level ecumenism had been a reality of every day life. People had been taught that few things were worse for a Methodist than to participate in a Roman Catholic mass or for a Roman Catholic to enter a Methodist chapel. Nevertheless, people of different denominations, and even different religions, participated in marriages, funerals and name-giving ceremonies.²²⁶ Standing outside, on the steps of the church building, listening to the service going on, the man in the street practised ecumenism without trespassing the prescribed boundaries. Thus, they indicated that solidarity within the community and personal relationships were more important than the prescribed church policy.

On other occasions this silent form of ecumenism took place as well. The Good Friday Procession of Witness became an ecumenical event long before the GCC took over the initiative.²²⁷ The Saint Mary Procession of August 15, though Roman Catholic in origin gradually became a happening in which many non-Roman Catholics,

²²² J. Meehan, *Report Juin 1916-Juillet 1921*, Addition to Journal III, Journal de Sante Marie de Bathurst 1894-1923 Reference 4i2.3 (literally: d'empêcher le protestantisme qui nous a devancé dans cette colonie, de triompher sur le catholicisme). About Meehan, who wrote the above report, the following (apocryphal) story is told: Towards the end of his life Meehan was in need of day and night attendance of a nurse. While literally on his deathbed Meehan discovered one night that the nurse on duty was a Methodist. The story says that Meehan got out of his bed, called the superior and said: 'Get this heretic out of my room.' Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Kanifing, March 5 1999

²²³ Synod 1937, Box 248 H2708 mf. 439.

²²⁴ Synod 1936, Box 247/48 H2709 mf. 438.

²²⁵ Synod 1943, Box 254 H2708 mf. 446.

²²⁶ Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, Banjul March 10 1999; Interview with Mr. Thomas Senghore, Banjul March 10 1999.

²²⁷ The origin of the Good Friday Procession is unclear. According to Dr. F. Mahoney Bishop John Daly started the Procession of Witness as an Anglican event on Good Friday. Personal communication of Dr. F. Mahoney, March 2003. According to Ms. Mary Jallow a teacher of the Methodist Boys High School, Mr. Robert Mules, started the Procession. Mules worked as a missionary for the Methodist Church in the 1940s. Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, Banjul March 10 1999. Prickett states that the Procession of Witness was first held in Bakau at a Youth Rally in 1940. B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 204. After the foundation of the GCC, the GCC took over the organisation of the Procession of Witness. During the procession hymns are sung, passages from scripture are read and short addresses are preached in the streets of Banjul. The vernacular is used during the singing and preaching. During the late 1990s the initiative has also been extended to other areas such as Serekunda and Brikama.

including Muslims, participated.²²⁸ Since time immemorial Anglicans and Methodists had had a practice of fellowshipping in each others churches on Christmas- and New Years Eve: Methodists flock to the Anglican Church on Christmas Eve in large numbers and Anglicans join the Methodists for the New Year's Eve service. In the early 1930s tentative plans to merge the Anglican and Methodist Churches into one Protestant Church stranded in the appointment of John Daly, a high churchman, as Anglican bishop of The Gambia.²²⁹ For a while in the 1940s there was a joint Methodist-Anglican Church in Lamin but the experiment was stopped after a year as being too ambitious.²³⁰ Also the trading community chapels in Basse, Kuntaur, Mansakonko and Ballanghar were ecumenical in character. In educational matters ecumenical co-operation was achieved as well. Some of this co-operation was enforced by the government, as in the case of the amalgamation of the Protestant Primary Schools in the 1940s²³¹ while on other occasions the churches took the initiative themselves. An example was the School of Science. This school, started in 1947, served all the Christian Schools with regard to science education and was governed by a Board of Management consisting of government officials and representatives of the three churches.²³²

The united presentation of the churches to the Government and a united stand in public affairs were among the initial aims of the GCC as stated in 1966. The Anglican Bishop Olufosoye, acting as the General Secretary, formulated them as:

1. to provide a body through which the Christian Church as a whole can speak on occasions with a united voice on the matters of public concern
2. to provide a stimulus for that deep creative thinking that in these days of transition is so great a need
3. to initiate and carry out through definite projects which can be best undertaken co-operatively²³³

Though initially relations were still strained due to the past years of competition and mutual suspicion, gradually the climate changed for the better and cordiality, openness and co-operation grew.²³⁴ No doubt the joint representations to the government in political, social and educational acts contributed in binding the churches together.

²²⁸ Interview with Ms. Acy Peters, Kanifing January 26 1999; Interview with Ms. Mary Jallow, Banjul March 10 1999. Another Roman Catholic event, which gradually has taken on an ecumenical character, was the Kunkujang Mariama pilgrimage on the first Saturday of December.

²²⁹ Synod 1936, Box 247/48 H2709 mf. 438. 'For some time now we have felt that the ideal for Gambia would be one Protestant Church but such a hope for the future is now gone.'

²³⁰ B. Prickett, *Island Base*, 210.

²³¹ For example the amalgamation of Methodist and Anglican Primary Schools in the 1940s, Synod 1945/46, Box 256 H2708 mf. 449.

²³² Entry January 23 1947, Journal de Sante Marie de Bathurst IV 1924-1958, Reference 4i2.4.

²³³ T.O. Olufosoye, *Bishop's charge: report on the proceedings of the 7th and 8th sessions of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas (St. Francis chapel, Gambia and All Saints Church Conakry, 1965,1966*, Red File Box no. 7, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court, Banjul.

²³⁴ Interview with Fr. Robert Ellison, Vol. II, March 5 1999.

The work of the GCC

The emphasis in the work of the Christian Council can be divided into three different phases. First of all there was the period of establishing relationships and promoting co-operation between the mainline churches. Joint seminars and workshops to promote ecumenism and fellowship and the GCC joint development projects were among the main activities in this period. It was also the time that the GCC clearly profiled itself as the voice of the Christian community in public matters. This inter-church emphasis has not stopped but still continues as one of the primary aims of the Council. In the 1980s a second accent was added by emphasising the importance of good relationships with Muslims. A full time adviser for Christian Muslim relations was appointed and attached to the inter-church/inter-faith subcommittee to implement this priority. In the 1990s a third topic demanded attention. The establishment of and the relationship with Evangelical and Pentecostal churches became a priority on the GCC agenda. The question was raised how to create a structure on which the churches could meet and co-operate in order to be able to speak with a united Christian voice. All three areas are still receiving attention in the Gambia Christian Council programmes and are discussed below in chronological order.

Much of the work of the GCC has consisted of the organisation of seminars and programmes for its members and the co-ordination of joint development projects. The GCC was and still is actively involved in programmes to increase awareness and knowledge within the Christian community. The Christian radio and TV programmes, which are co-ordinated by the GCC, are part of this programme. They have the double function of strengthening the Christian community and explaining the Christian faith to non-Christians.²³⁵ Of the subcommittees, the Interchurch/Interfaith Subcommittee and the Women's Affairs and Family Life Subcommittee are among the most active in this field. The Women's Affairs and Family Subcommittee celebrated the Women's Decade with a Counselling Project, while the Interchurch/Interfaith Subcommittee has organised workshops, seminars and courses on ecumenical and interreligious topics.²³⁶

The Dissolution of Marriage Act: Protest against the government

Chronologically speaking, one of the first acts of the GCC after its inception was a strong public protest in 1967 against the Dissolution of Marriage, Special Circumstances Act of 1967. This act provided that

in cases where a monogamous (not necessarily Christian) marriage has taken place (see Caps 119 and 120 of the laws of The Gambia) and where since the marriage one of the partners (and not the other) has been converted to a religion recognising polygamy, the marriage may be dissolved. One of the partners thus loses certain rights because of a change in beliefs of the other partner or (equally) because of failure to move in matters of belief along with the other partner.²³⁷

²³⁵ Contact with Radio Gambia date back to 1981. GCC minutes, November 27 1981.

²³⁶ GCC minutes, March 17 1989.

²³⁷ Gambia District Newsletter, Methodist Church no. 15 1967, 1, Red Box (no number), File Marriage, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

The Act was tailor made for the situation of the sitting President Dawda Jawara. In 1955 he had married Augusta Mahoney, an Anglican woman from a prominent Christian family in 1955 and had converted to Christianity to do so. About ten years later he wanted to marry a second, Muslim wife but could not do so because of his Christian, monogamous marriage. Rumours stated that Jawara thereupon reverted to Islam and therewith declared his Christian marriage invalidated. This was legalised by the above-mentioned act. Despite the political sensitivity of the issue the GCC leadership strongly and publicly protested. In an open letter, the GCC stated that there would appear to be no widespread situation in the country, which needed this type of legislation to regularise it, and pointed out that the Act had discriminatory implications for the Christian partner.²³⁸ Though the protest did not result in the withdrawal of the Dissolution of Marriage Act, it was one of the first public and political actions of the GCC.²³⁹

Also in later years the Christian Council spoke out in public both on social issues like education and on politically sensitive topics. After the 1994 *coup d'état* the GCC took a strong stance with regard to the violation of human rights, more especially the treatment of political prisoners and the restriction of freedom of speech. They pleaded for free elections during the military regime, made comments on the reinstatement of the death penalty²⁴⁰ and proposed amendments to the new constitution of the Second Republic.²⁴¹ This stance of the GCC to address political issues in recent times has been partly the result of a very active Justice and Peace Committee. The Committee was initiated in 1992/1993 by Fr. Tony Burne who, at the invitation of the GCC, came to The Gambia to organise Justice and Peace workshops.²⁴² Also on personal title, the heads of churches, aware of the prophetic task of the church in society, have showed themselves politically alert and vocal in the 1990s. The Roman Catholic Bishop Cleary addressed the sensitive issue of corruption in the government at the Kunkujang Mariama Pilgrimage of 1993, which made the headlines of the papers for days. During the transition period from a military regime to the Second Republic all three heads of the mainline churches took on political appointments to see to fair elections.

Development work

The GCC not only addressed public and social topics in words, but also became concretely involved in societal issues through development and relief work. Project proposals of individual churches were submitted to donors and funded via the GCC. After the 1981 attempted *coup d'état* the GCC acted as a channel for funds to rebuild

²³⁸ Letter of July 1967 of the Christian Council Petition re proposed Dissolution of Marriage (Special Circumstances) Act 1967, Red Box (no number), File on marriage, Anglican Archives Bishop's Court, Banjul.

²³⁹ The law has since been repealed.

²⁴⁰ GCC minutes, December 1 1995.

²⁴¹ *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 20 no. 6 (June 1996), 4.

²⁴² GCC minutes, March 13 1992 and June 4 1993; Interview with Ms. Acy Peters, Kanifing January 26 1999. The Justice and Peace Committee produced a Justice and Peace Handbook, which addresses social political issues in the Gambian situation and has been used in Religious Education in the secondary schools. The handbook is available at the Gambia Christian Council Secretariat.

the society.²⁴³ The GCC received funds from the WCC Sahel programme for rural development, while in 1986 donations from the WCC Emergency programme aided the rebuilding of Banjul's main market, which had been destroyed by fire.²⁴⁴ In 1992 a similar aid action was organised for the victims of the fire in Serekunda market.²⁴⁵ Large amounts of money were also received for the refugee programme²⁴⁶ and for income generating projects.²⁴⁷ Because of the increase of the amount of money and of the administrative work in the development wing of the GCC, the Council in 1987 decided to engage Mr. John Cardos as Project Co-ordinator. In later years John Daliah succeeded Cardos. Among the programmes co-ordinated were the Methodist Mission Agricultural Project, the Caritas well-digging project, the Anglican Training Centre and Farm in Farafenni, the Anglican Relief and Refugee programme²⁴⁸ and two women's projects that fell directly under the GCC.²⁴⁹ When the appointment of the co-ordinator was terminated in 1993, the post remained vacant due to financial constraints.²⁵⁰ The loss of the project officer has resulted in a gradual decline of the GCC's involvement in development and relief work. The running projects came directly under the supervision of the individual churches and thus slowly hollowed out the work of the GCC Development and Outreach subcommittee. With large WCC funds for a project received and no one but volunteers to execute it, most of the GCC co-ordinated development work seems to have become dormant.

Christian Muslim Relations

The theme of Christian Muslim relations had been discussed in the GCC since its inception. There had always been a good rapport between Christians and Muslims at the

²⁴³ Some examples for the 1980s: In 1981 a gift of 5000 US dollars was received from WCC for the reconstruction and rehabilitation which was paid in instalments to the Gambia Red Cross (GCC minutes, September 25 1981 and January 28 1982). In 1984 the MMAP received funding (no amount mentioned) through GCC (GCC Minutes, June 29 1984), 8 million CFA were received from WCC Sahel team for draught relief (GCC minutes August 27 1984), 2000 US dollars from ECLOF to cover the GCC administrative costs (GCC minutes, January 23 1985). In 1985 the GCC received D25.000 from the WCC Sahel programme (GCC Minutes, March 22 1985), 65.000 US dollars from NCCUS for drugs (GCC minutes, May 31 1985), D49.000 from WCC for food-aid (GCC minutes, May 31 1985) and D350.000 for the running projects within the various churches (GCC minutes, May 31 1985). In June 1986 the GCC contributed D100.000 to rebuild Albert Market which had been destroyed by fire and another D300.000 were given for aid to the victims (GCC minutes, June 13 1986). Later that year another 3 million German marks, received from the Bread for the World programme were offered to the ministry of health (GCC minutes, September 20 1986).

²⁴⁴ GCC minutes, June 13 1986.

²⁴⁵ GCC minutes, September 4 1992.

²⁴⁶ GCC minutes, September 6 1991.

²⁴⁷ GCC minutes, September 13 1996.

²⁴⁸ The Anglican Church has co-operated with the UNHCR in relief and refugee programmes for Liberians, people from Casamance and more recently also Sierra Leoneans. Minutes GCC, September 6 1991.

²⁴⁹ GCC minutes, September 25 1987. Two women's projects, the Nyakoi Women's Development Project and the Jenoi Women's Garden Project, were directly under the GCC.

²⁵⁰ GCC minutes, September 3 1993 and March 8 1996; Interview with Ms. Acy Peters, Kanifing January 26 1999.

grassroots level. Regardless of religion, people worked together at the community level, were colleagues at work, fellow students at school, neighbours and friends. They shared life's ups and downs and religious festivities such as Christmas, Id al-Adha and Id al-Fitr were celebrated with family and friends, regardless religious affiliation. Only very few Christian families had no Muslim relatives. In that sense the dialogue of life had been going on for centuries. But the Anglican Bishop Olufosoye, coming from Nigeria where the relations between Christians and Muslims were much more strained, created the awareness among the GCC members that cordial relations were not a given fact, but needed to be worked at. In 1966/67 he contacted the Islam in Africa Project (IAP),²⁵¹ which resulted in a visit from the General Advisor of IAP John Crossley in October 1967, followed by a workshop in 1968.²⁵²

The issue continued to be discussed – the Anglican Bishop Elisée made a request for a missionary with special knowledge of Islam in 1978²⁵³ – but no real steps were taken until the attempted *coup d'état* of 1981. In that year the theme of Christian Muslim Relations was put anew on the agenda of the Gambia Christian Council by the WCC, which had sent funds for 'national reconstruction' on the condition that the money was to be spent in collaboration with the Muslim community.²⁵⁴ Several meetings with representatives of the Muslim community took place, but after an initial positive response, but the co-operation did not consolidate.²⁵⁵ This made the Christian

²⁵¹ T.O. Olufosoye, *From the Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas*, 1967 (? No date mentioned), Red File Box no. 12, Diocesan Historical Records File, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁵² *Report from John Crossley*, 1969, IAP File, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul. Crossley, an outsider, wrote an interesting evaluation of the situation in The Gambia. He states: 'A pessimist could say that the state of the Churches is desperate. There are a good many instances of Muslims who had been baptised, reverting to Islam again. There are some instances of 'born Christians', becoming Muslims through social pressure or for rather casual reasons. The younger generation of Aku (Creoles) more and more use Wolof as their everyday language, so becoming increasingly remote from the traditional Church worship in English. There are the moral problems of the Church and the loss of potential leadership, experienced equally in secular society where many of the best emigrate. Nevertheless this area has a positive significance for the whole Christian witness in West Africa. Here a long established and well-educated church lives in generally cordial relationship with Muslims. At least some Muslims are ready for an extremely open kind of dialogue...' Note: The Islam in Africa project was started in 1959 to aid churches and Councils of Churches in their study of Islam, their theological reflection of Islam and their relations with Muslims. In the early 1990s the Islam in Africa project was renamed the Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA). PROCMURA works in about 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. See: J. Haafkens, 'Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa' in J.P. Rajashekar, *Christian-Muslim relations in Eastern Africa: report of a seminar/workshop sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa*, Lutheran World Federation, Geneva 1988, 5-7.

²⁵³ Hillman to Elisée, London January 27 1978, IAP file, Anglican Archives, Bishop's Court Banjul.

²⁵⁴ R. Ellison, 'Christian Muslim Relations', in *Syllabus Islamic Studies*, Basic Course, GCC 1997, 72.

²⁵⁵ GCC minutes, October 2 1981, January 28 1982; R. Ellison, 'Christian Muslim Relations', in *Syllabus Islamic Studies*, Basic Course, GCC 1997, 72.

leadership aware that maybe, beneath the superficial level of cordial relationships, there was another layer: one of deep-seated mutual suspicion and fear.

In 1983 this resulted in an application for membership with the Islam in Africa Project.²⁵⁶ In January 1987 the GCC appointed a full-time staff worker in the area of Christian Muslim relations. The Rev. Cokkie van 't Leven²⁵⁷, a minister of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, served as an area adviser for Christian Muslim Relations in The Gambia until 1992.²⁵⁸ She was attached to the Inter-church/Inter-faith subcommittee and at the same time maintained a link with the Islam in Africa Project at the continental level. The work of the area adviser consisted in sensitising the Christian community to the need of Christian Muslim relations and in organising joint workshops, seminars and activities with the Muslim community, guided and aided by the subcommittee. The visit of Pope John Paul II in 1992 contributed greatly to both areas. The Muslim community was involved in the programme and the Pope visited some of the Muslim leaders. In one of his addresses he stated:

The Catholic Church everywhere, as also here in The Gambia, welcomes opportunities for Christians and Muslims to know each other better, to share with each other their reverence for God, and to co-operate in serving the human family. Catholics rejoice in the religious freedom which marks your society, and which makes it possible for the majority Muslim community and the Christian community to live together in respect and accord. Like the Patriarch Abraham, we are all pilgrims on the path of seeking to do God's will in everything. Although we differ in many ways, there are important elements in our respective faiths which can serve as a basis for fruitful dialogue and a strengthening of the spirit of tolerance and mutual help.²⁵⁹

Later that same year Cardinal Francis Arinze, as the Pope's special envoy, came to The Gambia to thank the people and especially the Muslim community for their hospitality. On that occasion he again met with Muslim leaders.²⁶⁰

These two visits made a deep impression on the two communities and helped to create awareness that the relations needed to be deepened. Both on the Muslim- and on the Christian side however, a suspicion and fear of a real encounter continues to exist. Several attempts to establish long-term contacts between a group of Muslims and a group of Christians have failed.²⁶¹ Many of the Muslim elders have

²⁵⁶ GCC minutes, February 25 1983.

²⁵⁷ Rev. Cokkie van 't Leven was succeeded by the Rev. Martha Frederiks in 1993. In 1999 Sr. Catherine Jarra, a Gambian Cluny Sister who had been sent for training in the area of Christian Muslim Relations, took over from Frederiks. Jarra wrote both her B.A. and her M.A. thesis on CMR. C.M. Jarra, *Interreligious Dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the Gambia*, Rome 1993/4 and C.M. Jarra, *Christian Muslim relations: its educational and pastoral implications in The Gambia*, Rome 1996/97.

²⁵⁸ Her church required that she be attached to a Gambian Church. The Methodist Church agreed to host her for her period of service in The Gambia.

²⁵⁹ *GPI Newsletter, Special Edition*, February 1992, 3.

²⁶⁰ *GPI Newsletter*, Vol. 16 no. 5 (May 1992), 16.

²⁶¹ The experiment of 'Building bridges of friendship', which consisted of monthly meetings between some Muslims and Christians around a certain theme, had to be discontinued after about a year because only two Muslim leaders continued coming. Interview Fr. R. Ellison, March 4 1999 Kanifing and *Area report of The Gambia to the Procmura General Council*

seen and experienced that Christian education was a way of influencing young Muslims to become Christians. For that reason they distrust dialogue as yet another method of proselytism.²⁶² The majority of them do not want to be involved with the Christian community.²⁶³ Many Christians, looking at past experiences, consider dialogue to be a waste of time. The willingness of the Muslim community to engage in a true dialogue in order to nurture the existing relationships is questioned openly.²⁶⁴ 'They do not want it', became the slogan for years. Others Christians do not feel confident enough in the knowledge of their own faith to engage in a religious conversation. There are also Christians who feel threatened by the Muslim community in their existence as Christians. They have the feeling that Muslims are receiving more educational and job opportunities and that Christian girls are 'taken away into marriage' by Muslim families.²⁶⁵ Another factor that proves a hindrance to the deepening of the present peaceful coexistence is the growing influence of exclusivist groups within Islam and Christianity. Muslims who have studied in the Middle East or Northern Africa tend to return to The Gambia with a less tolerant view on the co-existence with Christians. Within Christianity several Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, many coming from other countries along the West Coast, have an aggressive evangelisation approach to Muslims, thus forming a potential threat to the present harmonious relationships.²⁶⁶ It is in this field that both the Islamic community and the Church still have work to do in their own backyard.

Ecumenicals and Evangelicals

The topic of the influx of small Evangelical and Pentecostal groups has been on the agenda of the Christian Council for the last 15 years. The main reason for this has been that the government has consulted the GCC for advice with regard to the registration of new Christian groups. The GCC, consisting of the three mainline churches and some associate members of whom the Baptist Mission is the most regular attendant, has always felt it difficult to give a positive or negative recommendation. A negative advice might be interpreted as violation of the freedom of religion in the country, whereas a positive advice would lead to a large influx of small Christian groups, that might disturb the harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims. In June 1994, the IC/IF

Meeting, Lome September 17-23 1995. The PROCMURA women's wing encountered the same problem: gradually the Muslim women stayed away. Social pressure was suspected.

²⁶² C.M. Jarra, *Interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in The Gambia*, 46ff.

²⁶³ R. Ellison, 'Christian Muslim Relations', in *Syllabus Islamic Studies*, Basic Course, GCC 1997, 73.

²⁶⁴ Relationships were also influenced by a growing number of Muslim leaders, trained in the Middle East or North Africa, who did not care for the existing climate of tolerance and harmonious relationships between Christians and Muslims and who questioned the rights and privileges given to the Christian community.

²⁶⁵ Interview with R. Ellison, Kanifing March 9 1999; M.C. Jarra, *Interreligious dialogue between Muslims and Christians in The Gambia*, 30. Note: the issue of Christian Muslim marriage has been a long-term topic of PROCMURA. In 1993 (reprinted in 1997) a guideline for pastors on Christian Muslim marriage was published: PROCMURA, *Christian Muslim marriages: what you need to know*, Olyseyi Press, Ibadan 1997.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Ms. Acy Peters, Kanifing January 26 1999.

subcommittee, which was given the responsibility to advise the GCC on these issues wrote a letter to the GCC stating:

For the last twenty years Christian churches and other groups have been trying to live out in The Gambia an understanding of evangelisation that respects the Islamic faith. From our experience we feel that the potential for further church growth in The Gambia is limited. In The Gambia there already is a great variety of churches and ministries which expresses Christian faith. Several new groups and ministries have come from areas (e.g. Nigeria) where there is a different perception of relating to Muslims. Their perception could hinder them from appreciating the delicate balance that exists within The Gambia between interfaith dialogue and proclamation of the Word. With the best of intentions their zealous approach to proclaiming the Word could have serious repercussions for the maintenance of the peace and respect between Christians and Muslims in The Gambia. The ever-growing multiplicity of Christian groups in The Gambia serves as a counterwitness to our proclamation of Christ. In the light of these comments we are very concerned about the growing number of Christian groups wanting to exercise a Christian ministry in this country. Given the small potential of church growth, it is likely – and indeed does exist – that these new groups target Christians of established denominations. This is a disturbing practice and in contradiction to article number four of the Gambia Christian Council Constitution.²⁶⁷

In the second half of the 1990s the need for a platform at which members of the Gambia Christian Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia could meet to discuss issues and exchange information has become more pertinent. Especially the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical churches has been strained, because the two groups have had and still have problems recognising each other's integrity and validity as a church. The Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches often see Roman Catholics as objects of evangelism, which has made interdenominational contacts extremely difficult.

In 1997 the need for a platform gained momentum when on the feast of Id al-Fitr an incident occurred between members of the Omega Church of the Evangelical Church of The Gambia and the neighbouring mosque at Kairaba Avenue. Omega Church members had been meeting for Sunday morning worship while at the same time Muslims were meeting in the mosque next door for the Id-prayers. Feeling disturbed by the music at Omega Church, Muslims started throwing stones at the church and part of the property was destroyed. Intervention of the army restored the peace but also resulted in the arrest of several leaders of the Omega Church. The leaders were released from prison after the mediation of the heads of churches of the mainline churches. Also two of the evangelical church leaders, Pastor Francis Forbes and Pastor Matthias George, played a crucial role. The incident has emphasised the need for one Christian umbrella group, which could act as a representative for the whole of the Christian community towards the government. It has stressed also the necessity for a platform on which the GCC and EFG churches could meet to discuss. Though meetings between pastors of the various churches have taken place and correspondence has been sent between the EFG and the GCC

²⁶⁷ IC/IF subcommittee meeting minutes June 11 1994. Letter was added as appendix to the minutes.

about this issue, though in 1999 it had not yet come to an ecumenical platform uniting both mainline-, Pentecostal- and Evangelical Churches.

9.7 The Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia

The Gambia Christian Council brings together the established mainline churches in an ecumenical platform. But there is another ecumenical platform in The Gambia: the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia. The EFG is a podium where evangelically minded churches and ministries work together, seek counsel, exchange views and pray together with regard to the evangelisation of The Gambia. All churches mentioned in paragraph 9.5 are members of the EFG. The Methodist Church and the Anglican Church have a membership with both the GCC and the EFG and function as liaison between the two platforms. Apart from churches, also a number of para-church organisations are members of the EFG. Among them are Scripture Union, Campus Crusade, Pan African Christian Women's Association, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Youth for Christ, World Evangelism for Christ, the United Bible Society and the Baptist Union. Several newly established churches and para-church organisations have approached the EFG for membership and their applications are taken into consideration. Nowadays also in EFG circles the question is raised whether the establishment of more churches in The Gambia is not detrimental to the united witness of the Christian community.

The EFG constitution formulates the purpose of EFG as:

To serve Christ through the Christian denominations and organisations by:

- a. providing spiritual fellowship among evangelical Christians that profess the same faith
- b. providing a means of contact and co-operation with other Evangelical groups throughout the world
- c. promoting evangelism by encouraging Christian denominations and organisations to mobilize their membership for continuous witness and total outreach
- d. promoting and strengthening the spiritual life and ministry of Christian denominations and organisations
- e. assisting one another by rendering special services or channelling emergency relief
- f. providing representation before government or other agencies when necessary²⁶⁸

The EFG started in 1976 as a small group of Christian leaders from WEC, Scripture Union, the Methodist and Anglican Church, meeting to discuss, pray and plan the visits of Christians who came to minister in The Gambia on an interdenominational basis. Among the things planned by this group was the visit of the Rev. J. Stott and the Joyful Way Singers. Youth For Christ, The Gambia started as a result of these visits. Also other visits like that of Calvary Production Ministries in 1979 and that of the Operation Mobilisation ship 'Doulos' in 1986 were co-ordinated by the group.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Constitution of the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia.

²⁶⁹ A. Kelland, 'How it all began', a paper on the history of the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia, no date (around 1993).

Gradually the committee developed from a planning committee into a group that met on a regular basis for mutual sharing and praying, seeking ways to evangelise The Gambia and revive Christianity. The group became known as the Evangelical Outreach Committee. This committee brought together a large spectrum of churches and para-church organisations with a more or less evangelical outlook and theology. In 1991, the name Evangelical Outreach Committee was changed into Evangelic Fellowship of The Gambia and in July 1993 the EFG registered with the government. In that same year it applied for membership with the Association of Evangelicals in Africa.²⁷⁰ In 1993 the EFG had 15 full members and 2 associate members.

The EFG has primarily served as a platform for exchange of information and as a prayer fellowship. Occasionally seminars on topics like evangelism, tribal missions, prayers chains etc. have been organised. Among the larger activities of the EFG were a four-day conference on Islam in November 1992, an evangelisation campaign of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in February 1995 and a Reinhardt Boncke campaign in 1998.²⁷¹ The spirituality of EFG is that of the AD 2000 movement, 'reaching the unreached for Christ'. Every year the EFG organises the so-called March for Jesus, a witnessing procession in which banners proclaiming Jesus are carried around town²⁷², while songs are sung and testimonies given in various languages.

In the past many of the EFG members have had a confrontational approach to Islam. Islam was refuted in public and the person of Muhammad slandered. Since early 1990 awareness has grown that confrontation might not be the best way to witness to Muslims. In December 1992 the EFG and the Project for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa organised a four day seminar in Farafenni which trained EFG members in Islamic studies and Christian Muslim relations. Pastors and evangelists of EFG member churches have also joined GCC organised certificate courses on Islam and Christian Muslim relation between 1997 and 1999. Though many EFG members consider dialogue to be a stage preparing for evangelisation of Muslims, they have begun to appreciate that knowledge of Islam and respect for Muslims are of crucial importance to a credible witness.

In recent years, especially after the Omega Church incident in February 1997, the EFG has sought more contact with the GCC. Discussions are going on whether it

²⁷⁰ *Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia Newlink*, 1/3 1993, 1; See also C.M. Breman, *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: its history, organization, members, projects, external relations, and message*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer 1996, p. 180.

²⁷¹ The proposed visit of Reinhardt Boncke led to much discussion within the EFG. The discussion centred around the question whether it would be wise to receive Boncke in The Gambia, considering the impact his visit to Kano (Nigeria) had had on Christian Muslim relations. A proposed visit in 1993 was kindly rejected because of Boncke's stance on Islam (Minutes of the EFG March 14 1992) and a visit in 1996 was again postponed for the same reasons. Minutes of the EFG, March 26 1996 and July 22 1996.

²⁷² The March for Jesus started in Banjul, but is nowadays also held in Brikama and Serekunda.

would be possible to establish an umbrella organisation as a platform for EFG and GCC to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest.²⁷³

9.8 Conclusion

In the period under discussion the Christian churches experienced a comparatively large numerical growth.²⁷⁴ This was due to the conversion to Christianity of refugees from Guinea-Bissau and more specifically of the 14,000 Manjago among them. This so-called Manjago factor explains the large numerical increase of Christians in general and of the Roman Catholic membership in particular, because most of these people have become Roman Catholics. Comparatively many of the Manjago have offered for the ministry. The Methodist Church through its outreach programme in Western Division and Central River Division also has had an influx of Manjago, Karoninka and Conjagi and is no longer just an 'Akou' church. The Anglican Church attempted to evangelise the Fula in the Farafenni area but failed. The Anglican Church is therefore still largely Krio dominated. Since 1966 the three mainline churches co-operate in the Gambia Christian Council.

After Independence The Gambia also experienced the establishment of new churches. Some belonged to the mainline tradition, others were AIC's and again others belonged to the neo-Pentecostal strand. Some of these churches have originated from the Gambian soil, others have come from abroad. The churches have added a new flavour to Christianity in The Gambia. Their ministry has challenged the mainline churches and has gradually influenced both the theology and the worship of the mainline churches. In that sense the new churches have re-vitalised Christianity in The Gambia. These new churches meet to pray and exchange views at a newly created platform: the Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia.

Numerically these newer churches have not really increased the Christian community. Most of their members come from the mainline churches (often of the Roman Catholic Church) or are migrant workers or refugees from other West African countries. The appearance of these new churches has merely reshuffled the membership of the Christian community. This means that the Christian presence in The Gambia has become even more fragmented than before.

Often Christianity in its history in The Gambia has provided an identity and social network to marginalised groups. The redeemed Wolof slaves from St. Louis and Gorée, the Liberated and Recaptive Africans who developed into the Krio community, the Manjago, Balanta, Conjagi and Mankaign refugees, who adhered to the African traditional religions were all in need of a social network in a society that was new to them. Many of the existing social relationships were either based on religion (Islam) or on ethnicity. Christianity has provided these groups with a new social community. In the case of the Akou the search for identity was successful: a

²⁷³ Minutes of the EFG, February 24 1997.

²⁷⁴ Because the natural growth of the Muslim community is higher than that of the Christian community, percentage wise the Christian community is declining. Presently the Christian community forms about three and a half percent of the total population.

powerful network was set up and a Krio culture developed. The integration of the Senegalese Wolof also succeeded. In recent years new migratory groups such as the Manjago, the Balanta, the Mankaign etc. have been looking for a means of integration in the Gambian society and have found it in the Christian church. These social factors do not diminish the religious commitment of these groups to the Christian faith. But it seems fair to say that they have contributed to the fact that Christianity is still considered by many 'authentic' Gambian ethnic groups as a religion of 'foreigners'.

The question when the church in The Gambia is a Gambian church, is indeed crucial. Can the Akou, after having lived for nearly 200 years in The Gambia, not be considered Gambians? And is therefore the Krio culture not a Gambian culture, even though their culture is a mixture of Western and African elements? And have the Manjago and other ethnic groups who have recently come from abroad but now have received the Gambian nationality, not the right to be called Gambians, as well as the Mandinka and the Fula who migrated to The Gambia several centuries earlier? Often inculturation is only interpreted in the strict ethnic and cultural sense of the word, meaning to inculturate into a certain culture of certain ethnic group. This thesis would rather propose that inculturation of Christianity in The Gambia means that the church should take its roots in the wider Senegambian, West African soil, with its diversity of cultures and religions.

The theme of inculturation and contextualisation has dominated the agenda of the churches in the second half of the 20th century. At the grassroots level contextualisation has been part of the every day life of being a Gambian Christian. Most of the churches have also succeeded in raising a Gambian indigenous clergy and the liturgy is in the vernacular. However, very little reflection on contextualisation has been done. The topic of theology is still virtually untouched. though the more evangelical churches have begun to address the African perception of oneness of body and soul by healing and deliverance services. Generally speaking very few Gambians seem to be aware of the need for an African theology as is practised in other parts of the continent.

Contextualisation of the gospel means Africanisation of the church and its theology, but in the Gambian context it also means reflecting on the relation with Islam. The area of Christian Muslim relations shows many developments, which have taken place during the period under discussion. By 1965 the three mainline churches had realised that the Gambian Christian community would always remain a minority church in a predominantly Muslim environment. Thus the need for a united witness became urgent and the Gambia Christian Council came into being. While the first years were spent on getting to know each other as Christian churches, the period thereafter was dedicated to reflection on the relation with Islam. Both the Roman Catholic bishop Cleary and the Anglican bishops Olufosoye, Elisée and Johnson proved fervent advocates of a peaceful and respectful relationship with Muslims. A special adviser for Christian Muslim relations, attached to the GCC, was appointed and Islamic Studies and Christian Muslim relations have become part of the prescribed syllabus in all theological courses in The Gambia. Special intensive training courses for Christian pastors and other church workers were organised and

joint meetings with Muslims were called. In this sense the Gambian churches have become aware of their predominantly Islamic context.

In the period under discussion the model of expansion was no longer the most important way of relating to people of other faiths and the antagonism against Islam had begun to diminish. All the mainline churches and some of the Evangelical churches hold the view that witness to Christ can be combined with respect for Muslims. The majority of the churches, including the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, have abandoned aggressive campaigns to convert Muslims, though most of the EFG churches continue to see evangelism as the prime task of the Christian community and still consider Muslims as 'the unreached' that need to 'reached for Christ'. One wonders, whether the change in attitude of the Gambian churches in relating to Muslims has been a matter of principle or whether it resulted from the practical experience that very few Muslims were willing to become Christians. For though the churches now mainly relate to Muslims in terms of diakonia and dialogue, they still pursue church growth in their relation to the adherents of African traditional religions.

The model of diakonia has dominated the agenda of the GCC member churches and seems to have been the core interpretation of their relation to society. The GCC development wing and the development and medical projects of the individual churches all testify that the churches have understood their calling in society to be one of service. The Anglican refugee programme, their attention for the HIV/Aids related problems, the Methodist schools, MMAP and the Marakissa clinic and the Roman Catholic contribution to rural education and their development work through Caritas and the Catholic Relief Services show that the churches' attitude towards society has primarily been one of service. Also on a deeper level the churches have worked with the model of diakonia. Cleary's criticism of the corruption under of the Jawara government and the joint GCC protests against the violation of human rights after the 1994 coup d'etat can be interpreted as a challenge of the power structures of society and an attempt to spread the Christian values of justice, freedom of expression and religion and other basic human rights.

The model of presence is mainly lived out in the small Christian communities in the rural areas, which are predominantly Muslim. Christians live among Muslim and participate in the ups and downs of daily private and village life. The mainline churches have also begun to think in terms of the model of dialogue but this is still in its prime stages. All three mainline churches, both through the channel of the GCC and individually, have advocated an attitude of respect for Muslims and have called for peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. Both from the Muslim and the Christian side however, dialogue is looked at with suspicion. Muslims consider dialogue as yet another method of conversion, while many Christians feel threatened in their identity by Muslim queries of their religion. So far, the model of dialogue in The Gambia has been interpreted as promoting respect and peaceful coexistence. Very few have gone beyond this interpretation to see dialogue as an opportunity to be challenged and changed and thus come to a deeper understanding of God.

10. BEING A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN A MUSLIM SOCIETY

10.1 A history of Christianity: retrospect and evaluation

The story of Christianity in The Gambia is one of missionary toil. Christianity was established on the banks of the river Gambia at the cost of great human and material sacrifice. Many missionaries went home invalid, even more died during their time in The Gambia. But nearly 550 years of evangelisation of The Gambia have only led to the establishment of a small Christian community of about 3.5 percent.

The initial attempts to establish Christianity in The Gambia were instigated by an antagonism with Islam. After the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal continued its battle against Islam in North Africa. In an attempt to search for allies, Portuguese explorers were dispatched to search for the legendary Prester John and to look for possible converts to Christianity among African chiefs. The first ships arrived in The Gambia in 1455, followed by the first missionaries a few years later. The results of their missionary work during this early period were minimal. Very few Africans converted to Christianity. But the antagonism with Islam continued throughout the mission history, until the 1960s brought a change of attitude.

The first Christian communities in The Gambia were not formed by Gambians, but by Mulattos. The Mulattos were the descendants of Portuguese or Cape Verdian settlers and their African wives. These Mulattos established small trading settlements along the river Gambia and adopted Christianity as their religion. It is suggested that as early as the last decades of 15th century there were such Christian Mulatto communities in The Gambia.

Mulatto Christianity was not missionary minded. Christianity was part of the Mulatto identity, just like their European clothing and their language, which was a mixture of Portuguese and African indigenous languages. Like other Europeans along the Gambia river, they earned their income by trade, especially slave trade. This involvement in the slave trade tainted the credibility of their Christian faith. Nevertheless, the Mulattos guarded the Christian religion for centuries with great care and gave The Gambia its reputation as 'a kingdom where Christianity had been firmly established since many centuries' (Demagnet 1764). Though there was a Christian community in The Gambia, the area was not considered to be a fruitful field for mission work. Until the 19th century, missionary activities in The Gambia were mainly limited to chaplaincy visits to the Mulatto community. The only exception was formed by a Spanish Capuchin mission in the 17th century. But no extraordinary results are reported from this missionary work.

Mission work in The Gambia received a new impulse with the settlement of a British garrison on the island of St. Mary in 1816. The garrison was stationed at St. Mary's in order to intercept slave ships on the Atlantic Ocean and on the river. The British government had abolished the slave trade in 1807 and wanted to supervise its implementation in West Africa. The settlement of soldiers at St. Mary's soon attracted Mulatto families from along the river and from Senegal. Also Wolof artisans and slaves settled on the island. Thus, the town of Bathurst came into being.

Governor Charles MacCarthy was instrumental in again bringing Christian missionaries to The Gambia. Around 1920 he invited a variety of missionary societies to come to The Gambia, to work with the liberated slaves and to evangelise the indigenous people. Roman Catholics, Quakers, Anglicans and Methodists responded to the call. Due to the hardship of the climate and the many tropical diseases only the Methodists were able to consolidate their work in the first half of the 19th century. They established themselves at the two main islands in the river, St. Mary's and MacCarthy. From there, they set up their mission work. The early years of the Methodist Church are characterised by their high appreciation of local workers and by their battle against the slave trade and slavery. Victims of the slave trade, the so-called Liberated Africans and Recaptives (later known as the Krio), formed the nucleus of the Methodist community. Redeemed Wolof slaves and European traders formed the two other main groups. None of them however, were indigenous Gambians.

In 1849 the Roman Catholic Church re-established itself in The Gambia and was able to gather the scattered Roman Catholics into the newly formed parish of Bathurst. The initial membership consisted of Mullatos and of Wolof Christians (artisans and slaves) from Gorée and St. Louis. Later, Manjago sailors joined the congregation. Senegalese priests served as parish pastors and Wolof was used as the liturgical language. This no doubt added to the attractiveness of the Roman Catholic Church. The Methodist Church, with a Krio majority, was more English oriented. The Anglican Church was mainly a chaplaincy to the expatriate community of colonial officers in the 19th century, though there also was a small number of Krio from Sierra Leone among the members.

Throughout the 19th century education was the main project of the churches. The Roman Catholics and Methodists established schools both for boys and girls soon after their arrival. In the 1880s they were followed by the Anglican Church. Much effort and energy was put into education because it was considered to be of great importance. Education was seen as a means to build up the infant Christian community and to raise Christian leaders. It was also regarded as a powerful instrument of evangelisation. Through the schools the churches hoped to influence young children, both Muslims and traditional believers, at an early age and to prepare them for conversion. This latter aim of education soon became the predominant goal. Especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries most missionaries and church workers were involved in education in some way or another. Though the churches persisted in the use of education as a means of evangelism until the 1950s, the results in The Gambia were minimal, especially compared to other areas of West Africa. Hardly anyone in The Gambia converted to Christianity because of education. However, the work of the churches in education has created a lot of goodwill for Christianity, has spread Christian influence in the country and has contributed to the country wide conscientiousness for the need of (male and female) education.

Extension work was also considered to be a priority on the agenda of the churches, but the tide was against them. By the time the churches had settled in The Gambia and were prepared to undertake serious extension work in the rural areas, the Soninke-Marabout wars had started. The wars made the country unsafe to travel

and famine was rampant and refugees abounded. This precarious political situation, combined with a series of deadly epidemics, made the second half of the 19th century a time of great hardship. Though the churches did not give up their dreams of extending Christianity 'into the interior', among the Jola, the Fula and the Serer, the projects could not be sustained because of the wars. Only in Combo, close to Bathurst and in the British area of influence, some new congregations were founded.

It was during the Soninke-Marabout wars and its aftermath in the early 20th century that Islam was popularised and became the religion of the majority of the Gambians. The Roman Catholic Church abandoned its attempts to evangelise Muslims towards the end of the wars, i.e. the end of the 19th century. They adopted another strategy towards Muslims and hoped to 'stem the tide of Islam' by converting traditional believers to Christianity. The Methodists still toiled on for another thirty years trying to convert Muslims, before they came to the same conclusion. Though after the wars the churches mainly directed their extension projects towards the traditional believers (e.g. the Anglican project of Kristikunda), it took them another fifty years to realise the extent of the Islamisation of The Gambia. Only then they drew the conclusion that the Christian community would always remain a minority in The Gambia. This new recognition gave birth to the awareness that there was a necessity for ecumenism. In 1966 the Gambia Christian Council was established. All three mainline churches participated. Soon Christian Muslim relations were high on the agenda and in 1987 a special adviser was appointed. The churches had realised that they needed to reflect on their relations to Muslims and needed to deliberate on how to be credible witnesses in a predominantly Muslim society.

The only truly large numerical increase of Christianity in The Gambia came from 1960s onwards in the form of the Manjago factor. From the 1960s onwards around 15,000 refugees from Casamance and Guinea-Bissau settled in The Gambia. The Manjago were the largest group among them. Most of the refugees were traditional believers. These groups converted en masse to Christianity from the 1970s onwards and have caused a considerable growth in the Christian community. Because most of them became Roman Catholics, the Roman Catholic Church became by far the largest church from the 1960s onwards. However, the conversion of these groups to Christianity has also affirmed the Muslim conviction that Christianity is first and foremost a religion of foreigners, i.e. non-Gambians.

Indigenisation and contextualisation have been themes, which have occupied the agenda of the Gambian churches throughout the 20th century. Beginning with the Methodist District in 1916, the churches have gradually moved towards independence. The Anglican Church became a diocese with the Rio Pongas in 1935 while the Roman Catholic Church reached the status of a diocese in 1957. This also raised the question of indigenous personnel. Though the Methodist Church had had a large number of Gambian assistant missionaries, evangelists and ministers during the 19th century, it was able to find only a few candidates in the 20th century. Until the 1980s the church has struggled to find Gambians willing to enter the ministry and work in The Gambia. In the Roman Catholic Church the situation was even more difficult. Only one candidate had been ordained in the 19th century and an incident with a Gambian priest in the 1930s blocked vocations for nearly fifty years.

The Anglican Church, much smaller, did better. From the inception of the diocese onwards there were regularly Gambian candidates for the ministry. But the fact that the Christian community in The Gambia is small and closely interrelated has made a life-long ministry in The Gambia a difficult vocation.

Indigenisation of the ministry was only one step towards the contextualisation of Christianity in The Gambia. There had been 'inculturation from below', i.e. inculturation started by Gambian Christians at the grassroots level. From the moment that Gambians became Christians they have interpreted their faith within their own context. But the conscious and supervised theological reflection on the interaction between gospel and culture (inculturation from above) is still in its infancy stages in The Gambia. Theologians in The Gambia are so caught up in the day to day routine of pastoral work that they do not take time to reflect on the issue of inculturation. One wonders whether the need for an African theology, felt in other parts of Africa, is shared in The Gambia.

The time of independence brought some changes to the Gambian scene. Where the colonial government had followed a restrictive policy in admitting new churches and Christian groups to The Gambia, the Jawara government proved more open. Gradually new churches - mainline, African Instituted, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches - were established in The Gambia. Though these groups have grown over the years, their church growth has mainly been from members of the mainline churches (especially from the Roman Catholic Church) and from people from other West African countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana. In that sense these new churches have not added to the growth of Christianity in the country. On the contrary, their work of proselytism has undermined the united witness of the Christian community in The Gambia and had led to an even greater fragmentation of the Christian community. In the late 1990s attempts were made to establish contacts between the GCC and these newer churches to come to a more united stance of Christian community. But so far to no avail. On a more positive note, the newer churches have influenced the mainline churches through their lively worship and their emphasis on evangelisation and have started a process of revitalisation within the mainline churches. Most of the newer groups are not members of the Gambia Christian Council but of the other Christian platform: the Evangelical Fellowship in The Gambia.

Evaluating this history, we can say that Christianity in The Gambia is and will remain a minority religion. Therefore, the churches need to reflect on the implications of their minority position. Choices will have to be made regarding the way in which the Christian community wants to be present and active in the Gambian society. Little reflection has so far been done about the consequences (and limits) of this minority position, but it seems that ecumenism is crucial if the Christian community wants to make an ongoing impact on society.

Over the centuries Christianity has provided an identity to many marginalised groups, such as Krio, the Wolof slaves from Gorée, the Manjago and other refugee groups from Guinea-Bissau. For these groups the Christian faith has served as a means of integration in the Gambian society. Christianity has been a constitutive element in the process of redefining and readjusting the identity of these groups to their new situation. The Christian community has served as a network for their

smooth integration. The other side of the coin, however, is that because these groups were not originally Gambian, Christianity is still considered as a religion of 'foreigners'. Therefore the main focus of the Gambian Christian community should be on the contextualisation of the gospel. This contextualisation of the gospel in The Gambia has two aspects: the aspect of culture and the aspect of religion. Contextualisation in The Gambia means a dialogue with the African traditional religions and inculcating the gospel into the context of the Senegambian or possibly even the larger West African cultures. But contextualisation in The Gambia also means addressing the Muslim context, in which Christianity lives and works. This means that Christian Muslim relations in The Gambia are not an option, but a question of to be or not to be a Christian community in The Gambia.

10.2 The models: retrospect and evaluation

Introduction

In the first chapter we discussed various models of relating to people of other faiths. We chose and introduced those, which were relevant to the Gambian situation. In the second part of this conclusion these models will be used to evaluate the history of Christianity in its relation to people of other faiths. A new model in paragraph 10.3 will complement the models. This model is the result of the author's reflection on the history of Christianity in The Gambia.

The model of expansion

The model of expansion has been the predominant model of relating to non-Christians throughout the history of Christianity in The Gambia. The Christian community in The Gambia (and in the larger continent of Africa) owes its establishment to the understanding of missionary societies that they were called 'to go and make disciples of all nations'. In the context of their time these men and women understood this commandment to mean the conversion of people and the planting of churches. Their sacrifice in leaving their countries of origin and often also in losing their lives and the lives of their loved ones was a testimony in itself to their dedication of spreading Christianity.

The model of expansion in The Gambia is as old as the time when the first Portuguese missionaries were dispatched to evangelise The Gambia. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith explicitly sent out missionaries such as the Spanish Capuchins, with the assignment to convert 'heathen and Muslims' in Nigritia. Also in the 19th and 20th centuries expansion was the main model. Education and medical services though signs of diakonia, were used as aids in spreading Christianity. This work of evangelisation still continues, both among the mainline churches and among evangelicals and is seen as a Biblical injunction.¹

¹ Possibly however, the passage of Mt. 28 can be interpreted in another way than as a unilateral communication from the 'reached' to 'the unreached.' Bediako has the following comment on Mt. 28: 16-20: 'The Great commission in Matthew 28 is not about numbers or statistics, important as these are. The Great Commission is not about the percentage of

In the Gambian context, the expansion of Islam in West Africa formed the setting for the spread of Christianity and Islam was perceived as a competitor. The first mission endeavours of the Portuguese should be interpreted in the context of the Reconquista and its antagonism with Islam. The Portuguese spread Christianity in West Africa in an attempt to seek allies against Islam, either by finding Prester John or by Christianising African people and African kingdoms. Here religious motives became intertwined with political interests. Especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries the competition between Islam and Christianity was fierce: both religions were trying to extend their numbers and their influence by various means. Islam in the second half of the 19th century took on a militant form and used the means of *jihad* to expand while Christianity, next to preaching, made use of education and medical services in 'the race for Africa'. The model of expansion continued to dominate the churches' policy, even when towards the end of the 19th century it had become clear that Muslims were not willing to convert to Christianity. From that time onwards the main objective became the conversion of traditional believers, again, in order 'to stop the advance of Islam'. The churches continued to cherish hopes to influence young Muslims through education.

Only in the middle of 20th century the mainline churches entirely abandoned the idea of expansion in their relation to Muslims, but the model continued to dominate the churches' relationship to adherents of the African traditional religions. This indicates that in the Gambian Christian perception (and in the Gambian Muslim perception as well), African traditional religions are not equal to Islam or Christianity. The Evangelical and Pentecostal churches still work with the model of expansion in relation to Muslims, but their approach has been one of friendship evangelism and encounter rather than of aggressive confrontation. The aggressive approach to Islam used in the past, both in preaching and in trying to convert young people through the schools, still impedes smooth relations between Christians and Muslims and will probably continue to do so for several future generations

Considering the effort put into the model of expansion, both in human and material resources, it seems fair to state that the model of expansion in The Gambia was not very successful. Despite 550 years of missionary toil and human sacrifice to spread Christianity in The Gambia, only 3.5 percent of the population has become Christian. Possibly there is a connection between this fact and the observation that the spread of Christianity has been closely linked to power and imperialism. The first

national populations that we may consider 'reached' or remain 'unreached' with the gospel, important as these considerations are. Our Lord did not say, 'Go make disciples of some people or even a large percentage of the people of the nations. What he commanded was, 'Go make disciples of the nations, go make the nations my disciples.' The Great Commission, therefore is about the discipline of the nations, the conversion of the things that make people into nations – the shared and common processes of thinking; attitudes; world views; perspectives; languages; and the cultural, social, and economic habits of thought, behavior and practice.' He then adds: 'The point then is that Christians involved in holistic ministry in today's world need, with appropriate humility, to discern their role in a similar vein – not as purveyors of a commodity, whether spiritual or physical, but as facilitators of people's own discovery of their heritage as children of Abraham and grafted into the one universal community of God's people in history.' K. Bediako, 'Theological reflections', 184.

missionaries came to The Gambia in the context of the *Padroado*, which united religious and political expansion. Also during the colonial period missionary activities were closely associated with the colonial government – the missionaries came to The Gambia at the invitation of Governor MacCarthy – and the churches received government subventions for their educational and medical work, which were cornerstones in the spread of Christianity. At times, it must have been difficult for people to distinguish between missionaries and colonial officers, especially since the CMS (and at times the WMMS) missionaries served as colonial chaplains and therefore were colonial officers. The alliance with power has tainted the honest intentions of the many missionaries, European as well as African, whose main aim was to preach Christ. The close connection between Christianity and colonial powers such as Portugal and Britain and between Christianity and Western culture has made people suspicious of Christianity as a religion of power and as a ‘foreign’ religion. From the time of the de-colonisation onwards (1960s), however, the link between power and expansion has been renounced and declared unacceptable and unbiblical.

The model of expansion can also be criticised for its concept of communication. It works basically with a unilateral communication perception. The messenger has a pre-conceived message for the other and the other is a person who is to be evangelised. There is no room for a real encounter with the other, as a person who already has a religion and has a grasp of God. The conversation with the other about his religion is mainly polemical.² The story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10, however, shows that it is in conversion with each other, in an interrelational – and interreligious – setting, that both men receive a deeper grasp of the love of God.

The model of diakonia

The model of diakonia has formed an important part of the missionary movement and the Gambian Christian churches in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Evangelism was done both in word and deed and schools, hospitals and development programmes accompanied the preaching. However, during most the 19th century and in the first five decades of the 20th century these services aimed at preparing people for the gospel. Thus, in a way diakonia was seen as instrument to spread Christianity, rather than as an aim in itself. It needs to be added however, that conversion was not seen as a prerequisite for receiving medical or educational services, nor were diaconal programmes stopped when conversions were not forthcoming. The energy and resources in put into these acts of diakonia have been enormous.

Schools have formed the main Christian service to the Gambian society. As early as 1824 the Quakers established schools in The Gambia, soon followed by the Methodists, the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics. In the early 20th century nearly all the workers in the Methodist Church were involved in education. When the resistance of Muslims against education as a form of pre-evangelism grew, the medium of the schools was not abandoned as a service to society. Rather, the aim of

² G.J. van der Kolm, *De verbeelding van de kerk: op zoek naar een nieuw-missionaire ecclesiologie*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer 2001, 47.

Christian education shifted to 'spreading Christian influence'. This was in line with the famous exclamation of the Methodist chairman Tregaskis that one should rather think of closing one's chapels than the schools. The nationalisation of the schools in the 1940s and 1950s threw the churches into a time of confusion, wondering what their service to society should be, after they had been deprived of their schools. But from the 1950s onwards all the churches, both mainline and the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, have again embarked on an impressive educational programme, offering education in areas where the government has not yet been able to provide the necessary means. The new educational service of the churches now focuses on nursery school education, private and vocational schools and schools in the rural areas.

From the middle of the 20th century onwards diakonia was no longer primarily regarded as an instrument to spread Christianity. Rather, service to society became a goal in itself, a sign of the Kingdom. There had already been early examples of this type of diakonia in the work of the Quakers and the Cluny Sisters in the 1820s. But the main shift in understanding took place in the middle of the 20th century when gradually the model of diakonia replaced the model of expansion in relation to Muslims. The mainline churches no longer aimed at converting Muslims to Christianity but at spreading Christian influence in society and creating goodwill for the Christian community. The GCC development programmes, such as aiding in the reconstruction of the country after the 1981 coup d'état and the rebuilding of the Banjul and Serekunda markets after their respective destruction by fire in the 1990s, are examples of this new understanding of the model of diakonia. Also the individual churches undertook development projects. The Anglican Church became involved in the refugee work, the Methodist Church had its Marakissa Clinic and the MMAP, while the Roman Catholic Church has several clinics and two development wings through Caritas and the Catholic Relief Services. Also the newer churches have engaged in medical and development work. The Evangelical Church of the Gambia is, via WEC, involved in clinics in Sibanor, Jarrol and Nemekunko and has a youth centre at Kampant, while the West Africa Mission has established a number of nursery schools throughout the country. In an age, however, that Africa is flooded with aid organisations, the Christian character of the diakonia has at times become difficult to be distinguished.

From the 1980s onwards, the churches have also seen the strife for justice and human rights as part of their service to society. A few early examples of this type of diakonia can be seen in the 19th century as well. The earliest example was the Methodist struggle to enforce implementation of the Abolitionist Act in the 1830s, a strife that was accompanied by efforts to negotiate the emancipation of slaves where possible. Also York Clement's advocacy for the refugees, displaced by the Soninke-Marabout wars can be seen as an example of this wider interpretation of the model of diakonia. In more recent years the Roman Catholic bishop Michael Cleary has publicly condemned the corruption of the Jawara regime and the heads of churches have protested against the violation of human rights after the 1994 coup d'état. When the government proposed a new constitution in 1996, GCC organised workshop to scrutinise the proposals on its implications for society. This

interpretation of diakonia has testified to the understanding of the model of diakonia as participation in God's mission of reconciliation to the whole world.

The model of diakonia represents the choice of the Christian community to participate in God's ministry of reconciliation of the world and is in itself an independent ministry of the church. During most of the 19th and 20th centuries, however, the churches have seen service to the community in the light of the higher aim of converting people to Christ. This has given diakonia an ambiguous reputation. Though people have appreciated the services of education and medical work, the catch of conversion has always lured in the background. Despite this comment, however, it should be underlined that through the churches' dedication to education and medical work, thousands of people have received tutoring and medical care. The impact of this fact cannot and should not be easily underestimated. Even after the school had been abandoned as a means of evangelisation, the churches continued their commitment to education as a service to society. A negative aspect of the model of diakonia is that it divides the world in 'givers' and 'receivers', in 'people who have' and 'people who have not'. This brings with it an inequality between those pursuing diakonia as service to society and those receiving the service. This inequality makes true communication and exchange difficult.

The more recent interpretation of the model of diakonia as a way to bring injustices such as corruption, the violation of human rights, the fate of refugees and HIV/Aids patients to the notice of the larger public does not have this ambiguity and inequality. This new interpretation offers a clear sign of the church's ministry of service and reconciliation in society. Besides, it offers a way to the churches to exercise their ministry of diakonia in a financially less costly way. By functioning as watchdogs for justice in society, the churches can take temporary action on emergency situations while at the same time bringing the topics to the national agenda, hoping that the Government or NGO's will see their responsibility and take action.

The model of presence

The model of presence originated from the African scene. It has its roots in North Africa. The model was specifically designed for being a Christian community in a Muslim environment. Despite these facts, the model of presence was – surprisingly - never explicitly chosen as a manner for relating to Muslims in The Gambia. Kristikunda probably came closest to the approach of presence though it was set up as an outreach programme and mainly took the form of diakonia. As an outreach programme Kristikunda failed. Very few of the Fula became Christian. But the unexpected side effect of Kristikunda was that the village functioned as a Christian presence in a predominantly Muslim environment. Archdeacon Mudford described this change of purpose of Kristikunda as follows

...the function of Kristikunda would now appear to be that of an African Christian settlement on community basis, living a normal village life, illuminated and transfigured by the light of Christ. (...) It hopes to teach the Gospel without preaching it and by

friendliness and charity to all comers to break ground for the sowing of the Word. (...) It is an inspired effort towards indirect evangelism.³

Kristikunda offered the gospel in a non-offensive, non-confrontational way, by living out the values of the gospel in a Muslim environment.

Kristikunda has been the clearest example in the Gambian history of the model of presence at work. But other small Christian communities such as those in Farafenni have lived with Muslims in the spirit of presence as well. Rather than by confronting Muslims or by preaching to Muslims, these communities live quietly in the larger Muslim society and by their way of life hope to serve as a witness to Christ. The Muslim scholar Ali Merad, who wrote a book about Charles de Foucauld, has valued the model of presence as an acceptable and comprehensible way of Christian witness to Muslims. He stated:

To imitate Jesus, to strive at all times to act as he himself would have done; to treat each person as 'not a man but Jesus' (Ecr. Spir., 211) is, from the Muslim point of view, the most eloquent way to espouse the authenticity of the Gospel message.⁴

Roger Hooker, reflecting on his work among Hindus and Muslims in India, underlined the value of the concept of presence as a way to truly understand the other person and his religion. He stated:

Often it seems that the really important things are not what the Christian hears said to him directly, but what he overhears Muslims saying to each other. At this point the word 'presence' seems better than 'dialogue'.⁵

Presence indeed seems to be an effective model of relating to Muslims. It is non-confrontational and contextual. It lives out the gospel rather than preaching it and takes the other person, including his/her religion, seriously. In an evaluation of the concept of 'presence', the Dutch pastor Gerrit Jan van der Kolm, who works in city evangelism, points out that the model of presence presupposes a two-way process, which presumes that the truth is interrelational.⁶ 'Presence', according to Van der Kolm is not a strategy, but an attitude of openness to search with the other for an authentic expression of the gospel in a certain context. In that sense 'presence' presupposes contextuality.⁷

³ C. Mudford, *Report on work in Upper River*, (date approximately 1945) Anglican Archives Bishop's Court Banjul, Red File Box no. 4, Kristikunda 1960-1970.

⁴ A. Merad, *Christian hermit in an Islamic world: a Muslim's view of Charles de Foucauld*, Paulist Press, New York 1999, 21.

⁵ R.H. Hooker, *Outside the camp: a Christian with men of other faiths*, CLS/ISPCK, Madras 1972, 30.

⁶ 'Presentie rekent af met overdrachtsmodellen, zending als veroveringstrategie; is uitdrukking van zowel de verlegenheid met de traditionele missionaire benadering waarin verkondiging eenrichtingsverkeer is, als van de continuïteit met het oorspronkelijke missionaire elan van tot de einden der aarde.' G.J. van der Kolm, *De verbeelding van de kerk*, 47.

⁷ G.J. van der Kolm, *De verbeelding van de kerk*, 47, 48. Van der Kolm also points out that in recent years the term has become worn out and covers all church activities, which are low

The presupposition of the model under consideration is, that presence is not 'just willed and intended as a sign of the love of Christ', but also recognisable and understood as such. This last aspect, however, has not always been honoured in the model of presence. The concept of presence emphasises the two-way communication process, the need for incarnation of the Christian community and the quest for contextualisation of the gospel. But the model does not show the real openness to learn from the other person as a religious individual. It does not take into account that the other might also be a person, who has also gained some profound insight about God in the pilgrimage of life.

The model of dialogue

The most recent model is the model of dialogue. As early as 1910 William Maude in his *Memorandum on Muhammedanism* pleaded for an attitude of respect and friendship towards Muslims, rather than opting for confrontation and aggression. He appealed to his colleagues to adopt an attitude of 'being neighbourly' to Muslims, rather than to offend them or try to convert them. Maude was far ahead of his time with his treatise on Islam.

Only in the second half of the 20th century the three mainline churches began to share the conviction that the gospel called for openness and respect towards Muslims. Rather than attempting to convert Muslims, as they had endeavoured to do until the beginning of the 20th century, or ignoring them as they had been doing in the period afterwards, they now began to understand the message of the gospel as one of dialogue. A special adviser for Christian Muslim relations was appointed to the GCC and all churches, evangelical as well as ecumenical, began to include Islamic Studies and Christian Muslim relations in their syllabi for theological education. Programmes and seminars were organised to study Islam and to meet with Muslims throughout the country.

Though the Christian attitude towards Muslims has changed from confrontation to openness and respect, the relations between the two groups are still contaminated by mutual suspicion. Muslims consider dialogue as yet another method of conversion, while many Christians feel threatened in their identity when talking with Muslims about their faith. Especially recent converts to Christianity experience dialogue with Muslims more as a menace to their feeble beliefs than as a way to enrich their faith. So far, the model of dialogue in The Gambia has been interpreted as promoting respect and peaceful coexistence. The government, who involves religious leaders from both Christianity and Islam in its public events and public sensitisation programmes, stimulates this attitude. But this is only one aspect of the model of dialogue. Very few people have gone a step beyond this interpretation and have undertaken the adventure to understand dialogue as an opportunity to be challenged and changed and thus come to a deeper understanding of God.

The model of dialogue offers great opportunities for people of different religions to truly meet on the level of faith, rather than dogmatics, and to be enriched

profile and reject conversion strategies. Recently A. Baart has applied the concept of 'presence' to the field of public health and welfare work. A. Baart, *Een theorie van presentie*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer 2001.

by this encounter. In a plural religious society such as The Gambia, the dialogue of life is a reality of society, where people of different religions meet and intermingle on daily basis. The present interpretation of the model of dialogue in The Gambia however, accepts the two communities as static entities. Dialogue is seen as a polite exchange of greetings and respect, but does not go beyond that stage. It has not (yet) meant the fundamental willingness to challenge each other in an enriching way, so that both partners can grow in faith in the encounter. Possibly the Christian community, being such a small minority and having many recent converts, feels too vulnerable to undertake this journey. In a way, this interpretation of the model of dialogue is rather elitist. Besides, dialogue needs at least two partners and only very few members of the Muslim community have been willing to embark on dialogue. Nevertheless, true contextualisation in The Gambia also involves Christian Muslim relations. And interreligious dialogue unavoidably entails the chance of being challenged and the risk of becoming changed. But those who are not willing to be challenged, also deny themselves the chance of being enriched.

Some final remarks

In the history of Christianity in The Gambia the models of expansion, diakonia, presence and dialogue have functioned supplementary to each other, rather than that they have replaced each other. In recent years the mainline churches have abandoned the explicit model of expansion towards Muslims, but they have maintained this attitude in relating to people of African traditional religions. With respect to Muslims, the churches have upheld the view that through diakonia, presence and dialogue the witness to Christ might touch the heart of Muslims and Muslims might come to accept Christ. However, these models do not have conversion as their aim. Each of these models has some positive and some negative aspects. Below, in paragraph 10.3, a model of kenosis is proposed, which seems to combine the positive aspects of the models of diakonia, presence and dialogue, while putting in a new all encompassing framework: that of the attitude of the self-emptying Christ.

10.3 A model of kenosis

Kenosis is a relatively new word in missiology.⁸ The concept of kenosis refers to Jesus' self-emptying act in the incarnation as described in Philippians 2:5-11.⁹ Jesus, in his mission of reconciliation, emptied himself by sharing our humanity and by living among us, in order to show the love of God for humankind. The model of

⁸ Later this year D.N. Harmelink will publish his Ph.D. dissertation of 1997 entitled *Mission and kenosis*.

⁹ For exegetical and linguistic comments on kenosis see W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Walter de Gruyter, New York 1971, 846, 847; D. Müller; H.G. Link (ed.), *Theologisches Begrifflexikon zum Neuen Testament*, Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, Wuppertal 1969, vol. II, 847-849; K.J. Kuschel, *Born before all time? The dispute over Christ's origin*, SCM Press, London 1992, 243-264.

kenosis calls for imitation of the attitude of Christ's kenosis, in the context of a shared humanity.¹⁰

Warren used the word kenosis as early as 1961 when he called for an attitude of humility and self-emptying among missionaries, especially in relation to Muslims. To Warren kenosis meant the ability to 'identify' with the other person.¹¹ The same aspect of 'identification with the other' is highlighted in Yves Raguin's *I am sending you*.¹² Also David Bosch in *Transforming mission* links kenosis to 'his [Jesus] identification with those on the periphery'.¹³ Identification with people on the periphery implies imitating Jesus' example of voluntarily laying aside power and status.¹⁴ It is this voluntary act of self-emptying, that enables people to cross boundaries of power, caste, class, culture and religion.¹⁵ Both Edward Matthew and Tariq Mitri point out that therefore kenosis involves a risk: the risk of rejection, the risk of suffering, the risk of having to give up pre-conceived ideas about what it means to be a Christian or to be a Christian community. But taking the risk is necessary, in order to be truly with the other.¹⁶ According to Bosch opting for kenosis as a model for mission, means accepting the cost of discipleship.¹⁷

¹⁰ According to Matthew's Christ's actual *act* of kenosis was unique and inimitable. E. Matthews, 'Christ and Kenosis: a model for mission', *Journal of applied missiology*, 2/1 (1991), 1. The article was made available at the following website: www.bible.acu.edu/missions/page.asp?ID=415, Date: May 22 2003.

¹¹ M. Warren, 'The meaning of identification' in G.H. Anderson, *The theology of Christian mission*, SCM Press, London 1961, 231, 234.

¹² Y. Raguin, *I am sending you (John 22:21): spirituality of the missionary*, East Asian Pastoral Institute, Manila 1973, 111, 112.

¹³ D.J. Bosch, *Transforming missions: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll 1997, 513.

¹⁴ L. Boff, *Church: charism and power*, Crossroad Publishing company, New York 1988, 64; E. Matthews, 'Christ and Kenosis: a model for mission', *Journal of applied missiology*, 2/1 (1991), 4 ; P.D. Niles, *World Mission today*, a paper presented at the Conference on World Mission and the Role of Korean Churches held in November 1995, Seoul, Korea, 17. See www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/research.dll/showarticle?item_id=127. Date: May 22 2003.

¹⁵ M. Nazir Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian encounters*, Regnum Books, Oxford 1991, 74.

¹⁶ E. Matthews, 'Christ and Kenosis: a model for mission', 2; T. Mitri, *Religious communities in minority situations, Procmura Newsletter*, 2/6 (1993), 2. Mitri uses the concept of 'kenotic presence' for the undertaking of this risk. Warren also shared this idea that incarnation might mean a complete revision of mission. In a letter of 1968 to his son in law Roger Hooker he writes: 'I am more and more convinced that Incarnation means self-limitation and this is what letting Christ be in one in India means. It means restriction of activity. (...) I am deeply, deeply concerned that in India, in Africa, in Britain Incarnation means self-limitation, means being willing to make friendship the keynote of ministry. This in turn must mean the accent laid on small groups. The Institution is there and must in some fashion be served until such a time as God either removes it, as he has done in China, or renews it, perhaps by some unexpected change.' G. Kings, *Christianity connected*, 216.

¹⁷ Bosch, in his paper on the vulnerability of mission, highlights that kenosis is indissolubly connected to the cross. 'The broken Christ is the one who heals the world.' J.D. Bosch, 'The vulnerability of mission' in J.A. Scherer; S.B. Bevans, *New directions in mission and evangelisation*, II, 79. 80.

In his book on missionary spirituality Raguin makes clear that kenosis does not just imply denouncement and sacrifice, even though kenosis reaches its height and depth at the cross. Kenosis also means 'plenitude':

Kenosis, then, places us in a state of receptivity. We develop an instinctive attitude of listening, trying to understand, letting ourselves be permeated with the atmosphere of our surroundings, passing beyond what is merely heard and seen to reach the personality of the people with whom we live, or those we may meet. In this way we learn to know others from within. (...) *Kenosis*, then, is the gateway to mutual understanding, and beyond this, to an intimate sharing that is the consummation of a relationship in union. (...) By dispossession of self we are able to absorb the amazing riches of others, the persons in themselves and as embodying a cultural tradition.¹⁸

Possibly Theo Sundermeier has this receptivity of kenosis in mind when he links the concept of kenosis to hospitality and points to kenosis as a model for intercultural encounter.¹⁹

Kenosis as the act of self-emptying does not demand the surrender of one's own identity. On the contrary, Raguin states: 'Just as the Word, though emptied, did not cease to be the Word, so the missionary cannot cease being what he is.'²⁰ Recently, David Jensen has argued that this aspect of kenosis, being both radical openness towards and respect for the other while at the same time preserving one's own identity, can serve as a christological basis for interreligious dialogue.²¹

Summarising, the model of kenosis is based on the kenosis of Christ in the act of incarnation, in his mission to reconcile the world with God. Kenosis takes the context of a shared humanity as a starting point for establishing relationships. It is as a human being that Christ interacted with us. Likewise, it is first of all as human beings that people relate to each other. In this relationship the model requires an imitation of Christ's kenosis and combines the act of self-emptying with upholding one's own identity. The other person is taken serious in the model of kenosis, both as a fellow human being and as a religious individual, while at the same time the model offers the possibility for being authentically different in religion, culture or personality from the person to whom one relates.

In the act of self-emptying the model of kenosis entails a radical contextualisation in order to be able to identify with the other. This contextualisation encompasses culture (inculturation), religion (interreligious dialogue) and the socio-

¹⁸ Y. Raguin, *I am sending you (John 22:21): spirituality of the missionary*, 111, 112.

¹⁹ T. Sundermeier, *Den Fremden verstehen: eine praktische Hermeneutik*, Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, 208, 209. See also T. Sundermeier, 'Inkulturation als Entäußerung (Inculturation as self-emptying)', in J.A.B. Jongeneel, a.o. (eds.), *Pentecost, mission and ecumenism: essays on intercultural theology*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt 1992, 209-215.

²⁰ Y. Raguin, *I am sending you (John 22:21): spirituality of the missionary*, 110.

²¹ D.H. Jensen, 'The emptying Christ: a christological approach to interfaith dialogue', *Studies in interreligious dialogue*, 11/1 (2001), 10. For Jensen this means that the kenosis of Christ 'is the ground for openness to the religious other and the norm for assessing that other person's religious claim.' But this assessment of the other person's religious claim is based on the presupposition that all our views of God are partial and need deepening. D.H. Jensen, 'The emptying Christ: a christological approach to interfaith dialogue', 20.

political setting (liberation).²² Kenosis represents the willingness to be challenged and changed by the other in order to be with the other. The model of kenosis is therefore a relational model of being in community and in interaction with the other. Because kenosis calls for shedding one's once acquired status, the model creates room for flexibility and adjustment: for changing structures, institutions, attitudes, policies, theologies or services, which have become burdensome or obsolete. The model of kenosis emphasises that not the self, the preservation of the community, the structure or the policy is important, but the other human being and his/her *shalom*.

The final aim of kenosis is the glory of God. The ultimate aim of Christ's kenosis was the reconciliation of the world with God 'to the glory of God the Father'. In its willingness to seek the other, to respect the other in his/her culture and religion and in the encounter with the other, sharing our deepest convictions about God, the model of kenosis offers a paradigm for a joint human pilgrimage towards God. The Christian testimony on that pilgrimage is that of a God whose love for the world was so profound that he was willing to become human in Christ and die on the cross.

10.4 The model of kenosis in the context of The Gambia

Kenosis as the model for the Christian community in The Gambia

The model of kenosis links up with the Gambian reality that Christians, Muslims and African traditional believers perceive each other first of all as fellow human beings, as neighbours, friends, colleagues or relatives with whom they share the ups and downs of life. It is the reality of going to school together, of participating in naming ceremonies, marriages and funerals, of tilling the same soil, of working in the same office and of suffering from the same diseases, the same draughts, and the same electricity cuts. It is on the basis of this shared humanity that relationships develop, friendships are built and faith is shared. The model of kenosis emphasises that it is in sharing life that the love of God is shared. It is this reality that the village catechist lives out daily: he works on the land, teaches in the school, eats the same food and visits his neighbours in the evenings; his presence in the village, his participation in the village life is in itself a sign of the love of God. It was this same understanding that sharing the love of God was sharing people's lives, that induced the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to enter the contaminated houses of Christians as well as Muslims to nurse people during the yellow fever epidemic of 1869, therewith risking their own lives. It is this same understanding that heartens

²² The setting for the model of kenosis is Christ's service of reconciling the world with God. The model of kenosis therefore demands the readiness to share oneself and one's resources and the courage to challenge the powers of injustice. In the model of kenosis servitude means identification with the powerless, the poor and the outcasts and serving them in all their needs, physical, social, political and spiritual. The ultimate aim is not just alleviation of needs, but a liberation of the injustices that discriminate some people and favour others.

the small Christian communities in Bansang, in Bwiam, in Farafenni etc. to remain where they are, as a sign of the presence of God.

In the context of this shared humanity, the Christian relationship to people of other faiths takes the form of kenosis. The model sees radical self-emptying as a necessity to establishing meaningful relationships with people of other faiths and other cultures. It is only in true and radical openness to the other in the totality of his/her being and openness to his/her deepest motivations in life, that the witness of God's love for all people can be shared. Inculturation and interreligious dialogue therefore are not just optional for the interested few, but, according to the model of kenosis, they belong to the core of the Christian calling to imitate Christ in his self-emptying love for people. They are authentic expressions of the Christian identity. Understanding the culture, the religion, the socio-political framework of the other is crucial in the understanding of the other as a person and a prerequisite of sharing his/her life with him/her.

For Christians in The Gambia the model of kenosis offers a way of relating to the Muslim community and to the people of the African traditional religions with whom and among whom they live. Kenosis calls upon Christians to fully participate in the events of everyday life. This means that the participation in religious festivals, the eating of Tobaski meat, the joining in prayers while attending a funeral or the study of Islam or traditional religions, are no longer optional or even questionable activities. Rather, it belongs to the core of the Christian calling to participate in these crucial events in the lives of people, in trying to understand their deepest convictions and in inviting them to share in one's own life and one's own faith. It is in visiting Muslim friends at the end of Ramadan in order to congratulate them with the end of the fasting period and in celebrating the event with them and in inviting them to join in the Christmas celebrations and in the Good Friday dish of *nanburu*, that the other feels taken seriously, as a person and as a religious being. And it is this experience of being loved as a fellow human being in all dimensions, that can enable the experience of the message of God's love for all human beings. Pierre Sallah, a convert from Islam experienced this in the British Methodist missionary Richard Marshall (1829-1830) and gave him the following tribute: 'He loved me too much, all the same as if we be born of one father and one mother.'

Isolation can never be the attitude of a Christian community. It is rather in sharing, and, where necessary, shedding one's life (as was done by some many, Africans as well as Europeans, in the history of Christianity in The Gambia), that the Christian witness is given. Thus, by fully participating in all aspects of daily life, religious, political as well as cultural, the model of kenosis offers the Christian Church a possibility to shed some of its reputation of being 'a stranger' in the Gambian society and thus enables it to more credibly and understandably share the Christian message of God's love and reconciliation.

The concept of self-emptying gives the Gambian Christian community the freedom to review the structures, institutions and theology they have inherited from the missionary age to fit the present day and age, because the other person, rather than the structures etc. are central. In its emphasize on kenosis, the model maintains the importance of a Christian witness in society. The attitude of self-emptying and openness in addition gives people the change to be enriched and challenged by the

faith and lives of others. Any Christian who has lived for a considerable period of time in a predominantly Muslim society has felt the challenge that goes out from the daily call to prayer and from the dedication to fasting during Ramadan. These aspects can lead to a renewed reflection on the role of prayer and fasting in one's own life and can lead to deepening one's own faith.

Thus, the model of kenosis, with its setting in God's mission of reconciliation, combines the positive aspects of the models of diakonia (service and the strife for justice and human rights), presence (the silent witness of life) and dialogue (openness and respect for others and the willingness to learn from the other), but firmly grounds it in the context of a shared humanity. It is there, in our shared lives, that the love of God for human beings becomes visible and credibly. For it was in sharing our lives with us, even share death with us, that Christ showed God's love for the world.

A story of kenosis in The Gambia

In December 1998 the Anglican evangelist James Baldeh and an elderly Fula man called Pa Baldeh who in the past had worked for the Anglican mission as a dispenser, accompanied the author of this book to the ruins of Kristikunda and Saare Yesu. After we had greeted the *alkalo* of Jaokunda and exchanged the traditional gift of kola nuts, we visited the remnants of what was once a flourishing Christian village. Only the foundations were left, hidden in man-high elephant grass. It was a depressing sight and after about 30 minutes we left.

In a local shop in Jaokunda, a *bitik*, we sat down for drink. An elderly Mandinka man approached us, greeted us and inquired after our mission. We explained what we had come to do and a conversation ensued. As a young man he had known Kristikunda very well, the man told us. And he began to describe the buildings, the many people who had lived in Kristikunda, the British and the Gambian missionaries, the car of 'Kotobill', the dignitaries who visited Kristikunda etc. His memory was remarkable. 'But you know what touched me most?' he said meditatively, 'that the bishop was willing to live here. More than all the buildings, the schools, the dispensary and all the good works the missionaries came to do, the fact that the bishop was willing to come and live with us here in this village, touched me. That he, who could have lived in the capital, was willing to live with us here in a village, so far away from the main road, so far away from comfort. That fact told me something about the love of the God of the Christians.'

The man was a Muslim. He had never considered becoming a Christian. But the willingness of an Anglican bishop who was prepared to live in an extremely poor rural village in the backwaters of The Gambia, communicated to this man the core message of the gospel. In this act he experienced that the love of God searches all, Christians and non-Christians, urban and rural people. He understood that the choice of this bishop to voluntarily lay aside comfort and convenience, conveyed the gospel message that all people are worthy in the eyes of God.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT LITURGY FOR THE MAKING OF THE CATECHUMEN

Preamble

This liturgy was drafted by Bishop John Daly. It was recorded in his notebook of 1947, probably to be used in Kristikunda. The liturgy is specifically designed to accept catechumens from Islam and African traditional religions into the Anglican Church. It has separate questions for adults and children from these two religious backgrounds. It is unclear whether the liturgy was ever used in Kristikunda.

Office for making a catechumen

The office should be said at the church door, the priest surrounded by the faithful should stand with his back to the church while the candidate approaches alone.

Antiphon: Wash you, make you clean. Ps. 23

Antiphon: Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, for thine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do good

Reading: Acts 8:26-38

The priest (turning to the candidate):

My son, what dost thou ask of me?

Candidate: I ask, the Christian teaching and holy Baptism.

Priest: It is needful for all men who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, to worship one God in Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.; and to renounce all idols and false gods; to live a sober, honest, pure and godly life; to be in peace and charity with all men, to help those who are in need or distress; to deny themselves, to be constant as well in private prayers as in the public worship of God in His Church.

Questions to be put to an adult pagan

Priest I ask thee therefore: Dost thou promise to worship and serve One God only, putting away all idols and false gods?

Candidate: I promise to do so, by God's help.

Priest: Dost thou promise to have nothing to do with the offering of sacrifices, the use of gree-grees or bad medicine, the practice of magic or any other superstitious practices?

Candidate: I promise not to do these things, by God's help.

Priest: Dost thou promise to abstain from all uncleanness of word or deed and from drunkenness?

Candidate: I promise to abstain, by God's help.

Priest: Dost thou promise to abstain from all anger, strife lying, fraud or

covetousness?

Candidate: I promise to abstain, by God's help.

Questions to be put to a pagan child:

Priest: I ask therefore: Dost thou promise to worship and serve One God only, putting away all idols and false gods?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Priest: Dost thou promise to pray to the Christian God only when you are afraid or in danger or in trouble?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Priest: Do you promise to tell the truth and always be honest?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Priest: Dost thou promise to be clean and pure in your thoughts, words and deed?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Priest: Dost thou promise to be kind and helpful to everybody, especially at home and to dumb animals?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Priest: Dost thou promise to come regularly to the classes and the Mass every Sunday?

Candidate: I promise to do my best.

Questions to be put to a Moslem

Priest: I ask therefore: Dost thou promise to worship and serve the One God, as taught by Jesus Christ?

Candidate: I promise, by God's help.

Priest: Wilt thou cease to be guided by the Koran and give all thy attention to the Holy Bible?

Candidate: I will.

Priest: Wilt thou turn from Mohamet and put all thy trust in Jesus Christ?

Candidate: I will.

Priest: Dost thou promise to have nothing to do with the offering of sacrifice, the use of gree-grees or bad medicine, the practice of magic or any other superstitious practices?

Candidate: I promise to have nothing to do with these things.

Priest: Dost thou promise to abstain from all uncleanness of word, deed and drunkenness?

Candidate: I promise to abstain.

Priest: Dost thou promise to abstain from all anger, strife, lying, fraud, covetousness?

Candidate: I promise to abstain.

[The Candidate alone kneels]

Priest: [Benediction] God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the

Way, the Truth and the Life and who hath put these holy desires into thine heart so to seek for his grace in Baptism, of His mercy grant thee to persevere therein unto the end and fulfil in thee the good pleasure of His will. Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy

Our Father.....

Lord God Almighty, we beseech Thee: look upon this Thy servant who desires to come out of the darkness into the light, and out of the bondage of sin into the glorious unity of the children of God, that being no more a servant but a son, he may in Thy presence find the fullness of joy through Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd who didst lay down Thy life for the sheep; mercifully receive this sheep that has no shepherd, join him with Thine own flock and lead him to the pleasant pastures of everlasting life, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

God, the Holy Ghost, Lord of Love and Giver of Life, lead this Thy servant from this dry and barren land of ignorance unto thy waters of comfort, that he may be washed clean from all offences and begin a new life in Thee, who livest and reignest for ever and ever Amen.

Exorcism

The Priest (standing before the kneeling candidate lifts his right hand):

God, the Son of God, who having spoiled all principalities and powers triumphed over them at the cross, who by death destroyed death and overcame him, that had power over death, beat down Satan quickly under thy feet, deliver thee from all his works, drive from thee every evil and unclean spirit, the spirit of error, the spirit of wickedness, the spirit of idolatry and all covetousness and cause them to depart from henceforth and for ever that thou mayest be made a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost and an heir, with all the saints of the Kingdom of heaven.

The Priest puts a cross, hung by a cord, around the catechumen's neck, saying:

Receive this cross in token that Christ Jesus who died for thee upon the cross, is stretching out His arms to receive and bless thee evermore.

Benediction: God, the Son of God, who hath called thee to follow Him pour water upon thee who art thirsty, and flood upon the dry ground of thy soul. Amen.

**APPENDIX II
COMMUNIQUE, RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
FOURTH PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF AECAWA
LAGOS 20-27 OCTOBER 1986**

Preamble

We the Archbishops and Bishops, participants in the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Association of the Episcopal Conference of Anglophone West Africa, together with representatives of our clergy, religious and laity, meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, from the 20th - 27th October 1986, give thanks to God Almighty, the Father of us all, for his graces and mercies. We praise him for the unity of faith and purpose which in his ineffable goodness he has established among us to become effective, if humble, instruments of his eternal plan to save our sub-region.

Multi-religious society

1. Under the inspiration of his Spirit, we have deliberated on the Theme: CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN DIALOGUE. Our search for dialogue with Islam is motivated by several factors. Our Church finds itself in a multi-religious society. In their daily life, our faithful have to relate at all levels to Muslims and adherents of the Traditional African Religions. It is, therefore, necessary that we find or devise ways and means of living together in peaceful coexistence with our brothers and sisters who do not follow our religion. It is our view that Christians and Muslims must be free to practise their religion without hindrance.

Common religion

2. This is the more so since all human beings form one community. All stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (Acts 17:26). All share a common destiny, namely God (N. Act 1). His Providence, evident goodness and saving designs extend to all. (Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7, 1 Tim. 2:4).

Universal Lord

3. It is also our firm belief that all men and women even those who do not know or accept him, and his lordship over us, are saved by Christ, the Universal Lord of all.

Magisterium of the Church

4. We are further urged by the fact that since Vatican Council II the Church's attitude towards people of other faiths has become more positive. The Council's *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, while asserting that it is in Christ that God has destined that the human race to be saved and to reach happiness, declares that the human person has the right to religious freedom which must be given recognition and respected (n.2).

In the Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, with specific reference to Muslims, the Council teaches that the Church has a high regard for them. She pleads with Christians and Muslims to forget the quarrels and dissension that marked the relations between the two groups in the past. She urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding 'so that together we may preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values' (N. Act.3). His Holiness Pope John Paul II has reiterated this call on several occasions, especially during his pastoral visits to our countries in Africa.

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Preamble: In this thesis two types of sources have been used. The primary sources are the sources, which have served as a *fundgrube* for the history of Christianity in The Gambia. They consist of interviews, archival materials, unpublished theses, pamphlets, journals and books and articles published by Gambians. The secondary sources are formed by all other sources, both on The Gambia and on more general topics. These sources consist of books, articles, websites and videos.

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SAMENVATTING IN HET NEDERLANDS

In 1456 zette de Portugese ontdekkingsreiziger Diogo Gomes voet aan wal in Gambia. Hij was in dienst van Prins Hendrik de Zeevaarder en op zoek naar handelspartners en Afrikaanse bondgenoten in de strijd tegen de Islam. Nadat de Portugezen de Moslims uit hun rijk hadden verdreven, hadden ze hun gevecht voortgezet in Noord Afrika. Tijdens zijn verblijf in Marokko als gouverneur van Ceuta, had Prins Hendrik geruchten gehoord over het goud van Afrika en over een Christelijke koning, Presbyter Johannes, die achter de Moslim linies, ergens in Afrika zou wonen. Kort daarop begonnen de eerste Portugese schepen de zeeroutes richting West Afrika te verkennen. Ze gingen op zoek naar handelspartners en op zoek naar Presbyter Johannes. Toen ze eenmaal ontdekt hadden dat ze via een golfstroom boven Kaap Verdië redelijk gemakkelijk en veilig weer terug naar Portugal konden varen, was de verkenning van West Afrika een feit.

Diogo Gomes was één van de eersten die de Gambia rivier verkende. In de monding van de rivier, ging hij aan land. Daar ontmoette hij de *Mansa* van Niumi, de leider van het gebied. Hij raakte met hem in gesprek over handel en religie. De *Mansa* bleek zeer geïnteresseerd in zowel het Christendom als de handel met de Portugezen en verklaarde zich bereid zendingen te ontvangen. Verheugd keerde Gomes terug naar Portugal met het bericht dat hij weliswaar Presbyter Johannes niet had gevonden, maar dat er wel een Afrikaanse chieft was die bereid bleek Christen te worden. De vooruitzichten op de kerstening van Gambia leken veel belovend.

Vijfhonderd jaar later was inmiddels het tegendeel gebleken. Slechts zo'n drie en half procent van de Gambianen was Christen geworden. Bijna alle anderen werden Moslim. Rond het jaar 1960 verzuchtte de Anglicaanse bisschop Olufosoye: "Terugkijkend op een zendingsgeschiedenis van verschillende eeuwen in Gambia en omstreken, kunnen we slechts constateren dat het is zoals de discipelen tot Jezus zeiden: 'We hebben de hele nacht hard gewerkt, maar niets gevangen'." De titel van deze dissertatie is aan Olufosoye's uitspraak ontleend.

Dit boek beschrijft de bijna 550 jaar lange geschiedenis van het Christendom in Gambia, van 1456 tot 2000. Het bespreekt de ontwikkeling van het Christendom tegen de achtergrond van de groei van de Islam in Gambia. De relaties tussen Christenen en Moslims krijgen daarom in elk kerkhistorisch hoofdstuk specifieke aandacht. Naast een historisch onderzoek wil dit boek ook een systematisch theologische vraag aan de orde stellen, namelijk deze: Hoe ben je Christelijke gemeente in een overwegend Moslim samenleving? Deze vraag wordt op twee manieren benaderd. Allereerst wordt gekeken welke modellen in het verleden zijn gebruikt in relatie tot Moslims. Daarbij komen de modellen van expansie, diakonia, presentie en dialoog ter sprake. Deze modellen worden in het laatste hoofdstuk geëvalueerd aan de hand van de geschiedenis. Vervolgens wordt een voorstel gedaan voor een nieuw model: een model van kenosis. Met deze twee vragen van historische en systematische aard is dit onderzoek van start gegaan.

Na de algemene inleiding die de vraagstelling van de studie uiteenzet, volgen drie inleidende hoofdstukken over Gambia. Hoofdstuk 2 beschrijft de belangrijkste

etnische groepen in Gambia: de Jola, de Fula, de Wolof, de Serer, de Mandinka, de Serahuli, de Krio en de Manjago. Tijdens de bespreking wordt er op gewezen, hoe racisme en bepaalde visies op cultuur en etniciteit een rol hebben gespeeld bij de beschrijving van de etnische groepen en bij pogingen hen tot het Christendom te bekeren. Het hoofdstuk concludeert dat Gambia een traditie van interetnisch en interreligieus samenleven kent, die voor een deel de vreedzame relaties tussen Christenen en Moslims verklaart. Verder wordt ook geconstateerd dat met name die groepen, die vanaf de 19^e eeuw in Gambia kwamen wonen, Christen zijn geworden. Bijna alle anderen, die zich al eerder in Gambia hadden gevestigd, werden Moslim.

Hoofdstuk 3 geeft een algemene geschiedenis van het land met als doel een achtergrond te bieden voor de ontwikkeling van het Christendom in Gambia. De nadruk ligt daarbij op de geschiedenis vanaf de 15^e eeuw. Vanaf dat moment zijn er namelijk contacten tussen West Afrika en Portugal en komt Gambia voor het eerst in aanraking met het Christendom. Portugese handelaars worden al snel gevolgd door de eerste missionarissen, maar hun impact blijft beperkt. Een belangrijke ontwikkeling is echter dat vanaf die tijd de handel via de zee en de rivieren langzaam maar zeker de trans-Sahara handelsroutes begint te vervangen. Als gevolg daarvan verschuift het zwaartepunt van de handel zich van het binnenland naar de kust. Maar afgezien van de handel, blijft de Europese invloed – en daarmee ook de invloed van het Christendom – in Gambia beperkt. Pas vanaf de 19^e eeuw, als Engeland een kolonie aan de kust van Gambia vestigt, krijgen zendingsorganisaties belangstelling voor het land. Vanaf dat moment begint een intensieve poging tot kerstening van Gambia. Maar juist in diezelfde 19^e eeuw is er ook binnen de Islam een hervormingsbeweging op gang gekomen. Tijdens deze hervormingen wordt het merendeel van bevolking Moslim. Pas in het begin van de 20^{ste} eeuw wordt het binnenland van Gambia tot protectoraat verklaard en dringt ook daar de Europese invloed door. In 1965 wordt het land onafhankelijk verklaard onder leiding van de eerste president Dawdu Jawara.

Hoofdstuk 4 beschrijft hoe ook de Islam West Afrika en later ook Gambia via handel bereikt. Vanaf de 11^e eeuw brengen Noord Afrikaanse en Berber Moslim handelaren, die zich in West Afrikaanse steden vestigen, de Islam met zich mee. Langzaam maar zeker verspreidt de Islam zich. Deze 'zwarte Islam' blijkt een Islam te zijn die zich verregaand aanpast aan de West Afrikaanse setting. Amuletten, magie en de zogenaamde *marabouts* – een kruising tussen een traditionele genezer en een moslim geleerde – spelen een grote rol. Vanaf de 16^e eeuw komen de eerste hervormingen in West Afrika op gang. Met name de 18^e en 19^e eeuw worden gekenmerkt door de *jihads* die tot doel hebben een zuiverder (lees: meer Arabische) vorm van de Islam te verspreiden. In Gambia leidt dit in de tweede helft van de 19^e eeuw, ook de tijd van het opkomende kolonialisme, tot de Soninke-Marabout oorlogen, waarin Moslims zich verzetten tegen onderdrukking en marginalisering door de aanhangers van de traditionele religies, die nog veelal de heersende klasse vormen. Tijdens deze oorlogen wordt de Islam in Gambia de religie van het merendeel van de bevolking. Deze islamisering zet zich voort in de eerste decennia van de 20^{ste} eeuw voort in de vorm van sociale druk en gaat gepaard met een groeiend Moslim zelfbewustzijn. Dit leidt tot Moslim scholen, Moslim belangengroepen en het zich aansluiten bij internationale Islamitische organisaties.

De hoofdstukken 5 tot 9 geven een overzicht van de geschiedenis van het Christendom in Gambia. Deze geschiedenis is gekenmerkt door veel moeite en inspanning. Er werd een hoge prijs betaald, zowel in financiële investeringen als in menskracht, voor het verspreiden van het evangelie in Gambia: veel zendelingen, Afrikanen zowel als Europeanen werden ziek; nog veel meer stierven op 'het zendingsveld'.

De eerste pogingen tot zending werden gedaan in het midden van de 15^e eeuw toen de Portugezen zendelingen naar West Afrika stuurden. Zo rond 1460 kwamen de abt van Soto de Casa en John Delgada als eerste zendelingen naar Gambia. Vele anderen volgden in hun voetspoor door de loop der eeuwen. Maar het bleken geen Gambianen te zijn die de eerste Christelijke gemeenschappen in Gambia vormden. Het waren de Mulattoes, de nakomelingen van Portugese en Kaap Verdische handelaren en Afrikaanse vrouwen, die vanaf eind 15^e eeuw voor het Christendom kozen als hun religie. Het Christendom werd deel van de identiteit van de Mulattoes, net zoals hun taal, hun kleding en hun manier van leven. Wonend in kleine dorpjes langs de Gambia rivier bewaarden deze Mulattoes gedurende vier eeuwen het Christendom. Maar erg aanstekelijk werkte hun geloof niet: hun belangrijkste bron van inkomsten was de slavenhandel.

Het was de afschaffing van de slavenhandel door Engeland in 1807 die in Europa tot een hernieuwde belangstelling voor zending in Gambia leidde. In 1816 vestigde zich een regiment Engelse troepen op een zandbank in de monding van de rivier Gambia, Deze vestiging groeide langzaam maar zeker uit tot Banjul, de huidige hoofdstad van het land. Vanaf 1821 begon het zendingswerk in Gambia pas goed. Met name de Methodisten waren in de eerste jaren actief en raakten betrokken bij de zorg voor teruggekeerde en op zee onderschepte slaven: de zogenaamde Liberated en Recaptive Africans, die zich tot de Krio gemeenschap ontwikkelden. Deze ontheemden mensen, die in de loop der jaren met behulp van het Christendom een nieuwe identiteit wisten te creëren, vormen tot op vandaag de dag de kern van de Methodistisch – en Anglikaanse – kerk. Rooms Katholieke missionarissen, de paters van de Heilige Geest en de zusters van het Onbevleete hart van Maria, vestigden zich vanaf 1849 permanent in Gambia. De Rooms Katholieke gemeenschap werd met name gevormd door de Mulattoes en door Wolof uit Gorée en St. Louis in Senegal. Deze laatste groep was al gedurende lange tijd met Christendom in aanraking geweest en had zich als ambachtslieden en handelaren in Banjul gevestigd.

De eerste decennia bleef het zendingswerk beperkt tot het kustgebied: epidemieën en de Soninke-Marabout oorlogen maakten constructief werk in het binnenland vrijwel onmogelijk in de tweede helft van de 19^e eeuw. Vanaf 1920 werd dat anders. Anglicanen Methodisten en Rooms Katholieken deden een poging om in het binnenland de aanhangers van de traditionele religies – met name Jola, Fula en Serer – te bekeren tot het Christendom. Vooral het Anglikaanse project onder de Fula, Kristikunda, is bekend. Kristikunda was een poging om een Christelijk getuigend dorp op te richten in de buurt van Basse, helemaal in het oosten van Gambia. Het was een kostbare onderneming, maar het leidde uiteindelijk niet tot de beoogde bekering van de Fula en moest wegens gebrek aan financiën gesloten

worden. Ook de andere pogingen tot zending onder de Jola, Fula en Serer leidden niet tot de gehoopte bekering tot Christendom.

De groei van de Christelijke gemeenschap kwam van een andere, onverwachte, kant. Vanaf 1960 kwamen groepen vluchtelingen uit de Casamance en Guinee-Bissau naar Gambia. De belangrijkste en grootste groep onder hen waren de Manjago. Zij hadden Guinee-Bissau verlaten tijdens de bloedige strijd voor onafhankelijkheid van Portugal. Deze toestroom van Manjago, die bij hun aankomst in Gambia nog veelal de traditionele religie hadden aangehangen maar in Gambia en masse tot het Christendom overgingen, maakte de Rooms Katholieke kerk tot de grootste in het land. Slechts een klein deel van de Manjago werd protestant. Opnieuw hielp het Christelijk geloof, net als eerder het geval was geweest bij de Mulattoes, de Krio en de Wolof slaven uit Gorée en St. Louis, een groep mensen met het integreren in de samenleving en met het creëren van een nieuwe identiteit.

Ondanks deze onverwachte groei bleef de Christelijke gemeenschap een kleine minderheid in Gambia. De bewustwording van deze minderheidspositie leidde in 1966 tot het oprichten van de Gambia Christian Council, de Gambiaanse Raad van Kerken. Rooms Katholieken, Anglikanen, Methodisten en Baptisten vormden de belangrijkste leden. Sinds 1990 wordt ook een poging gedaan om contact te zoeken met de steeds groter wordende groep van kleine, evangelische en pinksterkerken in Gambia, die zich hebben verenigd in de Evangelical Fellowship of The Gambia. Oecumene in Gambia is namelijk van levensbelang. Wil de Christelijke gemeenschap enige invloed blijven uitoefenen in de samenleving, zal ze met een gezamenlijke stem moeten spreken.

Onderwijs vormde het belangrijkste 'project' van de kerken in Gambia. Meer dan medische zorg en ontwikkelingswerk heeft de Christelijke gemeenschap zich ingezet voor het onderwijs. Vanaf begin 19^e eeuw werden er scholen opgericht. Deze hadden enerzijds tot doel om de kleine Christelijke gemeenschap op te bouwen en toekomstige leiders te kweken, anderzijds om niet-Christenen in aanraking te brengen met het evangelie. Anders dan in veel andere West Afrikaanse landen heeft het onderwijs niet tot een toestroom van mensen tot het Christendom geleid. Langzaam maar zeker stelden daarom de kerken hun doelen bij: onderwijs werd een methode om Christelijke invloed in de samenleving te verspreiden en een plek om een basis te leggen voor goede relaties tussen Christenen en Moslims.

In meer recentere jaren is er ook aandacht voor de inhoudelijke groei van de Christelijke gemeenschap. In dat kader komen thema's als inculturatie, contextualisatie en Christen-Moslim relaties ter sprake. Maar de ontwikkelingen op dit gebied gaan nog moeizaam: het aantal Gambiaanse theologen is beperkt en het dagelijkse kerkenwerk vraagt veel energie. Bovendien aarzelen veel Gambiaanse Christenen om zich aan een gevoelig thema als inculturatie te branden. Te lang hebben ze gehoord dat hun eigen cultuur, hun eigen religie niet deugden. Toch wordt het tijd dat ook in Gambia bewust gereflecteerd wordt op de wisselwerking tussen het evangelie en de Senegambiaanse culturen, want nog steeds wordt het Christendom verweten dat het een religie van buitenlanders is: een niet-Afrikaanse (lees: Westerse) religie, aangenomen door mensen die zich pas 'recent' in Gambia hebben gevestigd.

Hoofdstuk 10 geeft een evaluerend overzicht van de geschiedenis en de modellen. Het constateert dat het model van de expansie dominant is geweest in de relaties van de Christelijke gemeenschap met Moslims. Tot ver in de twintigste eeuw was het model van expansie de voornaamste manier van omgaan met mensen van andere religies. Ook de diakonia stond veelal in het teken van de expansie. Het langdurig samengaan van kerkelijke expansie en politiek expansionisme hebben dit model verdacht gemaakt. Vanaf midden twintigste eeuw wordt diakonia het belangrijkste model in relatie tot Moslims. De Christelijke gemeenschap ziet het als haar taak om de samenleving te dienen met onderwijs, medische zorg en met het streven naar gerechtigheid. In Gambia werd nooit echt gekozen voor het model van de presentie, maar het Kristikunda project en de vele kleine Christelijke gemeenschappen in het binnenland lijken dit model onbewust te beoefenen. Vanaf 1970 is er ook aandacht voor het model van de dialoog. Dit model wordt geïnterpreteerd als een poging om te komen tot begrip en respect voor de ander en te streven naar vreedzaam samenleven. Slechts een enkeling gaat een stap verder en interpreteert het tevens als een model om van elkaar te leren en zo tot een dieper inzicht te komen in wie God is en wie wij zelf zijn als gelovigen.

Het hoofdstuk en het boek eindigt met een voorstel om tot komen tot een model van kenosis in relatie met mensen van andere religies. Dit model, gebaseerd op Filippenzen. 2, stelt de kenosis (de ontlediging) van Jezus centraal en roept op tot navolging van die kenosis. Het model biedt ruimte voor zowel een totale openheid voor de ander, een ontleding in cultuur (inculturatie), religie (Christen Moslim relaties) en sociaal politieke omstandigheden (bevrijding), om de ander nabij te komen en geeft tegelijkertijd de mogelijkheid om vast te houden aan de eigen identiteit. Het zet de ontmoeting met de ander en het delen van de liefde van God met de ander in de context van het dagelijks samenleven. Want het is in het samen leven en in het delen van dagelijks leven van elke dag dat de liefde van God, toen en nu, openbaar wordt.

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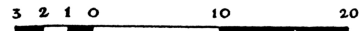
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