# The Baha'i Faith in Africa

## Establishing a New Religious Movement, 1952–1962

*By*
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LEIDEN • BOSTON
2011

# Studies of Religion in Africa

*Edited by*

Benjamin Soares, Africa Studies Center, Leiden, The Netherlands
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VOLUME 39

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lee, Anthony A., 1947–
The Baha'i faith in Africa : establishing a new religious movement, 1952–1962 / by Anthony A. Lee.
p. cm. — (Studies of religion in Africa ; v. 39)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-90-04-20684-7 (hardback : alk. paper)
1. Bahai Faith—Africa—History. I. Title. II. Series.

BP355.A35L44 2011
297.9'309609045—dc23

2011030296

ISSN 0169-9814
ISBN 978 90 04 20684 7

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# NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND STYLE

Any academic work on Baha'i history raises the question of how to render Persian and Arabic words, names, and phrases into the Latin alphabet. The use of other English conventions—such as capitalization, gender forms, and italics—also becomes problematic. Unfortunately, there is no one system of transliteration and style that is used universally in academia, so various systems compete. The systems used in this book are not entirely consistent. For that, I apologize in advance.

In 1923, Shoghi Effendi, then the head of the Baha'i Faith, asked Baha'is of the world to "avoid confusion in the future" by adopting an academic system of transliteration which was then in use. He presented this as "an authoritative and universal, though arbitrary code for the spelling of Oriental terms."[1] The strong point of the system was its strict insistence on letter-for-letter transliterations, such that any bilingual reader seeing a Persian or Arabic word transliterated by this system could immediately write the word back into the original language without error. The other advantage was that it brought consistency and uniformity to spellings in Baha'i books in various countries and languages.

Since then, Baha'i literature has adhered to this system religiously to represent Persian and Arabic words that did not have conventional spellings. However, academic conventions moved on, and the Baha'i spellings now sometimes appear old-fashioned and/or confusing. The system, besides being arbitrary, also had the disadvantage of being heavy with diacritical marks—so that the ubiquitous word *Bahai*, for example, was loaded down with two accent marks and an apostrophe—*Bahá'í*.

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[1] Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages*, 1922–1932, Revised edition (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974 [1928]) p. 56. Shoghi Effendi apparently believed that this system had been adopted as standard by academics at one of the International Oriental Congresses. But he seems to have been mistaken. (Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1955.] For a discussion of this matter, see Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i System of Transliteration," *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 5 ( January 1991) Nos. 1–2, pp. 13ff. See also, Stephen Lambden, "Modern Western, Arabic-Persian Academic Transliteration System," *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 5 ( January 1991) Nos. 1–2, pp. 56ff.

For this book, I have used a modified and softened version of (what is now exclusively) a Baha'i system. I have eliminated all sublinear diacritical marks (dots and underlining). All accent marks have been removed, as well, even from *Baha'u'llah* and *Bab*—though, *the Bab* retains the definite article to avoid confusion with the common English name (Bob) which is pronounced identically. Words that have conventional English spellings, as might be found in a dictionary or newspaper, are not transliterated using this system. The second hyphen in the rendering of the *ezafeh* form of Persian (which links two nouns) has been dropped. (So, Baha'u'llah's Book of Certitude is Kitab-i Iqan, not Kitáb-i-Íqán, for example.) I hope this will make the work more readable.

However, when quoting other books and authors using other systems of transliteration, I have been obliged to copy the spellings found in those works. Since I have cited and quoted a large number of Baha'i books and authors, the inconsistencies are glaring.[2]

Normally, book titles are placed in italics. However, books of Holy Scripture are not italicized—Bible, Qur'an, and Torah, for example. Therefore, major works of Baha'i scripture are not found in italics, unless the reference is to a specific published edition. For example, Baha'u'llah's holy book, the Kitab-i Aqdas, is normally not italicized.[3] References are made to the paragraph numbers of that book, which are the same in all editions.

Persian and Arabic phrases that are quoted in the book have been rendered in italics.

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[2] To make matters worse, Baha'i books published before 1923 (and sometimes afterward) did not adhere to the system Shoghi Effendi recommended. More recently, Baha'i authors—and especially scholars—have begun to depart from that system as I have, using their own forms of transliteration, or using conventional forms demanded by their publishers. Scholars who are not Baha'is have used their own systems when discussing Baha'i topics.

[3] Likewise, the Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, another work of scripture. On the other hand, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, for example, is a compilation of passages excerpted from Baha'u'llah's major works. Since it is a compiled, published volume—even if of scripture—it is rendered in italics.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume has had a difficult birth and has been attended by so many patient midwives that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to thank all of them. Through decades of postponements and repeated resolutions to start afresh—during which time I pursued book publishing as a career, a cause, and a passion—I have become indebted to many faithful supporters of my academic work, without whom this flawed piece of scholarship could not have been written.

First, I should express thanks to the late Valerie Wilson who generously allowed me to interview her and to copy her personal papers. Her records provided an abundance of information, allowing me to pursue the answers to questions that otherwise would have been unanswerable. I am also grateful to Don Addison for making his recorded interviews available to me.

Edward A. Alpers was the primary academic advisor for the dissertation upon which this book is based. It was he who first suggested to me that the Baha'i religion in Africa might become the topic of my research. His unflagging optimism and his uninterrupted support for my work over many years were nothing short of saintly. His comments and recommendations have improved this work greatly. I am grateful for the encouragement of Tom Hinnebusch and Christopher Ehret which they both expressed reliably and often over so long a time.

I must thank also Amin Banani, whose family appears in the body of this work, and his wife, Sheila Walcott Banani, for reading drafts of my work and for encouraging my efforts. I deeply appreciate their willingness to offer their home as a venue for interviews with Amin's mother, the late Samiheh (Mama-jan) Banani. Her remarkable openness and frankness were precious gifts.

I am also grateful to Juan R. I. Cole and to Sen McGlinn for their useful comments on drafts of this work. I cannot fail to express deep appreciation as well to the late Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, longtime friend and confidant, for many hours of discussion on the early chapters of my dissertation and for his confidence in my work. I also thank my friend and spiritual brother, Mehrdad Amanat, for reading parts of this work and making helpful suggestions—also for blazing a trail for me with his own recent dissertation and book.

I am eager to thank Terence O. Ranger, who first introduced me to the historical study of African religions and who never fails to inspire me with his insights on the subject. His consultation and encouragement over the years have been foundational and essential. Thanks also to Greg Pirio for his faith in me and his constant encouragement of my work.

I especially appreciate the willingness of Baha'i scholars who have done research on Africa for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project to share their work with me: Moojan Momen; Loni Bramson-Lerche, Martha Garman, Akwasi O. Osei, Prince K. Abaidoo, and Roberta Al-Salihi. Special thanks to Will C. van den Hoonaard for his assistance and concern. The materials he shared with me were invaluable.

I also wish to thank the following for their courtesy in allowing me to reproduce the maps and photographs that illustrate this volume: the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom, Kalimát Press, and I. B. Tauris Publisher.

Most importantly, I must thank my wife, Flor Geola, for her many years of patience and toleration.

Finally, I am keenly aware that this is the first book to be written on the history of the Baha'i faith in Africa. As a consequence, it is certainly replete with oversights and errors. Therefore, let me express my appreciation in advance to future scholars who will point out my many mistakes and advance this field of academic study.

CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION: THE BABI/BAHA'I MOVEMENT

## *The Beginnings of the Babi/Baha'i Movement*

On the evening of May 22, 1844, a young Muslim theology student named Mulla Husayn, returning to Iran from the Iraqi Shi'ite shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, was invited into the home of one of the merchants in Shiraz. According to the traditional, hagiographic accounts, during the course of that evening Mulla Husayn became convinced that his merchant-host was the person who would soon fulfill certain prophecies and expectations of the Shi'ite esoteric tradition.[1] Mulla Husayn's conversion was the beginning of a movement.[2]

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[1] This opening narrative relies on the hagiographic account of the Bab's 'declaration' found in the pious history of Nabil-i A'zam (Mulla Muhammad Zarandi) edited and translated into English by Shoghi Effendi as *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932). There are other accounts of the event, most notably in Mírzá Husayn Hamadani, *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd or New History of Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad the Bab*, trans. by Edward G. Browne (Cambridge University Press, 1893). For a full discussion of the sources, see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) pp. 166–74. Other accounts, while no less affected by Baha'i piety than is Nabil's narrative, are more interested in chronicling Mulla Husayn's inner struggle to accept the Bab's messianic claim. This struggle almost certainly played itself out over a period of at least a few days—other sources suggest anywhere between three and forty days—rather than in one night, as Nabil relates. (Denis MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz: Studies in Early and Middle Babism* [Leiden: Brill, 2009] pp. 167–68.)

[2] Of course, there is a considerable literature on the Babi movement. The various works of Edward G. Browne are still important, especially his translation and notation of *A Traveller's Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 1891), by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and his own *Materials for the Study of the Babí Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1918). The best recent academic treatments are to be found in Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, and in Denis MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shí'í Islam," Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979 (finally published in *The Messiah of Shiraz* [2009]). The classic Baha'i chronicle of the period is Nabil-i A'zam's *The Dawn-Breakers*, mentioned above. See also, H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973) and Peter Smith's sociological study, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions: From messianic Shi'ism to a world religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). The early volumes of the *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* series, Anthony A. Lee, General Editor, are also useful.

Baha'is mark the start of their history with that conversion, which took place—all sources agree—precisely at two hours and eleven minutes after sunset on May 22.[3] The merchant, Sayyid 'Ali-Muhammad of Shiraz, who later took the title of 'the Bab' (Arabic: Gate), claimed to be the appearance of the long-awaited Qa'im, the Imam Mahdi, the Hidden Imam, whose return in the flesh had been awaited for a thousand years by pious Shi'is.[4] The Babi movement quickly grew and spread, gaining a following in Iran among the religious scholars (ulama) of the Shaykhi school,[5] and eventually a wider following among ordinary Shi'ite Muslims. The followers of the Bab were soon declared heretics by the orthodox Muslim clergy, persecuted, and scattered. The Bab himself was imprisoned and eventually executed in 1850.

But on that first evening, the movement began with a conversation. Mulla Husayn was impressed by his host's invitation and by his solicitous hospitality once they were settled in his merchant house. The Bab ordered water to be brought and personally poured it so the student could wash his hands. He offered him refreshments, ordered a samovar and prepared tea for them to drink. They performed their evening prayer. They talked of religious matters, especially the more esoteric aspects of the Shaykhi religious doctrines with which they were both associated. Mulla Husayn showed his host some of his own writings on these subjects. The Bab, in turn, shared his compositions. During the course of the evening, Mulla Husayn became aware that his host was laying claim to a divine mission and asking him to become his

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[3] In his Persian Bayan (Bayan II, 7 30), the Bab himself fixes this time as the exact moment for the beginning of his revelation. See *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1976) p. 107. Also, Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 170; MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz*, p. 168.

[4] The eschatological prophecies of mainstream Shi'i Islam anticipate the coming of the Qa'im (Arabic: he who will arise; that is, arise from the family of the Prophet Muhammad). These Shi'is believe that the twelfth Imam, Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad (869–873 AD) did not die in childhood. He has remained miraculously alive through the centuries, hidden from the world. He is the Mahdi (Arabic: the guided one) who will suddenly end his occultation before the Day of Resurrection to wage a final battle for the establishment of righteousness on earth. Despite some similarities in eschatological expectations, the Shi'ite Mahdi is a different personality than the Mahdi of the Sunnis. He will not appear at the end-times simply to restore the abandoned Islamic shari'a, but rather to establish a new age of justice and a new religious order. (Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* [Oxford: George Ronald, 1985] pp. 45, 161–71; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 2–6.)

[5] A branch of Shi'ism that developed in the nineteenth century around the innovative theology of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753–1826).

Illustration 1.1. The Entrance to the House of the Bab

The front entrance to the House of the Bab in Shiraz from the street. The Bab's 'Ethiopian servant' Haji Mubarak acted as the doorman at this entrance during the first weeks of the Babi movement in 1844. The Bab's house was destroyed by the Iranian government after the Islamic revolution of 1979. Source: Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, *Black Pearls*, Second Edition (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1999) p. 8. Catalogued at the Bahá'í World Center, Audio Visual Department as NN3621-79, FN 13241.

first disciple. Then, to his great consternation, Mulla Husayn realized that he had perforce accepted that claim.

Mulla Husayn's conversion is remembered by Baha'is today as a seminal moment in their salvation history. The anniversary of that night is celebrated annually on the evening of May 22, by Baha'i communities around the world as a holy day, the 'Declaration of the Bab.' The various (and 'sacred') events surrounding the conversion are well known to Baha'is. I have argued elsewhere that there is no American Baha'i, for example, for whom this account does not carry profound personal significance. In fact, I have suggested that this story is so important that it has become one of the foundational myths supporting American Baha'i identity, an episode that is replayed at least once a year in American Baha'i imagination.[6]

The religious ecstasy that Mulla Husayn reports he felt that night is instructive. He was overwhelmed by the conviction that a new era in human history had begun. He was dazzled and empowered by a vision of infinite new possibilities. Many years later, he remembered his emotions on that occasion quite vividly:

> This revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendor and overwhelmed by its crushing force.
>
> Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanized my being.
>
> I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp.
>
> I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: "Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your promised One is come!"[7]

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[6] Anthony A. Lee, "Reconciling the Other: The Bahá'í Faith in America as a Successful Synthesis of Christianity and Islam," Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi, and Baha'i Studies, Vol. 7, no. 2 (March 2003) http://www.hnet.msu.edu/~bahai/bhpapers/vol7/reconc.htm.

[7] These are the remembered words of Mulla Husayn as reported by Mirza Ahmad

The Shi'ite millenarian movement known as Babism that was founded that night by the Shirazi merchant, the Bab, was the origin of the Baha'i religion that was brought to the United States in the 1890s. Remarkably, the same exhilaration and sense of unlimited possibility that Mulla Husayn describes was to be experienced also by thousands of American converts, and then by thousands of Africans in the colonial West Africa of the 1950s and 1960s.

Mulla Husayn's ecstatic conversion, in fact, translated well into American and Christian idioms. Stanwood Cobb, then a young Unitarian minister, and later an important Baha'i author and speaker, has left this description of hearing the Baha'i message for the first time in 1906, at the Green Acre conferences, in Eliot, Maine:

> Miss Farmer[8] took my hand in hers and cordially held it while she looked into my eyes and asked, "Have you heard of the Persian Revelation?"
>
> "No," I answered.
>
> "Well, go to that lady in the white headdress and ask her to tell you about it. I know by your eyes that you are ready for it."
>
> …Mary Lucas, the 'woman in white'—a singer just back from visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá—took me under an apple tree on the sloping lawn and proceeded to unfold to me the Persian Revelation. Her exposition was very simple. It consisted of only these four words: "Our Lord has come!"[9]
>
> The moment Mary Lucas uttered those words I felt, *This is it!*…one simple utterance could sweep me—mind, heart, and soul—into that Faith!…
>
> If 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself had stood under that apple tree and addressed me, I could not have been more convinced.… Mary Lucas had brought the spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with her. I felt it, and I was convinced. Especially as my own soul had already sought out and found the answer to the world's dire needs: *Someone must appear with more than human authority.*[10]

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Qazvini (who is supposed to have heard the former relate the story on a number of occasions) to Nabíl-i A'zam. (*The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 65.)

[8] Sarah Farmer had established the Green Acre conferences in 1894, at Eliot, Maine, in the aftermath of the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. The sessions were devoted to the exposition of progressive ideas and lectures on comparative religions. After 1900, when Miss Farmer became a Baha'i, the Baha'i faith was included among the subjects taught there.

[9] Meaning, Christ has returned.

[10] Stanwood Cobb, "Memories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" in *In His Presence: Visits to 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1989) pp. 26–29, reprinted from the July–August 1962 issues of *Bahá'í News*.

So perhaps we should not be surprised that the Baha'i message could also translate successfully into African cultures and expectations. Jacob Tabot Awo relates this story of meeting a Baha'i teacher, Enoch Olinga, in the British Cameroons in 1953:

> On the day he came to introduce the Faith, I said: "In fact, are you saying that Baha'u'llah is the Promised One?"
>
> He said: "Yes!"
>
> "By whom, and by what Prophet?"
>
> He said: "By Christ, by Muhammad, by Zoroaster, by Krishna—all the Prophets."
>
> I said: "Yes, it is true, because I read it in one of the parts of the Bible—that after one-thousand years a messiah comes. But what Christ said in his Holy Book…He said: 'I will come in the Glory of the Father, and when I shall come, I will establish the House of my Father on the top of Mount Carmel.' Which house is there?"
>
> The Hand of the Cause Olinga, who was [then] the traveling teacher, he answered me. He said: "You are a clever child. I am telling you that it is the Tomb of the Bab, now established on Mount Carmel."
>
> I said: "Yes. I accept you. [But] I have a second question. He [Christ] said: 'When he shall come, he will have his name to be written on a block, on a pillar of the house.' Which name is there?"
>
> Then he told me—he said: "Yes." That's when he said: "Baha'u'llah's name is written on one of the pillars of the house, meaning 'The Glory of God,' as you have said."
>
> I said: "Correct."…
>
> Then hearing all of his answers, I was very calm and [in] great happiness, and great joy—because of my last vision that I saw when I was fourteen years old. I saw that I was in the presence of Christ, introducing me to the wounds, the scars…and then I was seeing the [thorns] on his head, the wounds, and everything that they did to him. And then he said: "You will go and teach my new Faith." I didn't know what was the meaning of that. But now that I embraced this new Faith, I knew that it was the Faith that Christ told me, when I saw my vision. I actually confirmed that it is true. This was the religion that Christ promised that I will go and teach. So, I accepted it wholeheartedly. And the next morning, I came and then asked for Mr. Enoch Olinga, to tell me the way how I will become a Baha'i![11]

[11] Transcript of Don Addison interview with Jacob Tabot Awo, 1/2/83, National Baha'i Center, Limbe (Victoria), Cameroon. Don Addison papers.

## *Religious Transformations*

The Baha'i faith that reached West Africa in the early 1950s had its origins in the Shi'ite millenarian movement founded by the Bab one hundred years earlier. From its beginnings as "a heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of the Shaykhí school of Ithná-'Asharíyyih sect of Shí'ah Islam,"[12] the movement, by the twenty-first century, has transformed itself into a distinctive and independent religious system whose leadership claims for it the status of a new world religion.

The brutal suppression of the Babi religion within Iran by an alliance of clergy and government, the failure of armed resistance, and the execution of leading Babis, including the Bab himself, left the movement ripe for reinterpretation. This was eventually provided by Baha'u'llah (Mirza Husayn-'Ali Nuri), a wealthy and notable Babi, who made the claim to be the Bab's successor, and a prophet of God in his own right—equal to, and perhaps greater than, the Bab himself. From his exile in Ottoman realms (1853–1892), he reshaped the Babi teachings into a new quietist and liberal religion with universal claims. All but a small minority of Babis had become Baha'is, followers of Baha'u'llah, by the time of the second prophet's death (1892).

Subsequent diffusion of the Baha'is to Europe and America, in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, brought more transformations, with the explicit articulation of Baha'i beliefs in terms of Christian themes, using Christian terminology, and with reference to Christian scriptures. The Baha'i faith self-consciously represented itself, almost from the beginning of its arrival in the West, as a new religious movement—independent and distinct from all other religions. Baha'is of both East and West enthusiastically adopted quasi-democratic, Western parliamentary forms as the organizational framework of their religion. Perhaps somewhat prematurely, from the 1920s, Western Baha'is at least presented their religion to the public as the most recent of the great world

[12] An observation made by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, then the 'Guardian'and head of the Baha'i faith, in his official history of the first century of the religion, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944) p. xii. This passage traces the sectarian geneology of the Baha'i religion, which finds its roots in Babism (the "negligible offshoot"), which arose from within Shaykhism (a Shi'ite school of theological thought), which was a movement within mainstream, 'Twelver' (Ithna-'Ashariyyih) Shi'ism. The Twelvers accept a line of twelve (and only twelve) Imams as legitimate successors to the Prophet Muhammad. The great majority of Shi'ites are Twelvers.

religions of mankind. Today the Baha'i communities in America can demonstrate the persistence of this new Western Baha'i identity into the third and fourth generations.

Baha'i identity in the United States and Europe developed with a distinct social agenda. The Baha'i community emerged in the United States as a liberal, though non-political, voluntary association. American Baha'is were particularly notable for their strongly liberal position on racial equality, even in the South, during a period of legal segregation and ubiquitous racism.[13] Baha'is during this period summarized their beliefs in ten or twelve social principles gleaned from Baha'i scripture.[14] These principles very much shaped their own identity and offered a liberal face to the public. They were usually formulated as:

(1) The oneness of mankind
(2) Independent investigation of truth
(3) The common foundation of all religions
(4) The essential harmony of science and religion
(5) Equality of men and women
(6) Elimination of prejudice of all kinds
(7) Universal compulsory education
(8) A spiritual solution of the economic problem
(9) A universal auxiliary language
(10) Universal peace upheld by a world government.[15]

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[13] For a full discussion of Baha'i racial history in the United States, see Gayle Morrison's surprisingly frank monograph *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982).

[14] The list of principles was based on those outlined by 'Abdu'l-Baha during his public talks in the West, especially in the United States, in 1911–1912. See, for example, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911*, first published in 1912 (Eleventh Edition, Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979) and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, first published in two volumes in 1922 and 1925 (Second Edition, Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982).

[15] As listed in the popular Baha'i pamphlet *One Universal Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, n.d. [1960?]). Sometimes, the last principle listed here would be divided in two and presented as separate items: world peace and world government. Occasionally, another principle 'Religion must be the cause of unity and harmony' would be added to the list. There was no hard and absolute list of these principles, though all Baha'is would recognize that there was a list and could recite at least a few of them.

Though the Baha'i principles were oriented toward social reform, from the 1930s through the 1960s, American Baha'is in particular devoted an enormous amount of their attention to establishing the machinery of Baha'i Administration within their communities, almost to the exclusion of anything else. Since the Baha'i faith has no clergy, the organization of the affairs of the religion fell upon ordinary believers who were elected to nine-member councils, known as local Spiritual Assemblies. By the 1950s, these assemblies were the focus of most Baha'i activity in the West. In fact, the expansion of the religion was conceptualized almost exclusively in terms of the multiplication of these councils. Smith and Momen have noted the Americans' "distinct tendency toward over-administration"[16] which resulted in many Baha'is viewing their faith largely in corporate and legalistic terms, but not to the exclusion of charisma.[17] The Assemblies themselves were given sacred significance by the Baha'is and lauded as 'divinely appointed institutions' through which divine guidance might flow.[18]

Only in the 1950s did the Baha'i religion begin to realize any significant expansion beyond the United States and its Shi'ite lands of origin. The record of its expansion since then has been impressive. Baha'is have now established groups or communities in all countries of the world, with followers drawn from diverse religious and ethnic heritages. This includes an important presence in Africa. The Baha'i faith in the West has achieved wide recognition of its claim to the status of a world religion. It is not uncommon today for standard texts on comparative religions to include a short chapter on the Baha'i faith as a recent or emerging world religion.[19]

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[16] Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Bahá'í Faith 1957–1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments," *Religion*, Vol. 19 (1989) pp. 63–91.

[17] I have also commented on this aspect of American Baha'i history. Anthony A. Lee, ed., *Circle of Unity: Bahá'í Approaches to Current Social Issues* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1984).

[18] See, for example, the compilation of Baha'i scripture authorized by the Universal House of Justice, *The Local Spiritual Assembly: An Institution of the Bahá'í Administrative Order* (in various editions, for example, Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970); John E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, 1950 Second Revised Edition (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950) pp. 218–21. The section on Baha'i Administration in the revised edition of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* is considerably changed from the original edition of the book published in London in 1923.

[19] See, for example, Warren Matthews, *World Religions* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1991); Lewis M. Hopfe, *Religions of the World*, Seventh Edition, ed. by Mark R. Woodward (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998); Chris Richards, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1997); and

The first serious efforts of Baha'is to establish their religion in West Africa date from the 1950s, before which the Baha'i presence in Africa was negligible. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* estimates that there were a total of 1,732,816 Baha'is in Africa by the year 2000—this out of a worldwide Baha'i population of 7,106,420.[20] However, these figures are widely understood to be unrealistically high.[21] The International Baha'i Community has always been reluctant to release numbers of Baha'is for any place in the world.[22] However, the figures that Smith and Momen provide are probably accurate, though they include data only to 1988. Margit Warburg has estimated figures for 2001. (See Table 1.1.) The official Baha'i sources now claim a total of somewhere in excess of five million Baha'is around the world, with about one million of those living in Africa.[23]

## *The Academic Study of the Babi/Baha'i Religions*

The Babi movement attracted the attention of Western scholars almost from its beginnings. Important European orientalists, such as Browne, Gobineau, Tumanski, and Nicolas, devoted portions of their academic careers to the study of the Babis.[24] They succeeded in preserving many

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Geoffrey Parrinder, *Sexual Morality in the World's Religions* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1980 [1996]).

[20] *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, Second Edition, Vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 4 and 13.

[21] Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation* Perspective (Leiden: Brill, 2006) pp. 218–19.

[22] This is a long-standing policy that dates at least from the beginning of Shoghi Effendi's ministry (1921). It was, no doubt, a strategy used to conceal the very tiny numbers of Baha'is (at least, living outside of Iran) at that time. Baha'i institutions have always preferred to confine their official release of statistics to numbers of Baha'i local Spiritual Assemblies (that is, elected local councils), 'groups,' and 'isolated centers.' These are the kinds of statistics that were made available to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and they seem simply to have overestimated the size of the average Baha'i community. Actually, a Spiritual Assembly can be formed with as few as nine Baha'is in a city; a 'group' represents a place where fewer than nine Baha'is reside; and an 'isolated center' is a lone Baha'i living in a particular locality.

[23] Cf. *The Bahá'í World, 2004–2005* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006) p. 295.

[24] The writings of E. G. Browne on the Babis and Baha'is are extensive and particularly important to English-language scholarship. These include: *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London: A. and C. Black, 1893) and *Materials for the Study of the Babí Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1918). Browne was inspired by Comte de Gobineau's earlier *Les Religions et les philosophes dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris: C. Cres et Cie., 1865). Tumanski published in Russian. Nicolas's work was in French, including: *Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb* (Paris: Dujarric, 1905) and translations of the Babi

Table 1.1. Estimated Baha'i Populations

| | 1954 | 1968 | 1988 | 2001[25] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Middle East and North Africa | 200,000 | 250,000 | 300,000 | (See Asia: 3 & 4 below)[26] |
| (2) North America, Europe, and Anglo-Pacific* | 10,000 | 30,000 | 200,000 | 175,000[27] |
| (3) South Asia | 1,000 | 300,000 | 1,900,000 | 1,900,000[28] |
| (4) South-east Asia | | 200,000 | 300,000 | }1,200,000[29] |
| (5) East Asia | 2,000 | 10,000 | 20,000 | |
| (6) Latin America and the Caribbean | | 100,000 | 700,000 | 800,000[30] |
| (7) Africa (sub-Saharan) | | 200,000 | 700,000 | 900,000[31] |
| (8) Oceania (excluding Anglo-Pacific) | | 5,000 | 70,000 | 125,000 |
| **Total** | 213,000 | 1,095,00 | 4,490,000 | 5,100,000 |

* Anglo-Pacific refers to Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand.
Sources: Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Faith 1957–1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments," *Religion*, Vol. 19 (1989) pp. 63–91. The 1954 figure for North America, Europe, and Anglo-Pacific is probably a bit high. Numbers for 2001 are from: Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) pp. 222–27.

important Babi texts and making initial observations on Babi history which laid the foundation for future study. But, after this early scholarly curiosity, there was a gap of almost four decades before historians were to seek a reevaluation of the Babi-Baha'i movements in terms of more contemporary theory. Ivanoff's Marxist interpretation and Keddie's millenarian approach led this trend.[32] But, in fact, even these

scriptures *Le Béyân arabe* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905) and *Le Béyân persan* (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1911–14).

[25] All data for 2001 is from Warburg, *Citizens of the World*. Data for previous years is from Smith and Momen.

[26] Warburg's data for Asia is divided between India and 'Other Asia.'

[27] The total of Warburg's Europe, USA and Canada, and Australia and New Zealand categories.

[28] This figure is for India alone.

[29] Warburg's 'Other Asia' figure.

[30] This figure is for Latin America alone.

[31] This figure is for all of Africa.

[32] Mikhail S. Ivanov, *Babidski Vostanii i Irane, 1848–1852* (Moscow: Trudy Instituta Vostok-vedeniya, 1939). Nikki R. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, Vol. 4 (1962) pp. 265–95.

scholars had little interest in the Baha'i religion itself as a phenomenon. Their concern was to fit the events of Babi and Baha'i history into some larger ideological interpretation of history or some larger understanding of social theory.

More recently, much new scholarship has been undertaken—in many cases by Baha'i scholars—with a renewed interest in primary research. Johnson's dissertation on Baha'i history (1974) marks perhaps the beginning of this new literature.[33] This dissertation was important because it explicitly argued for the importance of the Baha'i faith as a subject of academic study. It also provided the first non-polemical interpretation of internal developments within the Baha'i faith that had appeared in the academic literature in many decades. Johnson suggested that the Babi-Baha'i religions had reinterpreted and transformed their core teachings and values—in almost chameleon-like fashion—right from their inception. Surprisingly, perhaps, this view was not far removed from Baha'i self-perception, and Johnson's dissertation was given a fairly warm reception within the Baha'i community itself.[34]

Johnson's thesis was followed by Garlington's study (1975)[35] and then Garrigues's dissertation (1976)[36] on the Baha'is of India. Kahn's analysis (1977)[37] of Baha'i conversion in the rural American South, Hampson's study of Baha'i global expansion (1980),[38] and Hassall's history of the Baha'i faith in Australia (1984) followed in their turn.[39]

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[33] Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith," Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1974.

[34] The first chapter of his dissertation was actually reprinted in the official journal of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'ís of the United States. Vernon Elvin Johnson, "The Challenge of the Bahá'í Faith" in *World Order,* Vol. 10, No. 3 (1976) pp. 39ff.

[35] William N. Garlington, "The Baha'i Faith in Malwa: A Study of a Contemporary Religious Movement," Ph.D. dissertation, Australia National University, 1975.

[36] Steve L. Garrigues, "The Baha'is of Malwa: Identity and Change Among the Urban Baha'is of Malwa," Ph.D. dissertation, Lucknow University, 1976.

[37] Sandra Santolucito Kahn, "Encounter of Two Myths: Baha'i and Christian in the Rural American South—A Study in Transmythicization," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1977.

[38] Arthur Hampson, "The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1980.

[39] Graham H. Hassall, "The History of the Baha'í Faith in Australia, 1920–1963," B.A. thesis, University of Sydney, 1984. See also, idem., "The Bahá'í Faith in Australia," in Ian Gillman, ed., *Many Faiths, One Nation* (Melbourne: William Collins, 1988); idem., "Outpost of a World Religion: The Bahá'í Faith in Australia, 1920–1947," in Peter Smith, ed., *Bahá'ís in the West: Studies in the Babí and Bahá'í Religions*, Volume

Hasan Balyuzi's work, published during this same period, was intended for a Baha'i audience and does not pretend to be academic, but should not be overlooked.[40] His pioneering monograph *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (1970)[41] was clearly written as a defense of orthodox Baha'i positions. But, the work respected scholarly standards and signaled a new willingness at the highest levels of Baha'i leadership to engage in academic discourse. It also awakened young Baha'is entering universities to the possibility of the academic study of Baha'i history. Balyuzi's full biography of Baha'u'llah (1980) was also written to serve a pastoral function within the Baha'i community. Baha'is instantly accepted it as the definitive work on the subject. But its foundation in primary-source documentation, use of the full apparatus of academic forms, references to variant accounts, and so forth, reinforced the legitimacy of an academic approach within the Baha'i community and blurred the previous hard distinction between faith-based history and disinterested scholarly inquiry.

The next internal development was the publication of the first of the series of volumes that was initially titled *Studies in Babí and Bahá'í History*.[42] Volume One (1982),[43] edited by Moojan Momen, who regarded himself as a student of Balyuzi,[44] was fully academic in tone and content and became the object of some controversy in Baha'i circles, since it openly challenged some faith-based assumptions.

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11 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004). This last paper was actually completed and circulated in 1988, but published later.

[40] Hasan M. Balyuzi: *The Bab: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973); idem., *Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980); idem., *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (London: George Ronald, 1971); idem., *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh: with some historical background* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985).

[41] H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1970).

[42] With Volume Five, the name of the series was changed to accommodate a wider diversity of articles to *Studies in the Babí and Bahá'í Religions*. I am general editor of the entire series. A complete listing of the volumes published (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press) to date is included in the bibliography of this book under my name.

[43] Moojan Momen, ed., *Studies in Babí and Bahá'í History,* Volume One (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1982). Momen is a medical doctor by profession, but he has published a number of books as an independent scholar which have gained wide recognition in the academic community, most notably his *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*.

[44] See Momen's tribute to Balyuzi in Volume Five of the *Studies* series which he titled *Studies in Honor of the Late Hasan M. Balyuzi* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988) pp. vii–xx.

Volume Nine *Modernity and the Millennium* (1988) was published by Columbia University Press. It was privately rejected and condemned by the Baha'i leadership as too academic, in that it sought to attribute the teachings of Baha'u'llah in their view, not to divine revelation, but to the convergence of social forces. The *Studies* series has published its twenty-second volume[45] and has received fairly wide acceptance in the Baha'i community. Nonetheless, this series and all other books by its publisher have recently become the object of a boycott by Baha'i institutions in large parts of the English-speaking world due to controversies over the publisher's academic books.

Outside of the Baha'i community, the study of the Babi-Baha'i religions has developed into a field of interest in academe. MacEoin's dissertation on the Shaykhi-Babi transition period (1980)[46] and Amanat's dissertation on the early years of the Bab's ministry (1981)[47] brought the movement into the full light of academic study. Bayat's *Mysticism and Dissent* (1982)[48] took the Babi movement seriously as an element of Iranian political and socioreligious history. Momen's collection of historical documents (1981),[49] and the publication of Smith's sociological survey (1987)[50] were also important in expanding the field. Amanat's history was published by Cornell University Press in 1989, and had the effect of bringing Babi history for the first time into the mainstream study of modern Iranian history. Cole's monograph *Modernity and the Millennium* (1998) played a similar role in bringing Baha'i history more clearly into the consciousness of Middle East historians. Cole's book was the first full volume on the Baha'i religion[51] published by an academic press since Browne's work (1918). Margit Warburg's volume *Baha'i* in the series *Studies in Contemporary Religion*[52] approaches the

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[45] This book is counted as Volume Twenty-three.

[46] MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism."

[47] Abbas Amanat, "The Early Years of the Babi Movement: Background and Development," Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1981. Published as idem., *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989 [Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005]).

[48] Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 1982).

[49] Moojan Momen, ed., *The Babí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981).

[50] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[51] As opposed to the Babi religion, that is.

[52] Margit Warburg, *Baha'i, Studies in Contemporary Religions*, Massimo Introvigne, series ed. (Torino: Signature Books, 2001). Originally published in Italian as *I baha'i.*

Baha'i faith as a fully legitimate subject for academic study, as does her subsequent collection of essays *Baha'i and Globalisation* and her full monograph *Citizens of the World*.[53] Two other volumes of collected essays, *Iran im 19.Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Bahā'ī Religion* (1998),[54] with three important articles in English; and *Studies in Modern Religions: Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths*,[55] based on papers delivered at the International Conference on Modern Religious Movements held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in December 2000, should not be overlooked.

There now exists a considerable published body of new academic literature on the Baha'i Faith. Unfortunately, almost all of this new scholarly attention has been centered on Babis and Baha'is in Iran and in America. To a much lesser extent, the Baha'i communities of India and of Europe have received some attention. Pioneering work has been conducted on the history of Baha'is in Britain[56] and in Australia.[57] There are two studies by sociologists, one that examines the Baha'i community of Atlanta, Georgia,[58] and the other, the origins of the Baha'i community of Canada.[59] Full monographs have been published on the Baha'is of the Netherlands[60] and of Denmark,[61] and two volumes on Baha'is and globalization issues.[62]

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[53] Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind, eds., *Baha'i and Globalisation* (Aarhus University Press, 2005); Warburg, *Citizens of the World*.

[54] Johann Christoph Burgel and Isabel Schayani, eds., *Iran im 19.Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Bahā'ī Religion* (Zurich: Georg Olms Verlag, 1998).

[55] Moshe Sharon, ed., *Studies in Modern Religions: Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[56] Phillip R. Smith, "What Was a Bahá'í? Concerns of British Bahá'ís, 1900–1920," in Momen, *Studies*, Vol. 5, pp. 219–51; idem., "The Development and Influence of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in Great Britain, 1914–1950" in Hollinger, *Community Histories*, pp. 217–40; and Ismael Velasco, "The Bahá'í Community in Edinburgh, 1946–1950" in Peter Smith, *Bahá'ís in the West*, pp. 265–93.

[57] Graham Hassall, "Outpost of a World Religion."

[58] Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

[59] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996).

[60] Jelle de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned…: The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of the Netherlands, 1844–1962* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

[61] Margit Warburg, *Baha'i: The Invisible Religion of Denmark* (University of Copenhagen, forthcoming).

[62] Margit Warburg, et al., eds., *Baha'i and Globalisation*; and idem., *World Citizens: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is in a Globalisation Perspective*, which gives special emphasis to Europe and Israel.

Despite this impressive scholarly work, the Baha'i communities in the Third World are mostly unstudied. Smith and Momen have included the Third World in their general surveys,[63] but with no specific information. Africa, with fully 20% of the world's Baha'i population remains virtually untouched by academic inquiry (also Latin America, for that matter).[64] This work will attempt to fill a small part of that gap.

### *Methods and Sources*

In a significant sense, this book was made possible by the diligence and care of Valerie Wilson, an African American Baha'i who moved to Liberia in 1952 to spread the Baha'i teachings and further the interests of the religion. Wilson became an important Baha'i administrator in West Africa, being elected to the regional National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of North West Africa, and also appointed to the Auxiliary Board (a board of assistants to the Hands of the Cause, the deputies of Shoghi Effendi). She kept meticulous records of her activities, copies of her correspondence, and copies of reports made to Baha'i institutions on the state of West African Baha'i communities.

I was very much privileged to have an opportunity to interview Wilson in June 1983, in her home in Menlo Park, California. She spoke openly and candidly about her Baha'i experiences in West Africa during her years of residence there. She also gave me full access to her personal papers, which were the records of her service as an Auxiliary Board member.[65] While these records reflect mostly the institutional concerns of growth, expansion, the fulfillment of goals, and so forth,

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[63] Smith and Momen, "The Baha'i Faith 1957–1988" and Smith, "The Bahá'í Faith in the West: A Survey" in *Bahá'ís in the West*, pp. 3–62.

[64] The only article on Baha'is in Africa that has been published in a secular, academic journal is still Loni Bramson-Lerche's "The Baha'i Faith in Nigeria" in *Dialogue & Alliance*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter 1992–93) pp. 104–125. See also Bramson's "Errata" for that article.

[65] Wilson explained to me during our conversations that she had also carefully kept the records of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of North West Africa, as she was the secretary of the Assembly. However, she no longer had them. After her return to the United States, she had traveled back to West Africa and returned the National Assembly's records to where she felt they belonged. They were left in the care of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Nigeria. However, she later learned that these records had been lost or misplaced. I have no further information about them, but we might hope that they are not permanently lost. The original copies

there is enough additional material to provide important insights into the nature of the Baha'i religion in West Africa and the attitudes of indigenous Baha'is there.

This book is based entirely on archival materials that were available to me. These include the published reports of Baha'i activities in Africa that have been produced by the international Baha'i community, particularly in the international newsletter *Bahá'í News* and the occasional yearbooks, *The Bahá'í World*, that were published from time to time. In addition, I was able to make brief visits to the National Bahá'í Archives in Wilmette, Illinois; the archives of the Basel Mission, in Basel, Switzerland; and the archives of the American Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

In addition to these, I have been able to make use of the papers of Don Addison, an American Baha'i who lived in West Africa for some years. Addison was an ethnomusicologist and took an interest in recording Baha'i music. However, he also conducted interviews with Baha'is that he recorded. His concerns were mostly faith-based, and he was not trained as an historian. But his interviews with African Baha'is have proven to be extremely useful to me.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to travel to West Africa to conduct interviews myself. Certainly, the most valuable source of evidence for the meaning of the expansion of the Baha'i faith in West Africa between 1952 and 1962, the subject of this study, would come from the personal reminiscences of the early Baha'is themselves. Though that has always been my hope, its realization has eluded me. However, I did have the great honor and pleasure of interviewing Samiheh Banani in 1991, at the home of her son and daughter-in-law, Amin and Sheila Banani, in Santa Monica, California. Samiheh Banani, known as Mama-jan among the Baha'is, was the wife of the Hand of the Cause of God Musa Banani. Together, she and her husband had moved to East Africa to be among the first Baha'is to relocate there for the purpose of spreading the Baha'i religion. I was fortunate enough to be able to speak to her at length on a number of occasions. Her insights and memories were invaluable.

Unfortunately, there is no academic literature on the Baha'i faith in West Africa, as I have noted. Generally speaking, the scholarly work

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of the Auxiliary Board records that I was able to photocopy were donated by Wilson to the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

that has been done on New Religious Movements in Africa has simply overlooked the more than one million Baha'is who live there. John S. Mbiti's book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, managed to mention Baha'i in passing.[66] But other academic work on new religions in Africa has passed it over in silence. Indeed, the very idea of a new religious movement arising in Third-World Iran in the nineteenth century, escaping from its Islamic roots, and finding a significant community of converts in the United States and Europe, who then, in turn—along with their Persian co-religionists—manage to establish their movement in Africa a century later, has not even been contemplated by academia, as yet.

### *Summary of Chapters*

Chapter One has simply been a discussion of the academic study of the Baha'i religion.

Chapter Two focuses on the African presence at the genesis of the Babi/Baha'i movement in Iran, a presence that continues to be erased and ignored in all the literatures.

Chapter Three is concerned with theoretical issues. It asks the question of why the Babi/Baha'i movement should have been successful at all—first in Iran, and later in America and in West Africa. This chapter develops the idea that the Baha'i teachings are fundamentally a religious response to modernity and its challenges to society. Looking at the missionary presence in Africa, it seeks to explain why the crisis of modernity would have been particularly acute within mission communities. It argues that in the contemporary environment of modern crisis, which is ongoing and ubiquitous, the Baha'i faith offered a productive religious alternative that was compelling to some.

Chapter Four seeks to sketch an outline of the diffusion and expansion of the Baha'i faith in West Africa. Since this expansion was accomplished by conscious planning, it reviews the international Baha'i plans that led to the movement of Baha'i pioneers (missionaries) to West Africa and their relative successes and failures. It is primarily concerned with the institutional development of the religion in the first ten years of its presence in the area. The chapter pays special attention

[66] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969) pp. 340–41ff.

to the African American Baha'is who moved from the United States to bring their religion to West Africa.

Chapters Five and Six attempt to ask more difficult and, I believe, more interesting questions about the development of a Baha'i community in Africa. They are concerned with asking what message Baha'is brought to Africa, how that message was delivered, and how it was understood and received by Africans. Therefore, these chapters are concerned with questions of meaning. What did the Baha'i faith mean to those Africans who converted to it in the first years of its existence in sub-Saharan Africa? What meaning did those early conversions have, in turn, for the larger Baha'i world community? Why did the religion spread rapidly in some areas, and not at all in others? How were the Baha'i teachings practiced and reinterpreted by the new Baha'is? And perhaps most interestingly, in West Africa, why was the religion most successful as a movement within the Christian mission community in the British Cameroons?

Chapter Five explores the nexus of missionary Christian communities at the end of the colonial period. It discusses the beginnings of Baha'i conversions in East Africa, which became the source of diffusion to parts of West Africa. Chapter Six looks specifically at the British Cameroons, where the religion was most successful in terms of converts. It investigates the role of Enoch Olinga, the Ugandan pioneer who carried the Baha'i faith to the Cameroons, and the role of the traditional African religious context into which these new teachings were inserted.

Chapter Seven changes the subject entirely. It follows the short career of an African Baha'i preacher who briefly established a Baha'i church in Calabar, Nigeria, independent of any outside Baha'i influence. It recounts the success, and then the collapse, of this church and the conversion of its leaders to a more orthodox Baha'i teaching. This chapter reminds us that master narratives are simply historical constructions—they do not account for everything. While the early history of the Baha'i faith in West Africa will inevitably be recalled as a history of growth and expansion, there were also other things going on that are ultimately more important.

While I think that it is premature to come to any hard and fast conclusions concerning the history of the Baha'i faith in Africa at this point in the development of scholarship in the field, I conclude with a brief statement written in lieu of such conclusions. Here I affirm that I am highly suspicious of master narratives—especially triumphal

narratives of growth, expansion, and success. Nonetheless, there are certain themes and issues that emerge in the study of Baha'is in West Africa. These include a wide divergence of belief and practice among communities in various areas; the influence of Iranian, American, and African pioneers; questions of boundaries and religious identities; and the highly uneven growth of the Baha'i community in different areas which allows us to identify some areas as unqualified successes and others as utter failures. These themes, more than anything else, suggest a field ripe for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

# THE AFRICAN PRESENCE AT THE GENESIS OF THE BABI/ BAHA'I RELIGIONS

From its earliest beginnings, the Baha'i religion knew an African dimension and included African converts. Even the hagiographic accounts of Mulla Husayn's conversion mention an African man who was present on the first night of the Bab's 'declaration.' This man, who is invariably referred to as the Bab's 'Ethiopian servant,' attended to his master and guest that evening. He can be glimpsed a number of times in Babi histories as a servant and companion of the Bab and a participant in some of the early events of his master's new ministry.

It is, I suppose, to be expected that the nineteenth-century Iranian sources leave it at that; they attach no significance to this African presence. It is perhaps less understandable, however, that contemporary histories reflect this same attitude, ignoring the implications of Africans participating in founding events of Baha'i history. Nonetheless, as will be seen, that presence was important, visible, and profound.

The 'Ethiopian servant,' Haji Mubarak, was purchased by the Bab in 1842 (two years before the beginning of his religious mission) from Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, a brother of the Bab's wife, Khadijih Bagum. Mubarak was nineteen years old. He had been transported from East Africa as a child, bought from slave traders when he was five years old, and trained for business and domestic service in the household of the Bab's future brother-in-law. His education is said to have been 'exemplary.'[1] He was literate and skilled at commerce, and the Bab entrusted him with the task of settling his outstanding accounts and winding up his business affairs in Shiraz.[2] Nonetheless, he has remained invisible to history.

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[1] Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, *Black Pearls: Servants in the Households of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988 [1999], p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

Illustration 2.1. An African Slave, 1840

A portrait of a black slave, probably Ethiopian, dated 1256 AH/1840 AD. In the manuscript he has in his hands, his face is compared to the 'night of revelation' (*laylat al-qadr*) of the Prophet Muhammad. The painting, from the Qajar period, is contemporary with the Bab and his servant, Haji Mubarak. Source: Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth-Century Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2005).

### *Slaves as Non-persons*

Orlando Patterson, in his broad comparative study of slavery around the world, defines the condition of slavery as a kind of social death. Slaves in all societies, and in all periods of history, were considered to be persons without rights and without moral claims on the wider community. Patterson suggests that:

> Perhaps the most distinctive attribute of the slave's powerlessness was that it always originated (or was conceived of as having originated) as a substitute for death, usually violent death.... Archetypically, slavery was a substitute for death in war. But almost as frequently, the death commuted was punishment for some capital offense, or death from exposure or starvation.[3]

The only human relationship that slaves held that was socially recognized or legally sanctioned was their relationship to the master. In all other situations, they were social and legal non-persons. As such, the slave was stripped of all claims of birth and belonged (of his own right) to no social order.

Patterson argues that this 'social death' included the slaves' alienation from all kinship ties in the present, and their alienation from all relationship to ancestors and from history itself:

> Not only was the slave denied all claims on, and obligations to, his parents and living blood relations but, by extension, all such claims and obligations on his more remote ancestors and on his descendants. He was truly a genealogical isolate. Formally isolated in his social relations with those who lived, he also was culturally isolated from the social heritage of his ancestors.... Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory....
>
> One of the most significant findings of Michael Craton's study of the oral history of the descendants of the Worthy Park plantation slaves of Jamaica was the extraordinary shallowness of their genealogical and

[3] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) p. 5. Patterson's book is a work of great breadth that calls on ancient, pre-modern, and modern periods of history and compares sixty-six societies over time—including Greece, Rome, medieval Europe, China, Africa, the Islamic world, and the American South.

> historical memory. The same is attested by the recorded interviews with American ex-slaves.[4]

Slaves, as Patterson explains, are denied any rights to their own heritage. They are also denied any role in history. Until recently, written histories might make reference to slaves as a class or a group, even as a gang in rebellion. But as non-persons, individual slaves were erased from historical memory. They could be remembered as objects, but not as independent actors in history. Slaves were excluded from history, just as they were excluded from society. An individual slave might be praised for his loyalty, even his bravery, but his life could have no significance beyond devotion to his master. For the most part, this remains the state of the academic literature even today.

## *Slavery in Iran*

Unfortunately, little is known about the history of black slavery in Iran. Thomas Ricks has noted this 'perplexing void' in Iranian history. He complains about the paucity of scholarship on "the subject of slaves, slave trade, trade routes, collection stations, creditors, or slavery for the medieval, early modern or modern periods of Iranian history."[5] Nonetheless, by the mid-1800s, the importation of slaves into Iranian

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[4] Patterson, *Slavery*, pp. 5–6. Patterson cites Craton's *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) pp. 45–48.

[5] Thomas Ricks, "Slaves and Slave Trading in Shi'i Iran, AD 1500–1900," *Journal of Asian and African* Studies, Vol. 36 (2001) no. 4, pp. 407–418. In addition to Ricks's comments, Ronald Segal comments at length on the paucity of academic work done on slavery in Iran in *Islam's Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2001) pp. 121–27. The only doctoral dissertation written on the history of Iranian slavery appears to be Behnaz A. Mirzai's "Slavery, the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the Emancipation of Slaves in Iran (1828–1928)," Ph.D. dissertation, York University, Ontario, 2004. By the same author, see "African Presence in Iran: Identity and its Reconstruction," in O. Petre-Grenouilleau, ed., *Traites et Esclavages: Vieux Problemes, Nouvelles Perspectives?* (Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-mer, 2002) pp. 229–46; and, "The Slave Trade and the African Diaspora in Iran" in Abdul Sheriff, ed., *Monsoon and Migration: Unleashing Dhow Synergies* (Zanzabar: ZIFF, 2005). Other useful discussions of slavery in Islam, with brief references to Iran, include Joseph E. Harris, *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971) and Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Apparently there is little memory of African slavery among contemporary Iranians, at least among those in Los Angeles. Whenever I raise the subject among Iranian

cities had been a long-established practice. Behnaz Mirzai has concluded that reports from the time indicate that the majority of African slaves taken from the East African coast were imported into Iranian ports.[6]

Domestic slavery had become the social norm for the royal court, for wealthy families, and even for some middle-class merchants like the Bab. For an urban, Iranian family of any wealth and status during this period, the seclusion of the women of the household (or at least the pretense of such seclusion[7]) was a supreme necessity. Respectable Muslim women were expected to remain within the private sections of their houses and gardens, and to venture out only when strictly veiled. Women of this class were, at least officially, expected to have no contact with men who were not their husbands or immediate relatives—such as fathers, brothers, or sons. In such a society, domestic slaves or 'household servants' were needed to carry out the public business of the house in streets and markets, and to maintain the honor of the family. Slaves and low-class women might haggle in the bazaar or move about the town without a specific destination, but such things were off-limits to high-caste, veiled women.

In Iran, there was some use of slaves as laborers for public works, and some were conscripted into the military. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, African slaves were almost always destined for domestic service. The importation of slaves to Iran for domestic service and concubinage continued into the twentieth century. In 1905, for example, Jamila Khanum, an Ethiopian slave in Shiraz, wrote a letter summarizing her life as a slave. She writes:

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friends and acquaintances they express shock and deny that such a thing could ever have existed in Iran.

[6] Mirzai, "Slavery," p. 70.

[7] This was as much a matter of pretense as anything else. Lady Sheil noted, with regard to Tehran in the early 1850s: "[Women of] all classes enjoy abundance of liberty, more so, I think, than among us. The complete envelopment of the face and person [the veil, or *chadur*] disguises them effectually from the nearest relatives, and destroying, when convenient, all distinction of rank, gives unrestrained freedom. The bazars [sic] are crowded with women in this most ungraceful disguise. The weekly bath and constant visits consume a large share of their time; and Thursday afternoon is devoted to a mock pilgrimage to some shrine outside the town, or else to the grave of some relation." Lady Mary Elenor Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (London: John Murray, 1856) pp. 145–46. I am grateful to Sen McGlinn for bringing this quote to my attention.

> My name is Jamīla Habashī [Ethiopian], my father is Lulā'd-Dīn from Sāho, my mother Loshābah, and from the Omrānīah tribe. I was enslaved when I was a child then was brought to Mecca where I was sold to a broker; the broker took me to Basra from the Jabal, and sold me to an Iranian broker named Mullā 'Alī, who shipped me from Basra to Muhammara and from there he took me to the Bushihr port and there he sold me to a merchant called Hājī Mīrzā Ahmad Kázirunī who is in Shīrāz now, I was his concubine for four years in Bushihr then Hājī took me to Shīrāz and kept me there for five years; in total, I was with him for nine years and then he sold me to Nasir Nizām the son of 'Atāu'llāh. After one year, Nasír sold me to Hājī Muhammad 'Alī Khān. Now it has been five years that I have been with him.[8]

A distinction in desirability and price was made between 'Ethiopian' slaves and East African (*siddi, zanji*) slaves from farther south on the continent. Systems of classification are, of course, common wherever there is slavery.[9] Sheil notes that African slaves in Iran were divided into three types: 'Bambassees, Nubees, and Habeshees. The former come from Zanzibar, and the neighboring country in the interior but I don't know the etymology of the name [certainly from 'Mombasa']. The others as their names imply are natives of Nubia and Abyssinia.'[10] Abyssinians were considered superior to the others, and males were therefore more likely to receive a full education and be placed in positions of responsibility and family trust.[11] They could be given important jobs within the household, even acting as their master's confidential stewards.[12]

It was also common for male slaves from Africa—both 'Ethiopian' and otherwise—to be castrated as children before being exported to the Middle East. If the child survived the operation, he would fetch a much higher price on the market as a eunuch.[13] Such slaves were

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[8] Jamila's saga apparently begins in 1880. Quoted in Mirzai, "Slavery," p. 72, from the statement of Jamila, 8 Shawwál 1323, File 2, Box 3, 1323, Center of Documents, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran. Mirzai suggests in footnotes nos. 24 and 25 (Ibid.), that Sāho is "a Cushitic-speaking group in northern Ethiopia," and that Omrānīah presumably refers to the Oromo. The latter supposition is certainly not true because linguistic barriers would prevent such a shift in pronunciation. (Christopher Ehret, personal conversation, July 2, 2007.)

[9] Slaves are, after all, commodities that must be classified and priced.

[10] Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, pp. 243–45.

[11] See Ibid. The book also contains an early account of the Babi movement in Iran. See also, Harris, *The African Presence*, pp. 39–40, especially note 25.

[12] Mirzai, "Slavery," p. 112.

[13] In Iran, at this time, the price of a eunuch was three times more than that of other slaves. (Mirzai, "Slavery," pp. 118)

bought specifically to act as attendants to the women of wealthy households. Of course, their mutilation insured that their close association with the women in such households would be beyond reproach. A eunuch could sometimes become his master's confidant.[14] All sources are silent on this issue, of course—but because of the nature of his service in the household of the Bab, it is likely that Haji Mubarak was a eunuch.

Polak stated in 1865 that the majority of black slaves (*ghulams, kanizes*) living in Iran were born in Africa.[15] In 1868, a census in Tehran found that 12% of the civilians in the city were African slaves or 'household servants' (who may or may not have been Africans[16]). This count includes only urban households, and not slaves who were used in agricultural work, or to maintain the irrigation system.[17] This census reveals the extent of domestic slavery in nineteenth-century Iran and the importance of the African population in cities, which is invariably ignored in Iranian history.

There does not seem to me to be any reason to think that the situation in Shiraz twenty-five years earlier, when the Bab acquired his slaves, was qualitatively different. Indeed, since Shiraz is closer to the Persian Gulf slave routes, and since in the 1840s there was less international anti-slavery activity than there was in the 1860s, I would suppose that the population of African slaves would be even larger there. Mirzai notes that Afro-Iranian communities were established in the towns and cities all along the southern coast of Iran. A report in 1847 shows that 3,488 slaves were brought that year to the Persian Gulf, and most of those were destined for Iran.[18] Shiraz was one of the principal

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[14] At least, according to Harris, *The African Presence*, p. 40.

[15] Jakob Eduard Polak, *Persien, das Land und seine Bewohner* (Leipzig:Brockhaus, 1865) p. 248. Cf. Mirzai, "Slavery," p. 80.

[16] Still, I am highly suspicious of the census category 'household servants' in this context. The slave trade had been formally outlawed by the Iranian government in 1848, but the importation of slaves from Africa had continued. Under such circumstances it may have been prudent for the wealthy to refer to their African slaves as 'household servants,' especially in official matters like a census. It may have been even more prudent for the Iranian government to refer to household slaves in public documents like a census with an ambiguous designation that would attract a minimum of foreign scrutiny and condemnation.

[17] Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, p. 126, quoting an unpublished paper by Thomas Ricks, which was eventually published as "Slaves and Slave Trading in Shi'i Iran, AD 1500–1900.". I am grateful to Sen McGlinn for locating the published paper for me.

[18] Mirzai, "Slavery," pp. 97–98.

cities in the south where slaves were disembarked for sale or transfer, and so the African population there must have been significant.[19]

A 12% segment of the urban population simply cannot be ignored and suggests that there have been significant African influences on all aspects of Iranian culture—from food to music to language to religion. This represents roughly the percentage of African Americans to be found living in the United States today, and of course the study of black people and their influence on American history and culture is a major field of academic study. Clearly, the study of the African presence in Iran could be a major field of Iranian studies, as well—even if the estimate of 12% were to be cut in half. As in the American South, this would be true especially as regards the influence that presence had on the culture of upper-class and wealthy Persian families.

Edward Alpers has also noted the absence of scholarship on the African diaspora in the Indian Ocean and on African cultural influences on societies from the Arabian Peninsula to India.[20] More than a decade ago he called forcefully for the study of Africans in the northwestern Indian Ocean. However, his pioneering call for more research, for the most part, has not been taken up by other scholars.[21] The consensus of all histories of Iran today insists, quite inexplicably, on "the all but complete disappearance of a black diaspora in Persia."[22]

Although the significance of his African presence is ignored in the account, Nabil's narrative—the most well-known and popular Baha'i history—records that Mubarak acted as the doorman at the Bab's house on the evening of Mulla Husayn's conversion. As such, he greeted both master and guest as they arrived at the house.[23] Beyond this, he attended to the other needs of the two men while the conver-

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[19] Ibid., pp. 74 and 78.

[20] Edward A. Alpers, "The African Diaspora in the Northwestern Indian Ocean: Reconsidration of an Old Problem, New Directions in Research," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (formerly *South Asia Bulletin*), Vol. 17 (1997) no. 2, pp. 62–81. Even Alpers's article—while calling on evidence from Arabia and India—was unable to discuss Iran as the site of African cultural influence, however. Presumably, this is because so little has been written on the subject.

[21] Campbell's important volumes, *Women and Slavery*, do not mention Iran, for example, as her earlier edited anthology, *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004) did not.

[22] Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, p. 127. Of course, such an assessment rests on the racial classification of the Iranian population into contemporary Western categories, which is questionable at best.

[23] Nabíl-i A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 53.

sation continued all night in the Bab's chambers, as the Bab sought to convince Mulla Husayn of his divine mission and related his new religious teachings. The mulla's own recollections of Mubarak's service are recorded:

> At the third hour after sunset, my Host ordered the dinner to be served. That same Ethiopian servant appeared again and spread before us the choicest food. That holy repast refreshed alike my body and soul. In the presence of my Host, at that hour, I felt as though I were feeding upon the fruits of Paradise. I could not but marvel at the manners and the devoted attentions of that Ethiopian servant whose very life seemed to have been transformed by the regenerating influence of his Master. I then, for the first time, recognized the significance of this well-known traditional utterance ascribed to Muhammad: "I have prepared for the godly and righteous among My servants what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor human heart conceived." Had my youthful Host no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that He received me with that quality of hospitality and loving-kindness which I was convinced no other human being could possibly reveal.[24]

After this passage, Mubarak disappears from Nabil's narrative of the sacred events of May 22, 1844. However, we are fortunate that contemporary accounts are not the only sources of information about these events or about the African domestic slaves that lived in the Bab's household. We also have the records, the oral traditions, and the personal reminiscences of the Bab's family. Not only did various kinsmen of the Bab eventually become Baha'is (while others remained indifferent, or even openly hostile to the Bab's new faith and the subsequent innovations that transformed it into the Baha'i religion), but the family was also extremely wealthy and prominent in other ways, developing a mercantile empire that stretched from Istanbul to Hong Kong.[25]

Although the Bab himself had no children, the descendants of his maternal uncles and of his brother-in-law claimed him as an ancestor. The Baha'i branch of the family, at least, was known as the Afnans

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[24] This quotation is also taken from the report of Mirza Ahmad Qazvini, as noted above. Nabíl-i A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 62.

[25] See Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, "'Black Pearls': The African Household Slaves of a Nineteenth-Century Iranian Merchant Family," a paper presented at the *Conference on Slavery, Islam, and Diaspora*, Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora, Department of History, York University, October 24–26, 2003.

(twigs),[26] which eventually transformed from an honorific title into a family surname. The Afnan family has maintained a keen sense of its own place in history, and particularly in the history of the Baha'i religion. By the 1980s, one member of the family, Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, living in England, had come to be regarded as "the true custodian in this age of the traditions of the Afnan family."[27] Mr. Afnan wrote down the family traditions as they related to the African slaves in the Bab's household in a narrative that included his own personal reminiscences, specifically for Baha'i communities in East and Central Africa. Of course, he had at his disposal the considerable resources of the Afnan family, held in private archives, which include documents and memoirs reaching back to the time of the Bab himself. His account was circulated in mimeographed form for some years. It was eventually published in 1988, in the United States, under the title of *Black Pearls: Servants in the Households of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh*.[28] The book became the subject of considerable controversy within the American Baha'i community at the time.[29] Nonetheless, *Black Pearls* may be regarded as a primary source that embodies a small portion of the Afnan family's extensive memory and archive of the events of Baha'i history.

It is no surprise that, although it is a biographical account of African slaves in the Bab's household, *Black Pearls*[30] focuses a great deal of attention on the Bab himself as the source of the numinous. The slaves are praised repeatedly for their loyalty and selflessness, and for their unquestioning—even childlike—devotion and obedience to 'their' family. As such, the book repeats the themes found in earlier

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[26] That is, 'twigs' branched from the Holy Tree (of the Bab). This, as opposed to the Aghsan (branches), the direct descendants of Baha'u'llah.

[27] Robert Balyuzi, in the Foreword to H. M. Balyuzi, *Khadíjih Bagum: The Wife of the Báb* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981) pp. xi–xii.

[28] Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, *Black Pearls*, Second Edition, 1999. The book remains in print today and is no longer the subject of much controversy.

[29] Some African American Baha'is were outraged at the revelation that the Central Figures of their religion had been slave owners. (See, for example, http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/3016/racism. htm) Others seemed unconcerned about that but felt that a public portrayal of early believers as slaves—even if slaves to the Prophets—was unseemly and ill-considered. They preferred to see black Baha'is in history occupying more heroic positions. They also objected to Mr. Afnan's accounts as patronizing.

[30] This very interesting little book also provides biographies of African slaves and servants who served in the households of Bahá'u'lláh, and of his son 'Abdu'l-Baha, in Iran and in Palestine. These narratives are also of considerable interest, but are beyond the scope of this study.

Baha'i histories, except that Afnan is quite personally attached to his relatives' reminiscences. For example, he writes:

> I vividly remember that my grandmother, the daughter of Hájí Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim, would often recall Mubárak's extreme modesty and politeness. She would say that, while intelligent, quick of understanding, and possessing a great capacity to learn, he nonetheless displayed the utmost meekness and humility and showed kindness to all. She would describe his manners and demeanor as being regal, and would remark that they well befitted his service in the holy house [i.e., the house of the Bab]. More than anything else, though, she remembered him as a loyal and faithful servant of the Báb and His mother.[31]

But, as I have argued elsewhere,[32] Afnan also provides us with enough additional information to suggest that the event of the 'Declaration of the Bab' should be reinterpreted to include an African presence at the genesis of the Babi movement.[33]

Afnan is able to locate Mubarak's room in the house of the Bab, and even provides a photograph of the room in his book.[34] He informs us that it sits adjacent to the room in which the Bab received Mulla Husayn on the night of the declaration. And since it would have been unthinkable for a domestic slave to retire for the evening while his master remained awake entertaining a houseguest, Mubarak "waited sleepless and vigilant, just outside the chamber, ready to serve when called upon."[35] This account does not make much of the obvious fact that Mubarak was present—and perhaps not even out of sight—throughout the conversation that led to Mulla Husayn's conversion, that he clearly witnessed the entire event, that he must have been fully aware of the religious claims that his master was making, and that—since he was literate and educated—the significance of these claims could not have been lost on him.

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[31] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, pp. 5–6.

[32] Anthony A. Lee, Foreword to the Second Edition, in *Black Pearls* (1999), pp. xvii–xxii.

[33] And also a feminine presence, for that matter. The traditions of the Afnan family include testimony from the Báb's wife that she "witnessed" the events of the Declaration of the Báb on the evening of May 22, 1844. She says that she remained awake the whole night listening to her husband's conversation with Mullá Husayn, which could be clearly heard even from the women's apartments in the Báb's modest house. (Munírih Khanum, *Munírih Khanúm: Memoirs and Letters* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986) p. 34. Her testimony reinforces the conclusion that Mubarak must have also overheard this conversation, and makes it conclusive.

[34] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, p. 4.

[35] Ibid., p. 7.

Illustration 2.2. Mubarak's Room in the House of the Bab

In Shiraz, Iran. According to Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, the room is directly adjacent to the audience room where the Bab received Mulla Husayn on the evening of May 22, 1844. The events of that night resulted in Mulla Husayn's conversion and the beginning of the Babi movement. The house of the Bab was completely renovated in the 1870s, so the room would not have looked like this at the time the Bab lived in the house. But the structure of the house remained unchanged.

This house became a place of pilgrimage almost immediately after the Bab's execution in 1850. Here the Bab's wife received Babi, and later Baha'i, pilgrims who came to pay their respects to the widow and visit the birthplace of their religion. The house remained a place of pilgrimage for Baha'is all over the world through the 1970s. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), it was razed to the ground by government officials because it was a center of Baha'i activity. Source: Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, *Black Pearls*, Second Edition (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1999) p. 4. Catalogued at the Bahá'í World Center, Audio Visual Department as NN 3559-4-29, *FN* 13241.

Beyond this, Afnan makes reference to the traditional sources that document Mubarak's intimate association with the whole period of the Bab's early activities. Between May 1844 and September 1846—when his master was finally arrested for his religious heresies and was forced to leave Shiraz for the last time—Mubarak met and served all of the first disciples of the movement; he carried secret verbal messages and written correspondence between his master and these disciples; he was the Bab's companion and attendant (along with one other disciple) on the pilgrimage in 1844–1845, to Mecca, where the new prophet publicly announced his claim to be the Qa'im.[36] Mubarak was witness to the Bab's nearly continuous dictation of sermons and religious treatises during the pilgrimage; he was shocked when most of these writings were stolen and was willing to defend them at the risk of his life. He was present when his master was arrested in June 1845, and placed under house arrest in Shiraz. During the period of that confinement, he served his master and was in charge of surreptitiously (and in defiance of government orders) bringing followers to meet with him through a secret passage to the house. When the Bab finally left Shiraz for hiding in Isfahan, Mubarak never saw him again but was entrusted with the care of his wife and mother, both of whom remained at home.[37]

It should also be noted, by way of understanding fully the African presence at the genesis of Baha'i history, that Mubarak was not the only slave in the Bab's household. Afnan also introduces us to Fiddih (Fezzeh) Khanum,[38] an African woman who was the servant and companion of the Bab's wife, Khadijih Bagum. When the Bab married in 1842, he established a new household which consisted of two slaves, his wife, his mother, and himself. Of the family of five, two were Africans; and after the Bab's forced departure, half the household was African.

Mubarak was purchased from his wife's brother for the low price of 14 *tumans* (about $28.00), and he was probably more of a wedding

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[36] The Shi'ite messiah. See Chapter One, n. 4.

[37] Nabíl-i A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 53–72 passim, 129, 132–33; Afnan, *Black Pearls*, pp. 11–16; Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 17, 49, 57, 71, 84; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 166–67, 241–43.

[38] Always referred to simply as Fiddih in the literature. I have added the title "Khanum," which is the customary honorific address given to any respectable woman, except perhaps a slave woman.

present from the brother-in-law than anything else.[39] At the time of his marriage, the Bab also 'acquired' (to use Afnan's term) Fiddih, an 'Ethiopian' child who was probably no more than seven years old, and clearly did not represent a great investment of funds. They lived in a small two-story house in Shiraz, and seem to have had modest means. The Bab had some time earlier retired from his business activities to pursue religious studies and devotions. It is not clear that he had any income at all, at this point, and may have relied on relatives for support.[40]

Afnan's portrayal of Fiddih's life presents, if possible, an even more narrow picture of a selfless servant utterly lost in devotion to her mistress, the Bab's wife, and in service to his mother. After the mother departed with Mubarak for Iraq, Afnan assures us: "…Fiddih was able to dedicate herself fully to Khadíjih Bagum to the exception of all others in her life. She never developed any warm friendship with anyone else, even though there were a number of servants in the homes of the uncles of the Báb. Never would she appear in public except in attendance on Khadíjih Bagum."[41] Beyond this, Afnan insists that: "Fiddih refused to even contemplate life without Khadíjih Bagum."[42] In fact, both women actually died on the same night, November 15, 1881. Fiddih was about 47 years old. Afnan explains that Khadijih Bagum died first, and that a short time later "…true to her hearts desire, the spirit of Fiddih winged its flight to join her beloved mistress."[43] The narrative is so idyllic on this point that one would assume that Fiddih had either died of acute grief or had committed suicide. Afnan assured me personally however, upon my inquiry, that both women had simply succumbed to dysentery, one after the other.[44]

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[39] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, p. 5. Apparently, the bill of purchase still exists in the archives of the Afnan family.

[40] I am grateful to the late Jackson Armstong-Ingram for some of these insights. I certainly wish to acknowledge the value of our many conversations, over lunch and via e-mail, which have helped to clarify my thinking about the slaves in the Báb's family.

[41] Ibid., p. 22. I should note that the other servants mentioned here lived in the adjoining houses of the Báb's relatives. This also indicates the importance of the African presence in these households and implies that the African servants were naturally close to one another and were expected to relate to one another with "warm friendship." Here we can catch a brief glimpse of the slave networks that would be able to preserve and reproduce some aspects of African culture.

[42] Ibid., p. 23.

[43] Ibid., p. 25.

[44] Afnan, personal conversation with the author.

As Armstrong-Ingram remarks in his discussion of Fiddih's life, one is tempted by Afnan's account "to consider her a child so traumatized by the experience of enslavement that she attached herself totally to a 'protector' and grew up to be a withdrawn, asocial person."[45] However, there are aspects of her story in this and in other histories that suggest otherwise. Some time after her husband's execution, Khadijih Bagum's home became a center of pilgrimage for the persecuted Babis (and later Baha'is) of Iran.[46] Streams of visitors came to the house to seek out the presence of the wife of the Bab, who was regarded as a holy person in her own right by virtue of her direct relationship to the Prophet. Some of the women, at least, might remain as houseguests for extended periods. Khadijih Bagum would receive these visitors, act as guide to the holy house, and recount her memories of her husband and her marriage to her devoted listeners. In this role, she became a person of considerable influence within the Baha'i community. Fiddih, for her part, remained the only servant in the house and would wait on and cook for the guests—so social isolation was not an option.

In addition, Fiddih—having known the Bab and lived in his household—also inherited some of the Prophet's charisma. Abu'l-Qasim Afnan explained to me that she was also an object of reverence and devotion for visiting pilgrims. He made a point of saying that these visitors would kiss the shoulder[47] of Fiddih as an act of subordination and reverence, and that they regarded her spiritual station as above their own.[48]

Despite their close relationship to the Bab and their participation in some of the most critical early events of his ministry, neither Mubarak nor Fiddih is given much notice in traditional Baha'i histories,

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[45] Armstrong-Ingram, "Black Pearls," p. 16.

[46] The Báb's house remained an important place of pilgrimage for Baha'is until it was razed to the ground by Muslim zealots after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

[47] Kissing of hands is forbidden by Baha'i religious law. (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i Aqdas, K34.) The kissing of shoulders is not unknown in Iranian culture as a gesture of love and respect, however.

[48] This statement was his response to objections which had been made by some African American Baha'is that his portrayal of Fiddih was demeaning to black people. He insisted that Iranian Baha'is of a previous generation had regarded Fiddih as a holy person, as did he. I remember quite vividly that at the end of our visit, perhaps in illustration of his point, Mr. Afnan embraced me and kissed my shoulder. The effect was indeed startling and inspired me with a sense of humility and deep respect for the man, who seemed to embody at that moment all of the traditional dignity, modesty, and rectitude of his illustrious family. (Afnan, personal conversation with the author.)

and even less in academic discussions of Babi-Baha'i history. Afnan himself rejected the idea that they should even be regarded as Babis. He is careful in his book to characterize their service to the Bab as demonstrating only their devotion to his person, and as having no religious significance—either for present-day Baha'is or for the individuals themselves. He repeatedly denied that such devotion should be interpreted in such as way as to grant a Babi identity to either Mubarak or Fiddih. Indeed, none of the sources ever make reference to them as 'Babis.'

But, of course, the sources never make reference to anyone as a 'Babi.' Especially during the early years of the Bab's mission, the nature of Babi identity was extremely fluid and undefined, and even the word itself had not yet been coined. The religious identity of the early followers of the Bab is simply inferred from their behavior and their identification with, their loyalty and devotion to, the Bab as the source of the numinous. Different rules seem to be applied for Mubarak and Fiddih. This is an odd turn: It could be that their slave status simply disqualifies them, from the perspective of the sources, from the possibility of having a Babi identity. Or perhaps it is assumed that, as slaves, they were not free agents and could not, therefore, choose to change religions or dedicate themselves to the person of the Bab as a matter of their own personal decision. Still, it is curious that an author like Afnan would spend so much time praising the selfless and unfailing devotion of both of the servants he memorializes if he felt that such devotion were coerced.

The publisher of Afnan's *Black Pearls: Servants in the Households of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh* intended to bring the book out under the title of 'Black Bábís,' with the same subtitle.[49] The book was even initially advertised as forthcoming with the 'Black Bábís' title. However, the author flatly refused to allow this title to be used for his book. An exchange of letters followed in which the publisher argued that all of the persons written about in the book should be regarded as Babis based on their actions, their devotion to the Bab, and their participation in seminal events of Baha'i history. Afnan was not convinced, however. He wrote:

[49] Kalimát Press was the publisher, and I acted as the in-house editor for the book. In fact, Kalimát Press had proposed the publication of the book to Afnan in the first instance, after seeing the mimeographed biographies that had been circulated in Africa.

> …there is no evidence which indicates that any of the black servants mentioned in my book except Masoud[50] became believers in the Bab or Baha'u'llah.… We have to bear in mind that simply the fact of the presence of these servants at certain important historical occasions is not sufficient as evidence of belief or proof of declaration.[51]…Therefore, not having seen or heard any evidence of a declaration of faith by any of these black servants, I am reluctant to state categorically that they became believers.[52]

Again:

> …these black servants were not declared Babis except Masud, but they were dedicated and faithful, selfless, truthful and loving followers of the Bab and Baha'u'llah and their family and followers.[53]

Of Fiddih, Afnan states directly in his book that "…she was not aware of the station and mission of the Báb."[54] Of course, in the case of the Bab's manservant such a statement would have been absolutely unsupportable, and we find no similar remark in Afnan's chapter on Mubarak. Moreover, I would suggest that the notion that Fiddih could have remained unaware of the claims of the Bab throughout her lifetime beggars all reason, though this view was obviously held concerning her within the Afnan family. This same conclusion with regard to Babi identity also represents the consensus within the Baha'i community with regard to both servants. In any case, the title 'Black Bábís' was changed to *Black Pearls* at the author's insistence.

Why Afnan should maintain such views is an open question. Armstrong-Ingram suggests that he simply "projected a bureaucratic view of religious identity that became common in the Baha'i community around the 1930s on his subjects."[55] I think it more likely that

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[50] A servant of the uncle (Khal-i Akhbar) of the Bab who met Baha'u'llah and became a Baha'i.

[51] That is, a formal declaration of faith in the prophet that would change one's religious identity. The concept here is similar to the recitation of the *shahada*, which instantly and unquestionably changes one's status to that of a Muslim in Islamic jurisprudence.

[52] Abu'l-Qasim Afnan to Anthony A. Lee, August 13, 1988. Kalimát Press archives. I have corrected some of the grammar and spelling errors in the original text.

[53] Abu'l-Qasim Afnan to Anthony A. Lee, June 29, 1988. Kalimát Press archives. I should point out that the concept of a 'declared Babi' is an anachronism that betrays the influence of later Baha'i ideas.

[54] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, p. 23.

[55] Armstrong-Ingram, "Black Pearls," p. 22. That is, Armstrong-Ingram suggests that since the Bab's slaves had never made a formal 'declaration' of faith as is required in the contemporary Baha'i community, they could not be considered Babis.

he unconsciously reproduced the views long held within his family—views that were primarily determined by cultural attitudes towards Africans, slaves, and household servants. A slave, almost by definition, after all, is not supposed to be an independent actor. Rather, a slave is supposed to be a person attached by law and by custom to the identity of another individual, who is the master. A slave might be a good servant or a bad one, might be devoted and faithful or careless and perfidious, might be truthful or false. But, the idea of a slave making a free and independent decision to assume a new identity is almost a contradiction in terms.[56] Nonetheless, as I have suggested above, it is certainly time to reconsider such false assumptions.

One aspect of Afnan's book that most startled his American readers was the assertion that neither Mubarak nor Fiddih was told by the Bab's family about the Prophet's execution as a heretic by clergy and government in Tabriz (northern Iran) in 1850. The Bab had been imprisoned for years before his execution, and the Babi movement had created a political and social upheaval in Iran. Armed conflicts broke out in various parts of the country, clerics regularly vilified Babis from the pulpit, and the Bab was the subject of general rumor in all parts of Iran. Nonetheless, the final blow came as a shock to the Bab's relatives, and Afnan admits that the menfolk tried to keep the news from the women in the family for as long as they could.[57]

Of Mubarak, Afnan writes:

> Even until the time of his death, Mubárak was not told of the Báb's martyrdom. Likewise, the other servants of the household remained in ignorance of these events. The family wanted neither to distress them nor to allow their servants, who were the only ones of the house who were regularly seen in the marketplace, to become the source of delusive

[56] Armstrong-Ingram has also suggested to me, in private conversation, that in some ways the reputation and honor of the Afnan family might be involved here. After all, most of the Afnans were not Babis at all, but were converted to the Baha'i religion during the time of Baha'u'llah (ministry, 1863–1892). So, if Mubarak and Fiddih were accepted as real Babis, they would have preceded the members of the Afnan family (except for the Bab's wife) into the Faith by almost a generation. Personally, I doubt that this was a conscious consideration on Afnan's part, though it may have unconsciously colored his thinking.

[57] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, pp. 16–17. This is not an unusual strategy for dealing with the death of an absent relative within Iranian families. Quite often, the bad news will be kept from as many relatives as possible for as long as possible. Of course, the charade inevitably comes to an end. The dreaded truth is either revealed openly and deliberately or accidentally—and it is then either fully acknowledged within the family, or a feigned ignorance is maintained as a polite fiction that is respected by everyone.

> news or rumors. Both Mubárak and Fiddih were told that the Báb had voyaged to India to manage his mercantile affairs and would eventually return.
>
> While in Karbala [in service to the Bab's mother], Mubárak longed for the return of his Master. He made a broom to which he attached a green handle. Green is the color of Muhammad's lineage: since the Báb was a descendant of the Prophet, Mubárak's broom was made in remembrance of Him. Every morning at the hour of dawn, Mubárak would use the broom to sweep the courtyard around the sanctuary of the Shrine of Imám Husayn. He vowed to perform this pious deed every day until the Báb would return. After completing this exercise, he would then proceed to procure the provisions required by the household and complete his other duties.[58]

Of Fiddih, Afnan simply writes: "…she was so enchanted by Him [the Bab] that she could not even fathom the thought that He could have been killed under such brutal circumstances."[59] In 1877, some twenty-seven years after the execution, the house of the Bab in Shiraz was renovated by Baha'is so that Khadijih Bagum could live there once again. Afnan relates a family tradition about this to illustrate the point that Fiddih remained ignorant of the Bab's death until the end of her life. He says that Fiddih was found rejoicing at the work being done, since she believed that the renovations meant that her master would soon return from his long journey to India. Afnan remarks: "Her joy was a heartbreaking testimony to her devotion."[60]

As persecutions of the Babi religion intensified in Iran, both during the Bab's lifetime and after his execution,[61] the situation of Khadijih Bagum and the other members of her family in Shiraz became precarious, and even dangerous. For a time it was unsafe for the Bab's wife to remain in her house, and she took up residence with relatives. Under such circumstances, it became expedient for the family to maintain the public fiction that it was not their relative who had been executed. Rather, the story was put out that Sayyid ʿAli-Muhammad had traveled to India to take charge of an arm of the Afnan trade network there. He was on an extended journey, but he would eventually return.

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[58] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, pp. 17–18.

[59] Ibid., p. 23. The "brutal circumstances" are a reference to the Bab's execution by firing squad.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Persecution became especially intense in 1852, after an attempt was made on the life of the shah by a group of Babis in Tehran.

Such a story may have made it a little easier for the Afnans to maintain their face in public, but it certainly convinced no one. Naturally, the family's household slaves were willing and able to defend the public fiction for decades.[62] But the Bab's mother and grandmother eventually felt compelled to move their residence from Shiraz to Karbala, in Iraq, to escape from the rumors and deprecations of their Muslim relatives who made no secret of their contempt and hostility.[63]

It is certainly absurd to maintain that either Mubarak or Fiddih remained literally unaware of the fate of their master, since they regularly attended to household duties in the streets of the city and would have heard all the news that circulated there. Both servants had witnessed the Bab's arrest, his imprisonment at home, and his forced departure. They certainly would have overheard conversations within the household and witnessed the grief-stricken mourning of the women of the family when the news of the Bab's execution was finally confirmed for them. Afnan maintains that the mother of the Bab, at that point, was "beside herself with grief."[64] Beyond that, of course, there was the parade of Babi and Baha'i pilgrims that Fiddih attended to for some thirty years after the Bab's death. It is not reasonable to suppose that the significance of any of these events would have been lost on anyone who was of sound mind. Nonetheless, that is the current state of the literature.[65]

The African dimension of the genesis of the Babi religion remains unexplored both by the Baha'i faith community and by the academic community. And it is not possible for me to explore it here, since such matters are beyond the scope of this work. However, the subject cries out for further study. At this point, it can only be said emphatically that there was an important African presence at the events that marked the germination of the Babi movement. During those early years, the Bab and his extended family lived in intimate association

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[62] There may have been an element of self-interest at play here, as well. Mubarak and Fiddih were, after all, slaves. If their master were determined to be dead, his property could be divided among his heirs. That property might include the two of them, and their household would be destroyed as a result. (I am grateful to Mehrdad Amanat for this insight.)

[63] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, p. 17.

[64] Ibid.

[65] For example, Will C. van den Hoonaard states categorically: "Neither Mubarak [n]or Fiddih became Babis." ("A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa from Its Earliest Days to 1986," *Baha'i Studies Review*, Vol. 11 [2003] p. 12.)

with Africans who were members of their households. We should expect then that a search for African cultural influences would prove fruitful. At this time, both Baha'i history and Iranian history seem unfamiliar with—perhaps hostile to—the concept that slaves might influence the tastes, the language, the actions, and even the ideas of their masters. However, the academic study of the African diaspora in the Americas and in other parts of the world has demonstrated this truth beyond a reasonable doubt.[66]

[66] The current state of Iranian scholarship with regard to African influences on the history, language, culture, music, and religion of Iran (among other aspects of the culture) resembles the state of American scholarship some sixty years ago, with regard to African influences on American culture. It was supposed then that there were none—that the experience of slavery had erased all cultural memory from the minds of slaves, who arrived in the New World as *tabulae rasa*. (At least, the presence of an African Diaspora was never denied.) The opening salvo of the destruction of such a position was Melville J. Herskowitz's, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941) which documented the survival of African culture in the Americas and its influence on American societies. Even before that, Carter G. Woodson, in *The African Background Outlined; or, Handbook for the Study of the Negro* (Washington, D.C., 1936), and W. E. B. DuBois, in *The Negro* (1915) had argued along the same lines. Since then, of course, although African American history remains a subaltern history, the influence of African people on the United States has become a large field of study. See Robin D. G. Kelly, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1883–1950," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, no. 3 (1999) pp. 1046–1077.

CHAPTER THREE

# OPTING FOR THE APOCALYPSE: THE BAHA'I RESPONSE TO THE MODERN CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND WEST AFRICA

This work is concerned with the growth and development of the Baha'i religion in West Africa during the first decade or so after its introduction there. During this period, Baha'is from other parts of the world—primarily the United States—pursued an international missionary plan that brought their religion to West Africa in the form of Baha'i 'pioneers' (missionaries) who settled in various parts of the region, supported by the international Baha'i community. These Baha'is successfully and permanently planted the Baha'i religion in West Africa through a decade of teaching, traveling, conversions, correspondence, and organization. A narrative of these events will be provided in Chapter Four.

A chronology of Baha'i growth and expansion in West Africa is not my primary concern in this chapter, though there is certainly a story to be told in that regard. Baha'is around the world were both surprised and delighted by the ease and rapidity with which their religion grew in this part of Africa during these first years. Thousands of new converts were spread over virtually every territory in the region. Perhaps even more important to the Baha'is of those decades, an impressive number of local Baha'i councils (local Spiritual Assemblies) were formed in accordance with the goals of the international plan. Beyond this, there were the formations of other Baha'i institutions—including the appointment of one Baha'i in West Africa, Enoch Olinga, to the international office of 'Hand of the Cause of God' by Shoghi Effendi, the 'Guardian' and the head of the Baha'i faith.

However, the causes for the successful establishment of any religious community in a new place must also be explained. I believe that an investigation into those causes will raise the most important questions that need to be answered about this early history: Why did people decide to become Baha'is in West Africa during the 1950s? What was the message that Baha'i teachers offered to potential converts? And why should this message motivate large numbers of people to embrace a new religious identity, even if provisionally? Why, indeed, did people

decide to become Baha'is in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, when it was introduced to that country? Or in Iran and in other parts of the Middle East even earlier, for that matter? Were these the same ideas and issues that motivated West Africans in the middle of the twentieth century?

If it is possible to recover a social history of the establishment of the Baha'i faith in West Africa in the 1950s and early 1960s, I believe that such a history will be found in asking questions such as these—questions that are concerned with the meaning of the religion to its members (both old and new), rather than in a chronology of first believers, conversions, travels, formations of local Baha'i councils—or even the emergence of an international leader.

## *The Baha'is of West Africa*

The Baha'i religion was introduced into West Africa in the early 1950s as a result of the deliberate missionary efforts of English, Persian, and American Baha'is.[1] Small communities were established fairly quickly in several West African countries—not as churches or as closed communities, but in the American model of voluntary associations. In the United States, and in other parts of the West, Baha'is had, by the 1950s, refused to organize themselves into churches. For various reasons, they had instead formed religious organizations that governed themselves in accord with standard parliamentary procedure, much as any secular association, club, or society might. These associations were designated 'Spiritual Assemblies,' and then later, 'Baha'i communities.' Indeed, this model of Baha'i organization took on an aura of sacredness in itself. So, naturally, it was this model that American Baha'i pioneers sought to reproduce on the African continent.

The only exception to this pattern is found in the British Cameroons where the Baha'i religion spread as a social movement. Here, several hundred people became Baha'is within a short time. This was the only country in West Africa where this was accomplished, and here American pioneers were only marginally involved in the process of conversion. I believe that this development in British Cameroons

[1] As mentioned, the history of the growth of the Baha'i faith in West Africa is treated in detail in Chapter Four of this work. Therefore, the following is only a brief summary of events.

demonstrates an occasion where the Baha'i faith offered an alternative to secularization and fundamentalism in a society facing a modern crisis.

Terence Ranger's definition of religious 'movements' is helpful here to differentiate between the development of the Baha'i faith in the British Cameroons and its development elsewhere in West Africa. Of course, Ranger's definition specifically addresses the situation of African religious movements: "By movements" he says, "are meant widespread and grassroots adherence to religious ideas, symbols and rituals, sometimes brief in duration, sometimes long-lasting; sometimes lacking and sometimes acquiring formal organizational structures."[2] Religious movements in all societies necessarily spread by rumor, gossip, and informal, face-to-face conversation. Movements of this kind expand through existing social networks, rather than creating new ones. They are fueled by partial understandings, misunderstandings, distortions, and reformulations of an initial (more formal and orthodox) message or teaching.

The Baha'i faith in West Africa spread initially among urban males with some schooling between the ages of 30 and 40 years, who were without steady employment, and who were at the bottom of the modern sector of society. They were almost always Christians. Also, foreigners in other countries looking for work tended to become Baha'is in disproportionate numbers. Occasionally, youth in school and villagers became Baha'is.

In the British Cameroons, virtually all of the new Baha'is were Christians. The Baha'i faith spread as a religious movement within the networks of the Basel Mission, a Swiss Presbyterian missionary society that functioned in the English-speaking British Cameroons as a Protestant denomination. At the center of the Baha'i movement was Enoch Olinga, an educated African Baha'i from Uganda.

Olinga moved to the Cameroons as a pioneer in the first year of the Ten Year Crusade, a worldwide teaching plan initiated by Shoghi Effendi, in 1953. He devoted his full time to teaching the Baha'i faith and was extremely successful. Within a few years, there were over 1,000 newly declared Baha'is in the Cameroons as a direct result of his efforts.

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[2] T. O. Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa" in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 29 (1986) no. 2, p. 1.

Almost all of these new believers had been Christians and communicants of the Basel Mission. Indeed, the Baha'i faith took on the character of a movement within the mission with—in some places—60% to 90% of the membership converting to the new religion.[3] Beyond those who broke with the church, there was also an underground movement of Christians who secretly considered themselves Baha'is, but who continued to remain within the mission, as teachers or employees.[4]

What was the Baha'i message then, and why was it so attractive to certain West African men in the 1950s?

## *The Baha'i Alternative*

To attempt an answer to that question, it will be useful again to have a look at the beginnings of the Baha'i religion in Iran. In his pioneering history of the first years of the establishment of the Babi religion, Abbas Amanat has argued that the Bab's message began as a call for pious reform within Shi'ism that eventually resulted in a break from Islam and in the creation of a new religion. He offers the view that the Babi movement, and by implication the Baha'i faith that succeeded it, found its appeal as a response to the global crisis of modernity which was just beginning to distress and to threaten the Middle East. Amanat argues, therefore, that the success of the Babi religion can be understood as an effort by one movement within pre-modern Iranian society to come to terms with the new and inescapable fact of modernity. All that, without resorting to fundamentalist rigidity and without passively accepting the secular attitudes that render religion marginal to modern concerns.

Amanat argues of the Babi religion that: "Its innovations were a spontaneous response to the realities of the time." And that: "It was an attempt to render a religious answer to the moral and material stagnation of the community by proposing a continuous regeneration of religious essence, while preserving the historical relevance of prophethood."[5] Amanat concedes that the Babi response to the perception of social

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[3] Georg Tröster, "Zum Problem der Baha'i-Bewegung in Sudkamerun" in *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (1962) pp. 71–77. See Chapter Six.

[4] Samuel M. Kima to Valerie Wilson, November 29, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers. See Chapter Five.

[5] Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 408.

crisis was primarily symbolic and religious, rather than rational or modern. Nonetheless, he argues that it "shared the modernity of a secular mind as it traced the stagnation of the [Shi'i Muslim] community not in the irreversible fate of its members but in their failure to see the incompatibility of their past religious values with the realities of a new era." He continues: "Before the introduction of Western ideologies would definitively revise the ideals of reform, this was the only answer generated in nineteenth-century Shi'ite Iran which coped with the threat of an alien and materially superior culture *without resorting to rejectionism or falling prey to complacency*."[6]

This chapter will seek to demonstrate that this insight into the beginnings of the Babi religion in Iran can also be usefully applied to the history of the religion of Baha'u'llah. More specifically, I will suggest that the beginnings of the Baha'i faith in West Africa—during the mid-1950s—and the appeal that the religion had at that time and place can be understood in terms of a religious response to the crisis of modernity. The Baha'i community flourished, when it did, in the Middle-Eastern, in the American, and later in the African, contexts because it offered an answer to the crisis that the modern world posed for religion, in particular, and for society in general.

## *The Crisis of Modernity*

Critics of modernity complain that the modern world is always in crisis, of course, for reasons that are basic to modernity itself. The sheer size, complexity, and specialization of modern life make the collapse of shared norms and values across the whole of society virtually inevitable. More than this, the modern world relentlessly pursues rapidly changing technologies to which individuals must continually adapt. These technologies are incorporated into modern lives much faster than they can be legitimized, or even understood, in terms of traditional values, accepted identities, or religious norms. And therefore, one of the most consistent critiques of Western societies, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been the generalized (and rather pessimistic) belief that the modern world is in a state of crisis. This discourse has proclaimed the widespread perception—among

[6] Ibid., pp. 406–407. Emphasis added.

intellectuals, at least—that Western modernity has come at a very high cost, a cost that threatens to erase all shared values and even to destroy society itself.

This critique of modernity is so ubiquitous and so familiar that its classic arguments hardly bear repeating. In the last hundred years, the most important critics of modernity have been Marx, Durkheim, and Weber—who, though their approaches differ utterly, are unanimous in insisting that the human consequences of modern life are calamitous for the individual and for society. Marx decried the exploitation of human beings as worker units, their estrangement from one another and from the products of their labor, their ultimate alienation from others and from themselves.[7] Durkheim warned of the dangers inherent in the growing complexity of society, the pluralization of values that must lead to normative breakdown, the collapse of social norms, and the exaltation of the individual to a cultic icon.[8] Weber's work details the soulless bureaucratization of human society, its inevitable specialization, rationalization, and disenchantment, leading to the reduction of the human spirit.[9] And so have the great social critics outlined the crisis of modernity. They have been joined by countless others across disciplines who have elaborated the same critiques.

It is, moreover, widely accepted—both by the religiously minded and by secular modernists—that the established religions find basic incompatibilities of consciousness and of practice within the modern world. The development of modernity in Europe has presented a devastating challenge to Christianity, for instance. The major social and intellectual responses to this dilemma are either religious fundamentalism—which rejects and demonizes important aspects of modernity; or secularism—which embraces modernity and tries to discard religiously oriented views of the world. These choices are, of course, Amanat's 'rejectionism' and 'complacency.'

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[7] For the general argument, see for example, Karl Marx, *The Marx Reader*, ed. by Christopher Pierson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) especially pp. 60–71; and Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition (New York: Norton & Company, 1978).

[8] For Durkheim's views see, for example, Emile Durkheim, *Readings from Emile Durkheim*, ed. by Kenneth Thompson, Revised Edition (New York: Routledge, 1984 [2004]); and idem., *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. by W. D. Halls, Second Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

[9] On Weber, see Max Weber, *The Essential Weber: A Reader*, ed. by Sam Whimster (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

## *The Heretical Imperative*

Peter Berger, a sociologist who has written on Christianity from the perspective of a Christian, has addressed the problem of modernity in a number of books and articles. Berger maintains that in the pre-modern world symbols, norms, meanings, and values could be experienced as a (more or less) integrated and taken-for-granted whole by everyone in society. This acceptance acted as a 'sacred canopy' that provided individuals with the unexamined context of their lives.[10] For Berger, the crisis of modernity is brought about most clearly by the pluralization (and fragmentation) of values and norms, which has destroyed the traditional canopy of wholeness and shattered Western culture beyond repair. Since the canopy was primarily religious, the impact of the modern world is most drastic in the area of religion.[11]

Berger discusses this issue thoroughly within Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, in *The Heretical Imperative*.[12] According to Berger, the modern situation is one that has universalized the condition of heresy. The word, *heresy*, itself is derived from the Greek word for *choice*. The heretic is one who 'chooses' his own path, rather than accepting the received, orthodox tradition as divinely ordained. Berger argues that no one in a modern society today can participate in any religious tradition without personal choice. It is impossible for any believer—as in pre-modern times—to simply take for granted his ancestral traditions, remaining unaware of alternative religious systems or secular lifestyles to which he could just as easily adhere. In the modern situation, Berger insists, even an uncritical affirmation of the received religious orthodoxy is an individual choice. No one can

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[10] Compare this approach with the ideas of John Middleton, which are outlined in Chapter Five. Middleton sees traditional African societies as accepting their local social contexts, with all their conflicts and contradictions as a roughly unified whole. All social phenomena that are 'there' are accepted as part of that context. While Middleton rejects the romantic overtones of Berger's views of a past 'wholeness,' his ideas are similar in terms of a shared context of community.

[11] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967); also idem., with Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind* (New York: Random House, 1973).

[12] Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979). It should be noted that Berger's doctoral dissertation was written on the Baha'i faith. It is a sociological inquiry into the transition of the religion from a sect to a formal religion. (Peter L. Berger. "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement." Ph.D. Dissertation. New School of Social Research, 1954.)

escape the imperative to consciously and individually choose his belief system. Nor can any religious community escape the implications of this choice.[13]

Berger finds only two major intellectual responses to this modern dilemma within Christianity, which he labels the *deductive* and the *reductive* possibilities. The deductive possibility (fundamentalism, traditionalism; Amanat's rejectionism) reaffirms traditional religion in defiance of the modern world and pretends to reject a modern consciousness. The reductive possibility (liberalism, capitulation; Amanat's complacency) accepts the modern, scientific worldview as the basis of truth and seeks to adapt what is left of religion to it. Beyond this, of course, there is the fully secular possibility of dismissing religion altogether. But, for Berger, this is not a real option. Even full secularization cannot discard religion since, as a natural aspect of the human experience, such a thing is not possible. Even within a wholly secular society, religion exists—reduced to a private and subjective spirituality.[14] Therefore, for Berger, secularism is really a form of reductive response, with religion simply marginalized and individualized.

Dissatisfied with these alternatives, Berger proposes a third way, the path that he favors—the inductive possibility. Here one affirms that religion is rooted in the continuing human experience of the sacred, an experience that is neither modern nor pre-modern, but an ongoing existential reality. The inductive possibility seeks to understand and accept the existential core of religious experience in light of modern realities. This third way allows the person of faith to maintain his religious experience as central to life, without rejecting the implications of the modern world. It seeks to return to the original historical events that gave rise to Christianity—to return to (the accounts of) the life of Jesus and his disciples as they can be understood and experienced today by believers—in order to interpret these ongoing realities in the light of modern consciousness.

## *The Babi Option*

I think that the Babi movement (and the later Baha'i faith) is in many ways similar to Berger's third category of inductive approach to reli-

[13] Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*. See Chapter One.
[14] Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 passim.

gion in the modern world—but with an important difference. While the inductive approach that Berger describes and advocates seeks to return to the original experiences that created the Christian faith, the Babis attempted no such thing. Quite the opposite. As Amanat demonstrates, Babis had no interest in returning to the primal experiences of Islam to discover their meaning in the modern world. Neither the Bab nor his followers sought to create or reexamine a pristine past. Rather, their intention was to actively create new experiences that would be as powerful, or more powerful, than the original impulse that created Islam in the first place. And this, not by looking to the past, but to the future.

The Babis sought to respond to the crisis of modernity by calling on the eschatology of their Islamic tradition (rather than its history) and pulling future events into the present. The prophecies about future events were studied and consciously enacted—lived out, thereby 'inductively' creating the promised apocalypse, or 'time of the end.' Thus the Qa'im, the Shi'ite Messiah, had appeared (in the person of the Bab) and his promised victory (or ultimate sacrifice through martyrdom, one is never quite sure which) had to be actively produced in the present. For this reason, I will refer to the Babi/Baha'i model of religious response to modernity as the *productive* possibility.

Amanat repeatedly laments the single-mindedness of the Babi leaders in continually interpreting their current reality in terms of prophetic fulfillment. According to Amanat, every decision, every victory, every betrayal, that the movement faced was experienced by the believers as symbolic—the enactment of the Qiyama (the passion of the Promised One's appearance)—"almost to the point of being mythological."[15] However, whatever its weaknesses, this consciousness was not a nostalgic return to the original experience of Islam, but an active claiming of events expected in the future for present use, in an effort to confront the challenges of a modern world.

The Babis did not reject the modern situation in favor of a lost 'Golden Age' of faith that they hoped to recreate. Neither did they, as Berger suggests we might, understand their faith as a timeless reality that we can experience in the modern situation as easily as in any other. Instead, they sought to engage the modern world—and to conquer it—by urgently invoking the millennium to justify and legitimize

[15] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 409.

their intention to discard and reformulate their orthodox tradition, in the name of orthodoxy.

This productive principle allowed for a complete reformation of religion (that is, of Islam)—a renewal of religion in the context of modernity, in other words, which might allow faith concerns to remain at the center of a modern world. It was also an attempt to redefine the nature of modernity itself, and so exert some control over its demands. After all, if modernity is really a question of the appearance of the apocalypse, then it is certainly under the control of the promised Qa'im, who is the ruler of the millennium. If the Qa'im is alive and available to provide instructions in this 'modern' situation, then matters are under his control and religion is the center of social concern. Of course, this reformulation—which requires the appearance of a new prophet of God, in this case the Bab, who eventually claimed that station—propelled the Babis beyond Islam, producing a new religious community, of which the Baha'i faith is the contemporary manifestation.

## *The Religion of Baha'u'llah*

The Babi religion was reformulated and revitalized by Baha'u'llah (ministry: 1863–1892) as a new dispensation, the Baha'i faith. Baha'u'llah accomplished this task in exile, first in Iraq, then in Istanbul; later in European Edirne; and finally in Syria/Palestine. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was transforming itself into a modern state. Baha'u'llah's teachings were promulgated within the context of the now overwhelming presence of European modernity, which was the most important force confronting these Ottoman realms in the nineteenth century.

Juan Cole, in his important book *Modernity and the Millennium*,[16] has argued that Baha'u'llah embraced certain aspects of the modern condition and placed them at the center of his religion. Cole demonstrates effectively how major elements of Baha'u'llah's thought were intended both to accommodate and to critique the modern situation through the reformulation of religion.

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[16] Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) distributed by Kalimát Press as volume nine of the series *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*.

The Baha'i religion, in Cole's view, clearly demonstrates the falsity of the stereotypical view of the Middle East as traditional, stagnant, and anti-modern—resistant to all change. This is an important insight, and an important challenge to the prejudices of earlier scholarship that can certainly be applied to African history, as well. Starting from the earlier Babi innovations, Baha'u'llah departed from Islam within his own teachings by embracing the concept of separation of church and state, rejecting absolutism in favor of democratic values, accepting the value of a limited nationalism, insisting on the unity of the human race, and calling for gender equality.[17] The result was the establishment of a new religion that deliberately and consciously—openly and unashamedly—formulated itself in response to the problems of modernity.

Christopher Buck also argues that the Baha'i religion consciously confronts the crisis of modernity, in his encyclopedic *Paradise and Paradigm*.[18] Buck demonstrates that many of Baha'u'llah's later writings can be understood as a direct response to modern issues. Baha'u'llah's solution to the challenge of modernity, according to Buck, was to accept a modern consciousness—but not by way of Berger's reductive capitulation to secularism. Rather, he undertook the active 'sacralization' of aspects of the modern world (scientific inquiry, gender equality, and internationalism, for example) and a corollary 'de-sacralization' of former religious practices considered "outmoded, incommensurate with the exigencies of modernity, and thus no longer 'sacred' with respect to divine authorization."[19] Again, we see the productive alternative at work.

Baha'u'llah's productive religious project, as with the earlier Babi movement, called upon traditional eschatology to meet the crisis of modernity. By deliberately invoking end-time prophecies and actively claiming to have lived out those prophecies in present time, he created the social space to reform, readjust, and indeed to recreate religion. Remarkably, Baha'u'llah was able to call upon not only Muslim (and of course Babi) eschatological narratives, but also those of Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as well. He announced himself to be (in addition to the promised Husayn of the Shi'is and 'he whom God

[17] Ibid. See especially, pp. 189–95.

[18] Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999). See especially, pp. 142–79.

[19] Ibid., p. 146.

will make manifest' awaited by Babis) Jesus Christ returned, the Jewish Messiah, and the Zoroastrian deliverer Shah Bahram Varjavand.[20] By claiming to be each (and all) of these holy figures, he could assume the divine authority required to adjust and remake religions in response to the demands of a modern world. Therefore, the success of his message rested on the acceptance of those charismatic claims. And acceptance of those claims propelled the new Baha'is out of their traditional orthodoxies into a new religious movement.

Similarly, the introduction of the Baha'i faith to America in the 1890s certainly exhibits the same option for a productive alternative to the (permanent) crisis of modernity. In America, the crisis was not the appearance of a new, alien, and militarily superior culture—as in the Middle East—or the collapse of colonial rule and missionary power, but rather the encounter of nineteenth-century American society with the full-blown effects of the industrial revolution, the rapid growth of the modern metropolis, and transition to an urban culture. All this, coupled with the failure of traditional Protestant religion to respond to a new and bewildering urban, industrial environment.[21]

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[20] Christopher Buck, "A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahá'u'lláh and Cross-Cultural Messianism" in Peter Smith, ed., *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, Volume Three: *In Iran* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986) pp. 157–79.

[21] For the history of the Baha'i religion in the United States, see Peter Smith, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1894–1917: A Preliminary Survey" in *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, Vol. 1, pp. 85–223; Richard Hollinger, *Community Histories*, volume six of the *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* series (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1992); and William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005). Other volumes of the Studies series are also useful.

The Baha'i faith was introduced to the United States by an Egyptian Christian convert, Ibrahim Kheeiralla. This early American Bahaism was millennial and the early Baha'is drew heavily on Bible prophecies to understand their new religious identity. Kheiralla taught and early American Baha'is believed that Christ had returned and that he was alive on earth in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha—Baha'u'llah's eldest son and successor, then living in Palestine—even though this was not doctrinally correct from a more orthodox perspective. ('Abdu'l-Baha repeatedly denied that he was the return of Christ, for example.) However, a full treatment of American Baha'i history is beyond the scope of this discussion.

It is useful to compare the success of the Baha'i eschatological message in America with the failure of the religion to establish itself in Britain. The 'productive' religion of the American Baha'is was effective in establishing a viable community in the United States almost from the start. However, British Baha'is never accepted Kheiralla's teaching that 'Abdu'l-Baha was the return of Christ. The religion, as it was taught in Britain, had no millennial message. Baha'is in Britain probably never numbered more than about 50, from the beginning through the 1930s. See Phillip R. Smith, " What Was a Bahá'í? Concerns of British Bahá'ís, 1900–1920" in *Studies in Honor of the Late*

## *The Collapse of the Missions*

I think that it is useful to apply the productive model to this introduction of the Baha'i faith into West Africa. But here, the crisis of modernity was not focused on an alien threat or the problems of urbanization and industrialization. The crisis that the modern world presented to the Africans in the 1950s was the impending collapse of colonial society, and particularly the collapse of Christian missions within that society.

John Iliffe, in his classic *A Modern History of Tanganyika*,[22] has outlined the major elements of the crisis of colonialism in Africa. Illife maintains that a crisis had developed in British colonies and colonial societies beginning with the Great Depression of the 1930s. This crisis coincided with the upheaval of European capitalism and continued through World War II. By the decade of the 1950s, which is the focus of this study, the situation was full blown and desperate. By then, according to Iliffe, the crisis was over—for all practical purposes—because colonial society had in fact already collapsed. Though colonial governments remained, responsibility for the future of Africa had passed to the minds and the hands of the colonized. In all African colonies, national liberation was by then clearly the logic and dynamic of all social movement. One element of this crisis was that both the colonizer and the colonized lost faith in the colonial project, the colonial vision of the future. Iliffe explains that Europeans began to doubt whether their goals of a Europeanized Africa were attainable, and "Africans doubted whether they were desirable."[23] Iliffe sees this disillusionment as being expressed most clearly in Christianity and within the Christian missions.

Iliffe sees this crisis as affecting all African missionary societies, not only the ones in Tanganyika. There is every reason to believe that a similar crisis faced the Basel Mission in British Cameroons during the same period, for example. After all, the Basel Mission was on the verge of collapse in Africa, as was the whole concept of a missionary Christianity controlled and administered by Europeans. By 1957,

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*H. M. Balyuzi, Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Volume Five (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988) pp. 219–51.

[22] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge University Press, 1979). See Chapter 1, "The Crisis of Colonial Society, 1929–1945," pp. 342–80.

[23] Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 342.

the Presbyterian community of the Cameroons had broken with such control and had become an independent national church free of all supervision from the Swiss Mission.

There is clear evidence of such a crisis of confidence and purpose for fellow Presbyterians in the French Cameroons just across the border. For example, the annual reports of American missionaries for 1953 and 1954, from the French region, had to be censored before publication. In them, the missionaries had complained rather bitterly that the African Christian community was out of control. Their teachers and pastors would not behave, and they had no way to discipline them. African Christians now had life choices, and they were using their mission education to move on to lucrative jobs in the city, forgetting their Christian roots. The communicants in their congregations had not become the strict Christian ascetics the missionaries wanted them to be. They complained that Africans were getting too much freedom and responsibility too soon.[24]

Perhaps we should expect that a fading vision of the future would most affect religious communities—since their shared identity relies so heavily on an imagined future, in this world and in the next. The dream for Africa had always been that the missionaries were raising up a new Christian society there, perhaps even new Christian nations. And for Africans, missionaries—even until the 1930s, in more remote areas—were conspicuous as the symbols of European wealth, power, prestige, and modernity in places where no other such symbols existed. By the end of World War II—with African soldiers returning from other parts of the world, with more Europeans arriving in Africa, and with a much more substantial secular government presence in the colonial territories—that was no longer true. Missionaries could not compete with the government or with private business interests in terms of wealth, prestige, or resources. It was also clear to all, by this time, that Christian missionaries were never going to have access to the massive infusion of money and personnel that they would have

[24] Annual Reports of the Mission Stations, 1953–54; Secretaries Files: West African Mission; Board of Foreign Missions (RG142, Box 11, Folders 57, 70, and 81). Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. See especially the (uncensored) general report and the report from Yaounde, 1953.

needed to assume a commanding presence in African societies—or even to control their own congregations.[25]

The missionary dream by the end of World War II had been overtaken by events. The mission community was obviously never going to become that near-perfect Christian society that the missionaries had hoped for and had struggled to produce through the first half of the century. Rather, the Christian church in Africa was going to look much like the churches in America and Europe—existing in cultural, political, and economic subordination to a secular state. Christianity would be only one aspect of a larger, Western, secular culture that would provide the primary identity of Africans—even for African Christians. Christianity was not going to become a dominant force in society, and the church would soon be turned over to African believers. The missionary dream was over, and the mission system was at the point of collapse.

It is perhaps for this last reason that Iliffe finds that the dynamic of a lost European vision was most pronounced in mission Christian communities. After all, secular societies in Africa would undergo a profound transformation, but they would not cease to exist. Missionary Christianity would disappear. As a result, Iliffe suggests: "As the European vision of the future faded, so African Christians sought one for themselves."[26]

Iliffe identifies three approaches by which African Christians asserted their independence and their visions of the future as a result of the colonial crisis: 1) independent Christian churches, 2) revival movements within the missions, and 3) eclecticism which refused to be limited by Christianity. Revival is the approach that is of most interest to us here, since it suggests possible parallels with the spread of the Baha'i faith within the Basel Mission in British Cameroon in the 1950s.

[25] Cf. Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, pp. 360–61.
[26] Ibid., p. 361.

The revival movement entered Tanganyika from Rwanda in 1939.[27] However, the revival preachers did not organize separate churches.[28] They preached within the mission. Those newly 'saved' remained within their congregations, although they might meet separately at times for prayer and mutual support. Nonetheless, the revival preachers criticized both the European missionaries and Africans in positions of authority within the missions as impure. Only gradually did these local cells within the mission—and occasionally larger gatherings arranged for the public confession of sins—create new loyalties and new communities. The point here is that the colonial crisis gave rise to movements within mission communities, just as it gave rise to movements outside of them.[29]

The colonial crisis was a profound disturbance for the missionaries, of course. But it was also a crisis for African Christians who now faced exactly the same choices as European Christians had in earlier times—secularization or fundamentalist retreat. Revival movements can be seen as the latter. This is especially true for village teachers, catechists, and communicants—those at the very bottom of the mission hierarchy for whom the dream of a Christianized Africa had held the most promise. Those who had assumed that a Christian career would lead upward now realized that they would be left behind.[30] Most

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[27] On Revival, see Max Warren, *Revival: An Inquiry* (London: SCM Press, 1954); Catherine Robins, "*Tukutendereza*: A Study of Social Change and Withdrawal in the Bolokole Revival Movement in Uganda," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975; Kevin Ward, "*Tukutendereza Yesu*: The Balokole Revival Movement in Uganda" in Z. Nthamburi, ed., *From Mission to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991, pp. 113–44; George K. Mambo, "The Revival Fellowship (Brethren) in Kenya," in David B. Barrett, et al., eds., *Kenya Churches Handbook* (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1973) pp. 110–117; Josiah R. Mlahagwa, "Contending for the Faith: Spiritual Revival of the Fellowship Church in Tanzania," in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds., *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); and Thomas Spear, "Toward the History of African Christianity" in ibid., pp. 3–10. The literature on revival is comparatively sparse. Spear notes that it is the independent African churches that have been studied the most, "leaving parallel developments within the historical churches and the emergence of African [mainstream] churches obscured below the waterline of schism and independence." (Spear, "Toward the History," p. 4.) See also, David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* [Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968] pp. 4–7, 179–86.

[28] Fellowship with mission churches was not finally broken until the 1950s. Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 365.

[29] This is precisely Spears's point, quoted in the footnote above. He notes that "the independent churches represented only the tip of the iceberg…" (Spear, "Toward the History," p. 4.)

[30] Cf. Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, pp. 358–59.

people within the missions would opt for one of the obvious alternatives. But, again, the Baha'i faith offered a 'productive' alternative that was chosen by a few, at least a few within the Basel Mission.[31]

The Baha'i teachings offered a way of renewing the missionary dream by reaching into the future to make use of the eschatological promises of Christianity. Actually, we know very little about how Enoch Olinga taught the people he converted to the Baha'i faith in the British Cameroons. But, there is evidence that the message was a millennial (that is, chiliastic) one. He taught that these were the Last Days, in a biblical sense. The Baha'i message, as it was understood by Cameroonian Baha'is for decades after, was shaped by Olinga's teaching.

## *Opting for the Apocalypse*

I suggest, therefore, that the meaning of the Baha'i message that spread as a movement, in the British Cameroons at least, in the 1950s and 1960s was a 'productive' one. Those attracted to the Baha'i teachings were precisely those Christians within the Basel Mission community who were facing a new crisis of modernity—a crisis that was about to sweep away their world. For some, rather than abandon their Christian dream, or retreat to a stubborn refusal to admit the obvious, the Baha'is offered an alternative—the unique apocalyptic option that has been characteristic of the Babi/Baha'i religions from the earliest days of their combined history.

One example of this productive message that successfully spread the Baha'i teachings is provided by the conversion of Alice Ndobe, later an Auxiliary Board member[32] in Cameroon during the 1980s, and so a prominent Baha'i. The message that she heard and that led her to become a Baha'i certainly originated with Enoch Olinga. Her story takes place in 1969, and demonstrates some of the ethos of the Baha'i community at that time, and earlier.[33]

Ndobe explains that she grew up within the Basel Mission system. As she became older, she was disturbed when she realized that there were a number of Christian churches that all preached the gospel of

[31] This was not the only productive alternative, by the way. Iliffe's Christian independency and eclecticism are others. (Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 361ff.)

[32] A fairly important position within the Baha'i Administration.

[33] Interview by Don Addison, January 1983, of which I have a tape.

Christ, but in different ways. So, "I was not steady in the Presbyterian Church [the Basel Mission]," she says. She continues: "I used to go to the Full Gospel. Hear what they are saying about Christ. And other churches that were around."

In 1969, she went to the small town of Tombe and encountered many Christian sects talking about the Last Days, the coming end of the world. Their teachings frightened her and were the source of continuous disquiet. She was worried about what would happen to her when the Last Day came. She was unhappy with all the anxiety that this preaching caused her, and she says that she even became angry and "blamed God" that he should send people into the world to torment her like this. Apparently, she was overwhelmed by fear that she might be damned in the drama of the Last Judgment. That reaction is, of course, precisely the one intended by a certain kind of evangelical preaching. Conversion to evangelical Christianity is supposed to be the next logical step from there.

She returned to Eboneme, her home village, in 1969, and she started talking about these ideas of the Last Days. (It is not clear from this account whether she was converted to these Evangelical views. But, she says that she "took that message" to her home village, so I assume that she had accepted whatever message was being preached.) On one occasion, when she was telling people that the end of the world was at hand, one of her relatives, Michael Edie, who was a Baha'i, objected. He told her that the Last Days would not come as the Christians expect. We are living in the Last Days now, he insisted. This response caught her off guard. He taught her a bit about the Baha'i faith. Most importantly, Edie taught her that the Last Days would not bring about the end of the world, and explained Baha'i notions of the end of the present era, the coming of a new religion, and so forth. She was immediately attracted to this teaching. And, after this, she was "a little bit released" from her anxiety about the end of the world. But her relative did not know very much about the Baha'i religion and could not tell her more.

At that point, she was in effect converted as a Baha'i. But she did not actually join the Baha'i community in a formal way until several years later, when she finally found some other Baha'is. This is an example of how the Baha'i religion was able to spread outside of the control of its formal organization. It indicates the development of the Baha'i faith into a religious movement, a development that was unique to British Cameroons. Her relative, Michael Edie, did not know enough about

the Baha'i faith to actually bring her into the community. Nonetheless, he succeeded in converting her in belief, if not in affiliation. Here, we see the expansion of the religion through family networks.

It is not clear to me that Edie himself was even a Baha'i, by formal affiliation, at the time of his initial conversation with Ndobe, though he was later on. Certainly, he knew very little about the religion. But, there was no question in his mind that the Baha'i message was: "We are living now in the Last Days." The Last Days, which become the 'first days' and open the possibility for the production of a new religion that takes account of modern life. This is the fundamental function of the productive alternative, and it became the entry point of the Baha'i religion into Cameroonian society, as it was the point of entry into Iranian society in the middle of the nineteenth century.

I might note here that Ndobe's anxiety about the Judgment Day and the end of the world was the force that bound her, perhaps even reluctantly, to the evangelical Christian church. When she found herself "a little bit released" from this anxiety by the Baha'i teachings concerning the coming of a New Age and a new religion (as opposed to the destruction of the planet), she would also have been released from binding ties to Christianity and to Christian missions and preachers. Ndobe does not discuss this aspect of her experience in the interview that is available to me. Nonetheless, in the British Cameroons at least, accepting a new Baha'i message carried with it a newfound autonomy from European authority and a rejection of mission control. This dimension of Baha'i conversion will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FOUR

# PLANTING THE BAHA'I FAITH IN WEST AFRICA: THE FIRST DECADE

From their beginnings, the Babi and Baha'i religions were conceived by their founders as world religions, comparable in universality and in divine mission to Christianity or Islam. As such, the Baha'i scriptures anticipate the eventual conversion of all peoples into a worldwide community of faith. Even in his first treatise, the *Qayyumu'l-'Asma*,[1] which the Bab began writing on the night of the conversion of Mulla Husayn, he called upon the "people of the West" in one passage to "issue forth from your cities and aid the Cause of God."[2] Some years later, Baha'u'llah wrote, concerning his own cause: "When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith."[3] Therefore, the conversion of African peoples was always regarded by Baha'is as inevitable—an event to be anticipated as a necessary aspect of the eventual conversion of all humanity.

'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah's eldest son and designated successor, explicitly anticipated the entry of Africans into his father's religion as part of this triumphant destiny. For example, he writes:

> How great, how very great is the Cause; how very fierce the onslaught of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth! Erelong shall the clamor of the multitude throughout Africa, throughout America, the cry of the European and of the Turk, the groaning of India and China be heard from far and near. One and all they shall arise with all their power to resist His Cause. Then shall the Knights of the Lord, assisted by grace

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[1] A commentary on the Sura of Joseph in the Qur'an. Excerpts of this treatise have been translated in *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, trans. by Habib Taherzadeh, et al. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976) pp. 39–74. See also, Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 202–207; [Nabil-i 'Azam], *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 61.

[2] Quoted in Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944) p. 23.

[3] Quoted in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939) p. 319. Neither the date nor the context of this particular passage is explained in the text of the book, which is a compilation of excerpts from the major works of Baha'u'llah.

> from on high, strengthened by faith, aided by the power of understanding and reinforced by the legions of the Covenant, arise and make manifest the truth of the verse: "Behold the confusion that hath befallen the tribes of the defeated!"[4]

In passages such as this one, the conversion of Africans seems almost to be consigned to an eschatological future. However, 'Abdu'l-Baha also took practical steps to encourage a Baha'i presence in Africa. In April 1916, in one of a series of letters written to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, he urged them to carry the Baha'i message to the continent of Africa and to its surrounding island groups:

> Similarly, if possible, they should travel to the continent of Africa, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands, Madeira Islands, Réunion Islands, St. Helena, Zanzibar, Mauritius, etc., and in those countries summon the people to the Kingdom of God and raise the cry of 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!'[5] They must also upraise the flag of the oneness of the world of humanity in the island of Madagascar.
>
> Books and pamphlets must be either translated or composed in the languages of these countries and islands, to be circulated in every part and in all directions.
>
> It is said that in South Africa, a diamond mine is discovered. Although this mine is most valuable, yet after all it is stone. Perchance, God willing, the mine of humanity may be discovered and the brilliant pearls of the Kingdom be found.[6]

As we have seen in Chapter Two, there had been a presence of Africans at the very genesis of Baha'i history. Both the Bab and Baha'u'llah owned black African slaves who were intimately involved in every aspect of their households. Africans had become Babis and Baha'is.[7] But by the middle of the twentieth century, Baha'is on the African continent itself were limited to a number of Iranian expatriates (and some converts) living in Egypt and Sudan,[8] a small Baha'i group in

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[4] Quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1928) p. 123.

[5] Arabic: O Thou the Glory of the All-Glorious, a Baha'i invocation.

[6] 'Abdu'l-Baha to "the believers and maid-servants of the Merciful of the Bahá'í Assemblies and meetings in the United States and Canada," April 11, 1916, in *The Tablets of the Divine Plan revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the North American Bahá'ís during 1916 and 1917* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1959) p. 14.

[7] Afnan, *Black Pearls*, passim.

[8] A few Egyptians converted to the Baha'i religion, especially the students of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl. I believe that the number of his student-converts was fourteen. At least one Christian became a Baha'i in Sudan. The first local Spiritual Assembly was elected in Egypt (Cairo) in 1912. The first National Spiritual Assembly (including both Egypt

Ethiopia,[9] and a few whites living in South Africa.[10] These small numbers, at this point, left the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa virtually unrepresented within the Baha'i community and West Africa almost completely out of the picture.[11]

In his letters of 1916–1917 to the North American Baha'is (which later came to be known collectively as the Tablets of the Divine Plan), 'Abdu'l-Baha had repeatedly urged them to travel to Africa to spread their religion. There was some response to this call, especially for South Africa, where Baha'is had been holding meetings, at least in Cape Town, as early as 1911. Baha'i travelers made sporadic visits to South Africa through the 1920s and 1930s, where a few Baha'is could be found until 1948, though all of these appear to have been Europeans.[12]

The Tablets of the Divine Plan, beginning in 1937, became the scriptural basis for a systematic and planned effort of growth and diffusion initiated and directed by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957) when he beame the leaderof the Baha'i religion. 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away on November 28, 1921. In his Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed, Shoghi Effendi, as his successor with the title of 'Guardian of the Cause of God' (*vali amru'llah*), investing that office with the

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and Sudan) was elected in 1924. A separate National Assembly for Sudan was elected in 1934. (*Bahá'í Year Book 1925–1926*, Vol. 1 [New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926] p. 101; and Will C. van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa from Its Earliest Days to 1986," in *Bahá'í Studies Review*, Vol. 11 [2003] p. 14.)

[9] There was at least one Baha'i living in Ethiopia by 1933; the first local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Addis Ababa in 1947. (van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," p. 14; *The Bahá'í World 1932–1934*, Vol. 5 [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1936] p. 426; *The Bahá'í World 1946–1950*, Vol. 11 [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952] p. 520.)

[10] van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," pp. 13–14.

[11] At least, as far as the mainstream Baha'i community was concerned. Apparently, the New History Society, a breakaway Baha'i group in New York City founded by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, had some success in convincing a number of West Africans in Ghana and Nigeria to declare themselves as Baha'is (through correspondence) long before the Baha'i community began its systematic efforts in West Africa. (Personal conversation with Iraj Ayman, April 1995, at the Fifth Annual Colloquium on Scriptural Studies, Wilmette, Illinois. Dr. Ayman told me that he had met some of these converts in Nigeria.) More specifics on the activities of the New History Society and the Caravan of East and West are discussed below.

The records of the New History Society have been donated to the National Bahá'í Archives in Wilmette, Illinois. Therefore, further research can be conducted on this matter in that archive. See below for a discussion of mainstream Baha'i contacts in Nigeria before 1950.

[12] van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," pp. 14–15.

absolute authority to command the obedience of the Baha'i community, as he had. Born in Palestine, the new Guardian was the eldest grandson of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Shoghi Effendi adopted a very different style of leadership than 'Abdu'l-Baha had, however. Notably, he was twenty-four years old when he became the head of the Baha'i faith. He had been educated at the American University in Beirut, had lived in England, and had attended Oxford University. He was fluent in English and had acted for a time as a translator for his grandfather. He had traveled through Europe and was familiar with Western customs and ideas. Indeed, he had never lived in or even visited Iran.[13]

From the beginning, Shoghi Effendi refused to take on any roll that might resemble that of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He rejected any charismatic authority and insisted that his leadership rested entirely on the legal appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha in his will. He took on as his primary goal the routinization of charisma, establishing a multi-layered bureaucracy within the Baha'i community to administer its affairs, from elected local and national councils, to international bodies appointed by himself. He further insisted that this new and bureaucratic 'Administrative Order' was an integral part of the Baha'i religion, inseparable from its spiritual elements, that it had been imbedded in Baha'i scriptures from the beginning, and that it was based on the instructions left by 'Abdu'l-Baha, especially in his last Will and Testament.[14]

Very soon after becoming the head Baha'i faith, Shoghi Effendi began to pursue policies that would provide the Baha'i community with a coherent theology; publish translations of major Baha'i scriptures into new languages—especially into English as rendered by himself; develop Western forms of organization and parliamentary procedure; establish clear lines of religious authority; and accelerate the movement of Baha'is into areas where there were none in an effort to increase the spread of the religion and expand its international character.[15]

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[13] Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 194–96.

[14] See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1938 [1974]) pp. 3–7 and passim.

[15] No academic study has been undertaken of Shoghi Effendi or of the policies that he developed as the Guardian of the Baha'i faith (1921–1957). For his own discussion of the rise of the Baha'i Administrative Order, see *God Passes By*, pp. 323–53. For a hagiographic biography of Shoghi Effendi written by his wife, see Ruhiyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969); also idem., *The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988). Also, the memoir of one of the Hands of the Cause, Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi: Reflections* (Oxford:

Shoghi Effendi in fact placed most of his emphasis on organization. He devoted most of his ministry to building the Administrative Order, which transformed the Baha'i community from an informal collection of believers, with loose and uneven forms of organization,[16] into (at least ideally) a rational and disciplined world organization. He insisted that in every place where nine or more adult Baha'is resided, a local Spiritual Assembly should be formed.[17] Originally called for by Baha'u'llah in his Kitab-i Aqdas, and designated there as the 'House of Justice,'[18] a local Spiritual Assembly is an elected council of nine believers who are given authority to take charge of Baha'i affairs within a city, town, or village. In every country or major territory where enough local Spiritual Assemblies could be formed,[19] a National Spiritual Assembly would also be elected to administer the national affairs of the Baha'is. Finally, the members of all National Spiritual Assemblies, acting as delegates at an international convention, were to be the electors of the (future) Universal House of Justice—the supreme administrative body of the Baha'i religion that (with the Guardian serving as its chairman)

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George Ronald, 1973); and *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi: Proceedings of the Association for Bahá'í Studies Ninth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1993).

[16] But powerfully tied together in an imagined unity by common devotion to the charismatic head of the Faith—first Baha'u'llah, then 'Abdu'l-Baha, and then (perhaps to a lesser extent) to Shoghi Effendi.

[17] Shoghi Effendi to "fellow workers in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh," undated (circa May 1922) published in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 20; and another letter addressed to the Baha'is of the West, dated April 8, 1923, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 37. Only Baha'is over 21 years old are eligible to serve on local Spiritual Assemblies and National Spiritual Assemblies.

[18] Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i Aqdas, K30. "The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counselors to the number of Bahá [9], and should it exceed this number it doth not matter.... It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly." The text of the Aqdas is numbered by paragraph and is referenced as such. The first official English translation of the book was published as: Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992). The Christian ministers Earl E. Elder and Wiliam McE. Miller had published an earlier, rather hostile, translation: *al-Kitāb al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book* by Mīrzā Husayn 'Alī Bahā'u'llāh (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1961).

[19] Initially, usually three or four—but sometimes even fewer.

would become the final authority on all Baha'i affairs.[20] This was to be the form of the Baha'i Administrative Order.

The Tablets of the Divine Plan were used by Shoghi Effendi as a charter for the diffusion and growth of the Baha'i religion. These Tablets emphasized a number of elements of Baha'i expansion that had been present since the beginning of its history. These goals included: an increase in numbers, the dispersion of Baha'is to new places, the translation and wide distribution of Baha'i scriptures, and an increase in the ethnic diversity of the Baha'i community.[21] To these objectives, Shoghi Effendi added the goal of establishing Baha'i administrative institutions wherever enough Baha'is might reside.

It is clear that Shoghi Effendi believed that the establishment of a well-ordered and functioning administrative structure was a necessary prerequisite to the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's far-reaching goals.[22] From 1921 to 1937, he was principally concerned, at least in the West, with developing the Administrative Order. After 1937, he initiated a series of plans, primarily intended for implementation by the Baha'is in the United States, to begin the diffusion of the Baha'i religion to new areas. The means of diffusion called for in these plans was always the same. The first stage was to establish a minimum Baha'i presence in a country or major territory. This was often accomplished by a lone pioneer,[23] or perhaps a small band of such pioneers, who

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[20] Shoghi Effendi died unexpectedly in 1957, and left no successor; he became the first and the last Guardian of the Baha'i religion. The Universal House of Justice was not elected until 1963, at the end of the Ten Year World Crusade, which had been initiated by Shoghi Effendi. Therefore, no Guardian has ever served as its chairman. The House of Justice, at its inception, decided to adopt an ad-hoc, rotating chairmanship in lieu of the scriptural prescription that the Guardian should act as chair.

[21] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 24–27 and passim; Arthur Hampson, "The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith," Ph.D. dissertation (Geography), University of Hawaii, 1980, pp. 189–90.

[22] See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 34–43; and, Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939) pp. 9–10.

[23] The term 'pioneer' designates a Baha'i who has left his home for the purpose of teaching his religion in a new area. Baha'is scrupulously avoid the term 'missionary,' a word they regard with some disdain. The Baha'i faith has no clergy, and Baha'is were anxious not to establish pioneers as such. Ideally, a pioneer is not paid. He simply takes up residence in a new place and finds a job or pursues his profession or business as a self-supporting member of his new community. In fact, this was not always possible, and pioneers were often provided with stipends from the Baha'i funds for their support. Such financial support of pioneers was always regarded as temporary and irregular, however, no matter how widespread or permanent the practice became. An

would take up residence in a new place. These first Baha'is would necessarily be foreigners. But even one alien Baha'i living within any country would mean that country had been 'opened' to the Baha'i faith, and that was regarded as an important victory.

The next step was the effort to increase the number of localities within a region where Baha'is resided. This would include the formation of local Spiritual Assemblies wherever possible. However, the minimum number needed for an Assembly is nine Baha'is living in one area. Places where fewer than nine Baha'is lived were designated as 'groups'; and even a single Baha'i living alone in a city, town, or village was counted as a 'locality' or an 'isolated center' and regarded as an outpost of the religion in that place. Goals were invariably established in terms of an increase in the number of Assemblies, groups, and localities within any region.[24]

This process was intended to result in the formation of a widely scattered network of Baha'i nuclei. As soon as possible, a regional National Spiritual Assembly would be elected—including a huge territory, sometimes covering more than a dozen countries. Such a regional Assembly would provide the area with institutional autonomy and (it was hoped) would increase the prestige of the religion in the public mind. Such regional Assemblies would have enormous territories to administer, and very few Baha'is. But Baha'i growth was encouraged throughout each region so that it could, eventually, be partitioned into smaller National Spiritual Assemblies corresponding to the countries and major territories to be found there. This was the ultimate goal and, again, was accomplished through pioneers, the multiplication of Baha'i 'centers,' the formation of groups, and the election of local Spiritual Assemblies. Plans of this kind and pattern were pursued in Latin America and in Europe from 1937 to 1953.[25]

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ideal of the self-supporting, unpaid pioneer was maintained—in contrast to a professional and paid 'missionary.' However, in practice there was often little difference.

[24] As opposed to goals for the number of converts or the number of Baha'is to be found within any region.

[25] Cf. Hampson, "Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith," pp. 399–404.

## *The Africa Plan*

In 1950, the same strategy of diffusion and growth was applied to Africa. In that year, in a long cablegram sent to their National Convention, Shoghi Effendi congratulated the Baha'is of Great Britain on the successful completion of their Six-Year Plan, which had culminated in the election of a total of nineteen local Spiritual Assemblies on the British Isles.[26] In the same message, he announced plans to begin a slow diffusion of Baha'is into sub-Saharan Africa. This "systematic campaign" was scheduled to begin in April 1951, and was to be a two-year plan that would include the consolidation of the recently formed Assemblies in Britain. The message reads, in part:

> ...HOUR PROPITIOUS GALVANISED FIRMLY KNIT BODY BELIEVERS [in Britain] BRACE ITSELF EMBARK AFTER ONE YEAR RESPITE YET ANOTHER HISTORIC UNDERTAKING MARKING FORMAL INAUGURATION TWO YEAR PLAN CONSTITUTING PRELUDE INITIATION SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN DESIGNED CARRY TORCH FAITH TERRITORIES DARK CONTINENT [Africa] WHOSE NORTHERN SOUTHERN FRINGES WERE SUCCESSIVELY ILLUMINATED COURSE MINISTRIES BAHA'U'LLAH 'ABDU'L-BAHA. HOUR STRUCK UNDERTAKE PRELIMINARY STEPS IMPLANT BANNER FAITH AMIDST AFRICAN TRIBES[27] MENTIONED TABLET[28] CENTRE COVENANT ['Abdu'l-Baha[29]]...DESIGNED LAY STRUCTURAL BASIS BAHA'I ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER SCALE COMPARABLE FOUNDATION ALREADY ESTABLISHED NORTH SOUTH AMERICAN EUROPEAN AUSTRALIAN CONTINENTS.
>
> ...FIRST OBJECTIVE TWO YEAR PLAN CONSOLIDATION NINETEEN ASSEMBLIES PAINSTAKINGLY ESTABLISHED ENGLAND SCOTLAND WALES NORTH IRELAND EIRE. SECOND OBJECTIVE FORMATION NUCLEI THREE DEPENDENCIES BRITISH CROWN EITHER EAST WEST AFRICA. THIRD OBJECTIVE TRANSLATION PUBLICATION DISSEMINATION BAHA'I LITERATURE THROUGH PUBLISHING TRUST THREE AFRICAN LANGUAGES ADDITION THREE ALREADY UNDERTAKEN COURSE FIRST PLAN. SUCCESSFUL

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[26] Including Ireland and Northern Ireland.

[27] "He used the word 'tribes' loosely to mean the peoples of Africa and not necessarily individuals still living under tribal system [sic]." (Shoghi Effendi's personal secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles, February 25, 1951, published in Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles* [London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981] p. 259.) There are no specific African 'tribes' mentioned in the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

[28] That is, the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

[29] One of the titles of 'Abdu'l-Baha used by Baha'is is the 'Center of the Covenant' (of Baha'u'llah).

PROSECUTION CONTEMPLATED PLAN WILL PAVE WAY LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS. . .[30]

The contemporary reader may find this message a little difficult to decipher. Without articles, conjunctions, helping verbs, and connecting phrases the language is stripped to a minimum. This was, of course, the usual condensed language used at the time in most telegrams. In 1950, this was still the fastest form of written communication. The cablegram, like the long-distance phone call, signaled urgency, formality, and gravity. As the most current communications technology, it also indicated wealth and modernity.

The mystique of the cablegram supported the emotional impact of Shoghi Effendi's message to the British convention. His very long message would have been read aloud to the assembled delegates and observers at the meeting. The length of the message would have been startling: something one would expect only from a government communication or instructions from a wealthy financier. Most telegrams at this time were composed of only a few words. The necessarily condensed form of the message, especially when read to a religious group, takes on the form and feeling of a solemn pronouncement. The form of the cablegram communicates an atmosphere of emergency. Even the difficulty that many listeners (even then) may have had in understanding the exact meaning of the message may have reinforced its power and charisma. What could be more riveting than receiving an urgent message in grand language with important news that you cannot quite make out?

In any case, it seems clear that the message to the British Convention succeeded in powerfully motivating the Baha'is there. The two-year plan for Africa announced in 1950 was to be a preliminary plan undertaken under the jurisdiction of the National Assembly of the Baha'is of Britain, with the assistance of the Baha'is in the United States and Egypt. Its goals were quite modest: the migration of three Baha'i pioneers to any three British colonies in East or West Africa[31] and the translation

[30] Shoghi Effendi to the British National Convention [April] 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 245–46. The complete cablegram is quite long, totaling 351 words.

[31] Southern Africa appears to be excluded here, perhaps because there was already a small Baha'i presence in South Africa. The Guardian later excluded Nigeria and Kenya as goals for that reason. (Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles, June 28, 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 253.)

of some Baha'i literature into three more African languages.[32] More extensive goals were supposed to follow in subsequent plans.

The proposed Africa campaign quickly grew beyond these intentions. Within the year, the first Baha'i pioneers had arrived in Africa and others were on their way. Shoghi Effendi expanded the plan to include the cooperation of the National Spiritual Assemblies of Persia and of India, who were to provide additional pioneers. By the time the Two-Year Plan was "officially launched" in April 1951, the Guardian could boast that: "…SEVENTEEN AFRICAN TERRITORIES NOW INCLUDED [within the] PALE [of the] FAITH."[33] These included countries where Baha'is had lived for many decades, like Egypt and Sudan, but also new areas. By April 1952, the total number of goal territories to be 'opened to the Faith' in Africa had been increased to 25, and pioneers had arrived in 9 new places. Two local Spiritual Assemblies had been formed—in Kampala, Uganda, and in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika—a development which had not been initially contemplated. By October 1952, there were one hundred Baha'is in Uganda alone.[34] By the end of the plan in April 1953, Baha'is had formed 17 new local Spiritual Assemblies on the continent—13 in Uganda, and one each in Tanganyika, Kenya, Libya, and Liberia.[35]

The following table summarizes some of the achievements of the Africa Campaign, which certainly exceeded expectations:

Table 4.1. Goals and Achievements of the Africa Campaign, 1951–1953

| | Goal | Achievement |
|---|---|---|
| New Territories settled ('opened') | 12 | 16 |
| Local Spiritual Assemblies | | 26 |
| Translation into African Languages | 13 | 13 |
| Ethnic groups | | 24 |
| Baha'is in Africa | | >200 |

Source: van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," p. 16, Table 1.

[32] One Baha'i pamphlet, *Do You Know in What Day You Are Living?*, had already been translated into Swahili, Hausa, and ChiNyanja by Philip Hainsworth. (*The Bahá'í World 1950–1954*, p. 827; *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 253.)

[33] Shoghi Effendi to the British National Convention April 25, 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 264. Meaning that at least one Baha'i now lived in seventeen different countries or major territories on the continent.

[34] *The Bahá'í World 1950–1954*, Vol. 12 (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956) pp. 52–53.

[35] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, Vol. 13 (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1970) p. 283.

Something should be said about the symbolic (even metaphorical) nature of the goals of the Africa Plan, as well as the goals of previous plans, and of the Ten Year International Plan that was to come. All of the goals of these plans were modest. They were all focused on the establishment of Baha'i 'localities' and 'groups,' and the multiplication of Baha'i institutions—local Spiritual Assemblies and National Spiritual Assemblies. In the case of Africa, the goals included translation of Baha'i literature into African languages, and sometimes the purchase of land and buildings to be held in the name of Baha'i institutions. Numerical goals for the number of African conversions were never adopted. While every effort was made to bring indigenous people into the Baha'i religion, all of the goals of the plans could have been accomplished with a minimum of such conversions.

Baha'is discussed the achievement of their goals in epic language—literally, in biblical terms. Nonetheless, the actual achievements of the plans, in many cases, might be seen by a social scientist as insignificant. For example, in 1950, the migration of three more Baha'is to British colonies in Africa and the translation (somewhere in Great Britain) of the words of a pamphlet into three African languages would hardly seem important from a sociological point of view. Yet, in announcing the plan, Shoghi Effendi compared it favorably to the establishment of the British Empire:

> SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION CONTEMPLATED PLAN WILL PAVE WAY [for] LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS CALCULATED LAY FOUNDATIONS PROMISED KINGDOM [of God on] EARTH THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER INFINITELY MORE GLORIOUS [than the] EMPIRE BUILT RULERS BRITISH ISLES THROUGHOUT THAT CONTINENT [i.e., Africa]...[36]

Clearly then, the goals of the Baha'i plans for Africa were symbolic of the larger dream of the far-off but longed-for conversion of humanity to the religion. The real intention was simply to establish a presence on the continent that Baha'is could present to the public, and to themselves, as evidence of the international character of their faith and as proof of its claim to be a world religion. This was made explicit with regard to the translation projects, for example. When the National

[36] Shoghi Effendi to the National Convention of the Baha'is of the British Isles, Cable, April 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 246.

Spiritual Assembly of Britain suggested, during the two-year Africa Plan, that more literature be published in Hausa and Swahili, the Guardian's secretary replied on his behalf:

> Entirely aside from any additional literature it might be possible to get out in Hausa and Swahili he feels your objective must be to print at least a pamphlet in three languages other than those…It must be borne in mind that printing in new languages kills two birds with one stone—not only does it enable the Faith to reach new elements, but it also enriches our literature and is excellent as a means of calling the attention of the public to the universality of our Cause and the extent of our world-wide activities![37]

Similarly, the arrival of the first Baha'i pioneers, the conversion of the first indigenous believer, the election of the first Assemblies, and so forth, should be seen—at least in retrospect—as metaphors for larger concerns. Baha'is celebrated each of these events enthusiastically, and today sometimes remember them in the same way. But, with one notable exception,[38] the number of Africans actually involved in these events was tiny. Again, with the one exception, we will be discussing the history of dozens of people, rather than hundreds or thousands.

### *Some Early African American Pioneers*

When Shoghi Effendi called upon the American Baha'i community to assist the British Baha'is with their Africa Campaign in 1950, he made a special appeal to African American Baha'is to volunteer as pioneers to that continent:

> I appeal particularly to its [the American Baha'i community's] dearly beloved members belonging to the Negro race to participate in the contemplated project marking a significant milestone in the world-unfoldment of the Faith, supplementing the work initiated fifty years ago on the North American continent, forging fresh links binding the American, British and Egyptian Communities and providing the prelude to the full-scale operations destined to be launched at a later period of the unfoldment of the Divine Plan aiming at the conversion of the backward, oppressed masses of the swiftly awakening continent.[39]

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[37] Written by Shoghi Effendi's secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles, June 28, 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 253.

[38] British Cameroons.

[39] Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, August 5, 1950, published in *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947–1957* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970) pp. 87–88.

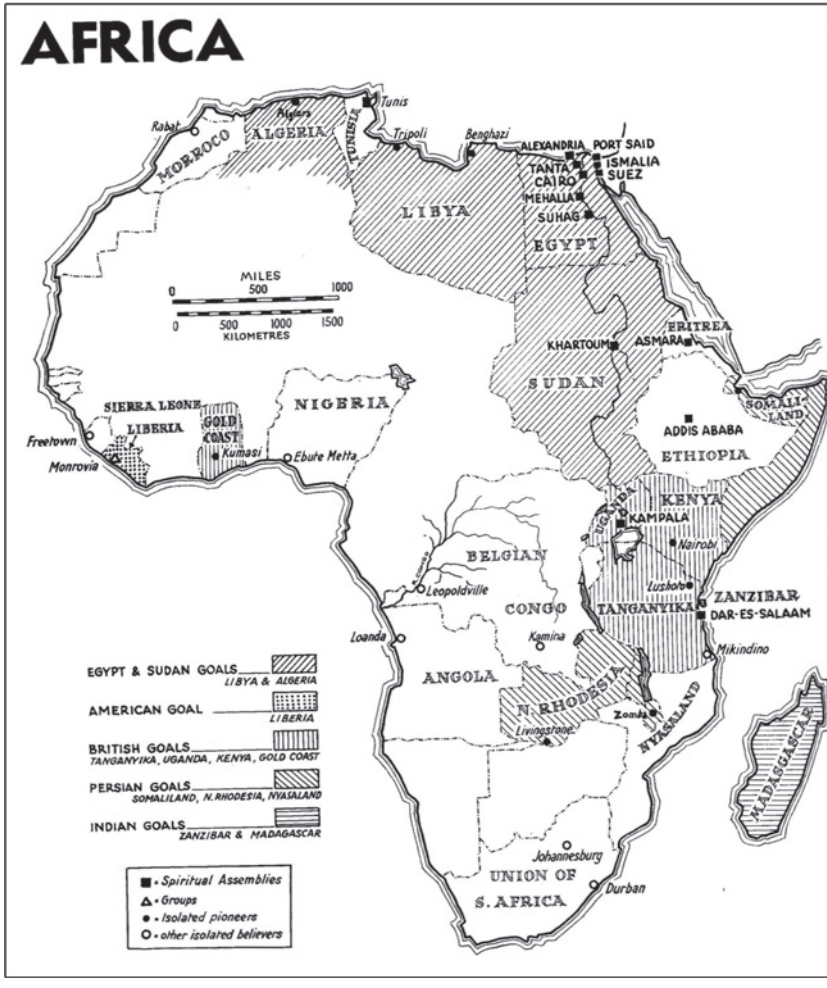


Illustration 4.1. Map of Baha'is in Africa, 1952

Not really a map, but more an illustration of the presence of Baha'is in Africa in 1952, published in *Bahá'í News* as a way of demonstrating recent achievements. The original caption reads: "Map of Africa showing Bahá'í Assemblies, Groups, and Isolated Centers. The lined and dotted areas indicate the countries the Guardian assigned as the teaching responsibility of each of the National communities participating in the Two Year African Plan, inaugurated in 1950. The large legend designates the specific assignments. This map was prepared by the British Africa Committee for *Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII." (Although, the map was not in fact published in that volume. Since Volume XII covers the years 1950–1954, by the time the book was published in 1956 the map was already obsolete. It was probably omitted for that reason.)

Caption (*cont.*)

While the map manages to fill in most of English-speaking Africa, in one way or another, any analysis would immediately note the blankness of French and Portuguese Africa. An entire page was devoted to this map in the October 1952 issue (No. 260, p. 6) of *Bahá'í News*, and it was intended to celebrate the Baha'i presence in Africa at the end of the Africa Campaign. However, the map reveals just how very thin this presence was. Cities identified with a square symbol had at least nine Baha'is living in them and had elected a local Spiritual Assembly. Those identified with a triangle had fewer than nine Baha'is living in them, but at least two. The circles indicate cities where no more than a single Baha'i lived. Nonetheless, entire countries are filled in by only one or two circles.

This display demonstrates the symbolic nature of the Baha'i goals during the 1950s. Aesthetically, the map appears full. The underlying message here is that the Baha'i faith is a world religion that can claim to be present and fully established in Africa. But the map does not indicate a significant presence of Baha'is on the continent—at least from a sociological perspective. Rather it illustrated for Baha'is a symbolic, "spiritual conquest" of Africa, accomplished simply by the fact that Baha'is were now living there—even in small numbers. This mere presence was a source of both pride and excitement for Baha'is at the time. Maps of this genre were used extensively during the Ten Year World Crusade, 1953–1963.[40]

A number of black Baha'is responded to this plea. There were probably fewer than 6,000 Baha'is in the United States at this time, and certainly fewer than 500 of them were African Americans[41]—making the response all the more impressive.

Ethel Stephens,[42] a black American Baha'i, was the first pioneer to arrive in West Africa in response to Shoghi Effendi's message, reaching the Gold Coast in October 1951. Stephens was a 'Home Economist' who participated in a research project under the direction of Northwestern University. She was employed at Kumasi College to teach and conduct research on diet and nutrition in the Gold Coast. Although she was somewhat restricted in her activities because of her government employment, she made efforts to teach the Baha'i faith.

[40] See, for example, the maps that were published as inserts to the *Bahá'í World*, Vols. 12 and 13 (1950–1954 and 1954–1963, respectively).

[41] There were no public records of the number of Negro Baha'is in the United States in 1950. It is possible that some confidential records exist in the National Baha'i Archives in Wilmette, Illinois. The number 500 is probably high, but represents a general impression based on contemporary records and photographs taken at the time. (Private e-mail communications with Richard Hollinger, December 2006.)

[42] Mrs. Stephens was married (although she is sometimes referred to as 'Miss' Stephens in Baha'i sources). Her husband was a physician. He did not accompany her to Africa. (*Bahá'í News*, No. 254 [April 1952] p. 8.)

After one year, due to an unexpected death in the family, she returned to the United States, leaving the Gold Coast with no resident Baha'is. Although her stay in the country had no concrete results, at least in terms of converts, she is remembered as the first Baha'i pioneer to West Africa.[43]

The first black Baha'i who volunteered to go to Africa after Shoghi Effendi's call for pioneers had been William Foster, but he did not arrive in Liberia until January 1952.[44] Responding to a letter from Foster in which he had expressed his desire to relocate to Africa, Shoghi Effendi's secretary, writing on his behalf, had stressed the importance of Negro Americans taking the Baha'i religion to Africa. The letter reads in part:

> [June 4, 1951]
>
> Dear Bahá'í Brother:
>
> Your letter of May 2nd was received by our beloved Guardian and brought him great joy.
>
> The decision you have taken to go to Africa and teach the Cause is momentous and is worthy of the great race you belong to. The Guardian has been eagerly awaiting a Negro pioneer, and feels that Bahá'u'lláh will surely bless your enterprise and assist you in this work you are planning for His Faith.
>
> You are fortunate to have a wife by your side kindled with the same enthusiasm and determination, and your joint labours will be a tremendous asset to the new campaign in Africa.…
>
> With warmest Bahá'i love,
> [signed] R. RABBANI[45]
>
> [*P.S. In Shoghi Effendi's handwriting*]
>
> May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you always, enable you to fulfill your heart's desire, set a noble example to the Negro believers, and win great and memorable victories in that promising Continent.
>
> Your true brother,
> SHOGHI

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[43] Minutes, November 3–4, 1951; AFR 9/44, April 21, 1953; AFR 10/1, September 30, 1952, Africa Teaching Committee records, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; *Bahá'í News*, No. 249 (December 1951) p. 5, No. 251 (February 1952) p. 9, No. 254 (May 1952) p. 8, No. 257 (August 1952) p. 10, No. 258 (September 1952) p. 13. For the celebration of Stephens as the first pioneer, see chart below; also *Bahá'í World 1950–1954*, Vol. 12, p. 53; and, for example, Bahá'í World News Service, "Official Urges Study of 'Noble Principles,'" October 2004 (http://news.bahai.org/story/328).

[44] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 7/51, March 8, 1953, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., cited in Van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index," p. 40.

[45] Ruhiyyih Khanum Rabbani, Shoghi Effendi's wife.

Foster's Baha'i wife, Ruth, was white; and the couple had one son, whom they named Badi.[46] His family did not accompany him to Liberia because Ruth had a skin disease that she felt would not allow her to live in a tropical climate. But he left for Africa with her encouragement. Eventually, when Foster relocated to Casablanca, Morocco, Ruth and Badi joined him there.[47]

Valerie Wilson remembered Foster as an outgoing person, with a good sense of humor, who was able to make friends easily.[48] He was much more successful than Ethel Stephens had been in finding people who were willing to become Baha'is. In February of 1952, he was able to cable the Africa Teaching Committee in the United States with news of his first Baha'i convert in Liberia.[49] By July, there were twelve Baha'is in Liberia, holding meetings and Baha'i events.[50] By the time Wilson arrived in November, Foster had brought twenty-six new converts into the Baha'i religion.[51] (See Table 4.2 below.)

Foster was also able to make contact with another Negro America Baha'i, Joseph Pereira, formerly of Boston, who had settled in Gbarnga, Liberia, in 1946, and had been living there ever since. Gbarnga is some eighty miles from Monrovia, in the Liberian hinterlands, and Pereira's residence there had been unknown to the international Baha'i community before Foster discovered him. He was, however, inactive as a Baha'i and seems to have shown no interest in spreading the religion. He seems to have been among the American Negroes who experimented with 'returning' to Africa in the post-World War II period.[52]

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[46] An Arabic word meaning 'wonderful,' the name of a celebrated Persian Baha'i martyr. Badi Foster became a noted African American scholar and educator in the United States. See Anthony A. Lee, "Badi Foster" in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Revised Edition, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 691–92.

[47] Valerie Wilson Interview, Menlo Park, Calif., June 16, 1983. Foster left Liberia for Casablanca on May 1, 1954. (Membership book, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Valerie Wilson papers.)

[48] Ibid.

[49] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 5/6, February 18, 1952, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., cited in van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index," p. 39; *Bahá'í News*, No. 254 (April 1952) p. 8.

[50] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 5/6, July 25, 1952, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., cited in van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index," p. 41.

[51] Valerie Wilson Interview, Menlo Park, Calif, June 17, 1983.

[52] *Bahá'í News*, No. 254 (April 1952) p. 8; Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 5/6, July 25, 1952 and AFR 3/52, September 9, 1956, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., cited in van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index," pp. 39 and 41.

As we shall see, other black Baha'is in Africa during this period would seem to fit this pattern, as well.[53]

Foster had secured work as a plumber, supervising the work at the government hospital being built at Bassa, in southern Liberia. Therefore, he was a government employee. He became quite friendly with a number of civil officials, including President William Tubman. He taught the Baha'i faith through his personal contacts. All of the new Baha'is Foster converted were men.[54] They were also foreigners—Ghanaians, Sierra Leoneans, and Americans. These Baha'i men all had good jobs in Monrovia, mostly as clerks, secretaries, or bookkeepers. They were all literate. They were Christians and had been educated in British schools in Africa. Most of them had been friends before becoming Baha'is; this was especially true of the Ghanaians. They became Baha'is in groups, rather than as individuals. Because of social custom, Foster was not able to approach Liberian women to teach them about religion, and he seems to have been almost as unsuccessful in teaching Liberian men.[55]

Because of this situation, Foster asked the Africa Teaching Committee in the United States to send a Baha'i woman pioneer to Liberia. They were able to convince Valerie Wilson to move there, even though she had originally planned to pioneer to Tanganyika. Through his personal contacts, Foster was able to secure the promise of a job for Wilson as the Director of Nurses at the government hospital in Monrovia.[56] Wilson arrived in Liberia in November 1952.

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[53] Including Foster's first convert, Benjamin Miller (Jala Massaquoi). (See footnote 89 below.) Also, the Washingtons and the Dunnes in Liberia.

[54] Except for three women who were the wives of Foster's converts. They were apparently convinced by their husbands to enroll as Baha'is. (See Table 4.2 below.)

[55] Valerie Wilson Interview, Menlo Park, Calif., June 16, 1983.

[56] Ibid. The promised salary was quite modest: $100 per month, plus housing, to be raised to $150 per month after six months of employment.

Table 4.2. The First Twenty-Six to become Baha'is in Liberia, 1952

Twenty-three men and three women (wives of male converts) who were taught the religion by William Foster, American pioneer to Liberia, before the arrival of Valerie Wilson. All but two are foreigners.

| No. | Name | Sex | Date of Declaration | Country of Origin | Ethnic Group | Language | Residence | Moved to: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Benjamin Miller (Jala Massaquoi) | M | 2/1952 | USA | American Negro | English | Sanniquette | America, 6/1954 |
| 2 | Mangus Innocent Nani Amegashie | M | 6/10/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 3 | Patrick Hector Amegashie | M | 6/10/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | Keta, Gold Coast, 9/1955 |
| 4 | David Seah Doe | M | 6/10/1952 | Liberia | Kru | Kru | Monrovia | Suakoko, 2/1955 |
| 5 | Gakpo (Bill) Kpohanu | M | 6/10/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 6 | Lottieri Lotteringhi della Stufa | M | 6/10/1952 | Italy | Italian | Italian | Monrovia | Unknown, 1/1953 |
| 7 | Dan G. K. Ocloo | M | 6/10/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 8 | C. A. Lovette-Brew | M | 6/10/1952 | Nigeria | Ibo | Ibo | Cape Palmas | |
| 9 | Fred Armstrong Letchah | M | 8/5/1952 | French Togoland | Ewe (Agu) | Ewe | Monrovia | America, 9/1953 |
| 10 | Ezekiel Adecye Thomas | M | 8/5/1952 | Sierra Leone | Creole | English | Monrovia | |
| 11 | Irene Agatha Abigail Thomas | F | 8/5/1952 | Sierra Leone | Creole | English | Monrovia | |
| 12 | Joseph Kofa | M | 8/5/1952 | Liberia | Kru | Kru, Twi | Monrovia | |

Table 4.2 (*cont.*)

| No. | Name | Sex | Date of Declaration | Country of Origin | Ethnic Group | Language | Residence | Moved to: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | K. B. Addo | M | 9/17/1952 | Gold Coast | Fanti | Fanti | Monrovia | England? 11/1953 |
| 14 | Rudolph Amartey | M | 9/17/1952 | Gold Coast | Fanti | Fanti, Ga, Twi | Monrovia | Canada, 8/1953 |
| 15 | James Klutse Chapman | M | 9/17/1952 | French Togoland | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | France, 10/1953 |
| 16 | Gedeon Patrick Yawo Koffie | M | 9/17/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 17 | Melissa Oconnor | F | 9/17/1952 | Sierra Leone | Creole | English | Monrovia | Bomi Hills, 1/1953 |
| 18 | Benjamin Ojumeri Oconner | M | 6/7/1952 | Sierra Leone | Creole | English | Monrovia | Bomi Hills, 1/1953 |
| 19 | Rowland Emmanuel Sagoe | M | 9/17/1952 | Gold Coast | Fanti | Fanti | Monrovia | |
| 20 | Chamberlain Tamakloe | M | 9/17/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | Bomi Hills, 1/1953 |
| 21 | Wellington K. Gony | M | 11/16/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |

Table 4.2 (*cont.*)

| No. | Name | Sex | Date of Declaration | Country of Origin | Ethnic Group | Language | Residence | Moved to: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | Alfred A. Lewis | M | 11/16/1952 | Liberia | French Kru | English, Kru | Monrovia | |
| 23* | Sophia Abdallah Kpohanu | F | 11/26/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 24* | Dan Demor | M | 11/26/1952 | Gold Coast | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | Mt. Koffie, Harrisburg |
| 25* | Ireneaus Gadegbeku | M | 11/26/1952 | French Togoland | Ewe | Ewe | Monrovia | |
| 26* | Aiah M. Mangatoma | M | 11/26/1952 | Sierra Leone | Kono | Kono, Mende | Monrovia | |

* The last four names listed, Nos. 23–26, had their declarations witnessed by Wilson, although they were Foster's students.
Source: Membership Book, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Valerie Wilson papers, pp. 20–21.

I was able to interview Valerie Wilson in her home in Menlo Park, California, in 1983.[57] By then she had returned from Africa and was caring for her bedridden mother. Although she had always identified herself as an African American,[58] she was a very light-skinned woman and would have appeared white to any observer. She was happy to be interviewed and was willing to give me access to her personal papers[59] and to share her memories of the history of the Baha'i faith in West Africa.

Wilson was thirty-three when she arrived in Liberia as a Baha'i pioneer.[60] She was unmarried and remained so for the rest of her life. She had grown up in Oakland, California. She completed her college education at Wilberforce University, Ohio, in 1938. She had entered nursing school in 1940, at General Hospital in Los Angeles, but left during World War II to work for the Army. After the war, she had trained as a physical therapist at Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, in a March of Dimes program to assist polio victims. She attended Baha'i meetings in Los Angeles at the home of a black family, the Ellises.[61] After her training, she traveled around the country for two years working with polio victims for the March of Dimes. She was, however, able to attend Baha'i meetings in each city where she was assigned. When she returned to Los Angeles, she became a Baha'i, on February 7, 1949.

Wilson decided to move to Liberia mostly in response to Shoghi Effendi's appeal for Negro Baha'is in the United States to pioneer to Africa. She had attended sessions at Geyserville Baha'i School[62] in 1951, one of which had been devoted entirely to African pioneering. Amin Banani was present at this session; his father, Musa Banani, had recently relocated to Uganda. Apparently, this had impressed her.

Wilson took up residence at the government guesthouse in Monrovia and began work at the hospital on December 1, 1952. On December 11, 1952, both she and William Foster received letters from President Tubman dismissing them from their jobs and expelling them from the country. Another woman living in the guesthouse had reported

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[57] Most of the remaining information in this section was obtained from two interviews with Valerie Wilson conducted at her home, Menlo Park, June 16–17, 1983.

[58] This term is an anachronism, of course. During the 1950s, Wilson considered herself an American Negro.

[59] Referenced here as the Valerie Wilson papers.

[60] Her birth date was September 7, 1919.

[61] The home of Charles and Sadie Ellis and their children.

[62] In northern California.

Wilson's conversations at the dinner table directly to the President.[63] He had taken offense at some of her remarks and actions and had used the opportunity to fire her and Foster.[64] Both Foster and Wilson were accused of deliberately insulting the nation of Liberia. However, their crimes were slight, and we might suspect that there were other factors involved. The opportunity to humiliate a 'white' woman probably had a part in the matter. Also, it was reported that the government treasury was desperately overextended and the President needed to reduce expenses.[65]

Wilson was able to get the expulsion order delayed and to arrange for an appointment with the President where she apologized to him personally. So, both Wilson and Foster were allowed to remain in Liberia.[66] Wilson got her job back, but Foster did not. He had to find other employment during his remaining time in the country.

This incident represented a crisis for the new Baha'is in Liberia. Almost all of them were, after all, foreigners and could be expelled from the country without much cause. Wilson remembered that half of the new Baha'is were lost at this point, because they did not want to be associated in any way with the two expelled pioneers. The growth of the Baha'i faith in Liberia was temporarily halted and reversed.

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[63] Apparently, the President knew this woman very well. She was from Sierra Leone and had been invited by the President to come to Monrovia specifically to visit him. She was offended by some of Wilson's behavior and reported her indignation to the President.

[64] Wilson's indiscretions were three: 1) Shortly after her arrival, on November 22, 1952, she had invited the entire Monrovia Baha'i community to her room in the guesthouse to celebrate the 19-Day Feast (a regular Baha'i community gathering). Nineteen people attended the meeting. The guesthouse was supposed to be an exclusive government residence, and the President thought her actions were inappropriate. 2) She had overheard a domestic argument near the guesthouse in which a man was asserting his right of custody to his young son. At table, Wilson had taken the side of the mother. 3) She had repeated a story about a photo taken at the dedication of the new government hospital at Bassa, which she had heard from the other nurses at the Monrovia hospital. This ceremony had been attended by some high government officials from Monrovia, in full dress uniforms and regalia, but the only transportation that they could find to Bassa was in an old garbage truck. They had asked William Foster to take a picture of them in their uniforms. He obliged them. But, unfortunately, they had posed themselves in front of the garbage truck. The photo that resulted was apparently hilarious, and all the nurses were talking about it.

[65] The presidential order for Foster and Wilson to leave Liberia is reported in the records of the Africa Teaching Committee, AFR 1/1–11, January 4, 1953, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[66] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 1/1–11, January 10, 1953, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

In any case, Wilson remained in Liberia. After she lost her job at the hospital (a second time) in 1955, she was supported by Baha'i funds from the United States.[67] In 1954, she was appointed to the Auxiliary Board, a group of assistants to the Hand of the Cause Musa Banani, whose area of activity was Africa. In 1956, she was elected as a member of the new regional National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa. She traveled extensively in West Africa by automobile, visiting fledgling Baha'i communities, and was an important support for the Baha'i Administration in the area for many years.

There are also tragic stories to tell, however. George and Bessie Mae Washington were a Negro American Baha'i couple who arrived in Monrovia on July 19, 1955, with their grandson, Ricky.[68] They came to Liberia with another black Baha'i, Arthur Banks, who was a friend of theirs. All three had lived in Seattle, Washington. The Washingtons had sold all they had in the United States and had come to Africa to stay for good. They brought a large number of belongings with them, including an American car, a Packard. They also brought a large amount of money with them. The three had intended to settle in Sierra Leone, but they were unable to obtain visas, and so they were forced to come to Liberia.

The Washingtons joined Zara and Major Dunne, Baha'is who had arrived in Monrovia in January 1954.[69] Zara was white; Major Dunne was black. They had known the Washingtons in Seattle. They had made some plans for private projects in Africa that they did not share with the other pioneers. Wilson thought that their schemes were rather "grandiose." She remembered that Mr. Washington was frustrated and restless when he first arrived in Liberia. He would drive his car far upcountry in search of opportunities to realize his plans. He and his wife soon shed their American citizenship to become naturalized Liberians so that they would be able to own land in the country.

Mr. Washington was introduced to one of the local chiefs in Gbarnga District who promised to give him 500 acres of land and to pay all his expenses, if Washington would construct a house for him using

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[67] She received $100 per month for some years. She explained to me it was enough to live on at that time.

[68] Membership book, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Valerie Wilson papers, p. 25. Unless otherwise indicated, the information below on the Washingtons and the Dunnes was obtained from my interviews with Valerie Wilson.

[69] Membership book, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Valerie Wilson papers, p. 23.

modern materials. The site was some 137 miles from Monrovia. To accomplish the task, Washington converted his Packard into a pick-up truck to transport the building materials. He exhausted all of his funds building the chief's house, which he completed. He was given title to a 500-acre estate in payment, but the chief never reimbursed him for his expenses. So, the Washingtons were left destitute, even though they were now landowners.[70] They settled in Gbarnga in November 1955, and managed to establish a rice farm there. However, in August 1957, the American Africa Teaching Committee received a report that they were in "dire straits" financially.[71]

On April 23, 1959, Bessie Mae Washington passed away after a brief illness.[72] Her death was a great shock to her husband, who nonetheless pledged to continue his pioneering activities for as long as he could.[73] However, Mr. Washington passed away in Gbarnga a few weeks later on May 30.[74] Ricky was left an orphan, though he inherited his grandparents' property. Mrs. Dunne and Mr. Banks became his guardians.[75]

The African American pioneers to Liberia included Vivian Wesson,[76] who arrived with Mavis Nymon[77] in August 1954. They established themselves in Bomi Hills, a mining town in northwest Liberia, north of Monrovia. They opened an English literacy school there in early 1955, with an initial enrollment of 60 students. The school was maintained into the 1960s.[78]

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[70] Wilson said that, after this, the Dunnes supported the Washingtons financially until they passed away.

[71] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 1/1–11, August 18, 1957, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[72] Aftica Teaching Committee records, AFR 6/2, n.d., National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 9/37, March 14, 1971, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[75] Report to the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa, "Liberia: LSAs, Centers, Communities, & Pioneers," by M. Mustapha, n.d. (Received by Valerie Wilson on September 18, 1959). See section on "*Gbarnaga*: not incorporated, & Washington Estate." Valerie Wilson papers.

[76] I understand that there are extensive taped interviews of Wesson that were made some years ago. However, they have not been deposited in the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., and are not included among her papers there. Although I was told about the tapes by the interviewer herself years ago, I do not know where they might be located now.

[77] Wesson and Nymon were both Americans. Nymon was white.

[78] Membership book, Valerie Wilson papers, pp. 22–23; Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 6/20, March 21, 1955; AFR 1/1–11, April 3, 1955. See also, "Bomi Hills Literacy Graduates First Class," in *Bahá'í News*, No. 299 (January 1956) p. 3.

There were other pioneers as well—both black and white. Certainly, more research needs to be done on the biographies of these early Baha'is in West Africa, their motivations and beliefs, their social backgrounds, their similarities (in these respects) to Christian missionaries, and—perhaps most interestingly—how their moves to Africa compare to similar moves made by other Americans during this same period. There is some evidence, as we have seen, that some of the black American Baha'is saw themselves as 'returning' to Africa, and as such may be part of a pattern of the tiny trickle of African American emigration to Africa that began in colonial times.[79] For example, Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa movement and the (unrelated) emigration of W. E. B. DuBois to Ghana in 1961, come immediately to mind.[80] In any case, it is clear that, in the 1950s, the Baha'i community in the United States was able to call upon its African American converts to help establish a permanent presence in West Africa.

## *The Ten Year World Crusade*

Immediately upon the close of the two-year Africa Plan, Shoghi Effendi initiated a new Baha'i teaching campaign that was global in scope and far more ambitious than earlier plans. This was a ten-year plan that he designated as a "fate-laden, soul-stirring, decade-long, world-embracing Spiritual Crusade"[81] to involve a coordinated effort on the part of

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[79] See, for example, P. J. Staudenraus, *The American Colonization Movement, 1816–1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), which is still the most recent full treatment of the American Colonization Society; and, for example, Kevin K. Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Also, Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Grioux, 2007).

[80] On Garvey, see Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991) and E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955). The most definitive biography of DuBois is the two-volume set, David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* and *W.E.B. DuBois:The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993 and 2000); on DuBois religious views, see Edward J. Blunt, *W.E.B. DuBois: American Prophet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[81] Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i world, September 8, 1952, published in *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 41.

all twelve existing National Spiritual Assemblies in the world.[82] The primary goal of the plan was to establish a Baha'i presence and the rudiments of Baha'i administrative organization in every country and major territory in the world.

Again, the goals of the plan were highly symbolic. The metaphor was the (spiritual) conquest of the planet. A country, as before, would be considered 'opened to the Faith' or 'conquered' when a single Baha'i took up residence there. The metaphor of world conquest—with Knights, armies, battalions, reinforcements, sacrifice, and victory—was quite explicit in the messages of the Guardian to the Baha'is of the world. In the following passage, he calls for an increase in the number of Baha'is in the United States as an adjunct to the plan. Perhaps referring to the prophecy of 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted earlier in this chapter, Shoghi Effendi gives the Ten Year Plan an almost eschatological significance:

> The movement of pioneers, the opening of virgin territories, the initiation of Houses of Worship and of administrative headquarters, the incorporation of local and national elective bodies, the multiplication of assemblies, groups and isolated centers, the increase in the number of races represented in the world Bahá'í fellowship, the translation, publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature, the consolidation of administrative agencies and the creation of auxiliary bodies designed to support them, however valuable, essential and meritorious, will in the long run amount to little and fail to achieve their supreme purpose if not supplemented by the equally vital task . . . of winning to the Faith fresh recruits to the slowly yet steadily advancing army of the Lord of Hosts, whose reinforcing strength is so essential to the safeguarding of the victories which the band of heroic Baha'i conquerors are winning in the course of their several campaigns in all the continents of the globe. . . .
>
> Such a steady flow of reinforcements is [needed to] safeguard the prizes which . . . are now being won in virgin territories by Bahá'u'lláh's valiant Knights, whose privilege is to constitute the spearhead of the onrushing battalions which, in diverse theaters and in circumstances often adverse and extremely challenging, are vying with each other for the spiritual conquest of the unsurrendered territories and islands on the surface of the globe.

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[82] The United States; the British Isles; Germany and Austria; Egypt and Sudan; Iraq; India, Pakistan, and Burma; Persia; Australia and New Zealand; Italy and Switzerland; Canada; Central America; and South America. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Bahá'í Faith 1844–1952: Information Statistical and Comparative, including Supplement Ten Year International Bahá'í Teaching Plan 1953–1963* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1953] p. 12.)

> This flow, moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of divers nations and races into the Baha'i world—a day which, viewed in its proper perspective, will be the prelude to that long-awaited hour when a mass conversion on the part of these same nations and races, and as a direct result of a chain of events, momentous and possibly catastrophic in nature, and which cannot as yet be even dimly visualized, will suddenly revolutionize the fortunes of the Faith, derange the equilibrium of the world, and reinforce a thousand fold the numerical strength as well as the material power and the spiritual authority of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.[83]

A total of 131 new countries and territories were to be settled by at least one Baha'i during the Ten Year Plan, and this objective was supposed to be achieved during the first year—between April 1953 and April 1954. Because Africa was so thinly populated with Baha'is, African countries and territories were prominent on this list, although the distribution of the territories was global. Shoghi Effendi's intention appears to have been to establish a symbolic presence of Baha'is even in the most remote and far-flung parts of the world. Hampson has noted that many of the territories designated as goals of the plan were "notable only for their geographical isolation and demographic insignificance. The United States, for example,…was expected to spread the Faith to such obscure places as Spitzbergen, St. Helena, Sakhalin, Andorra, Tonga, and Réunion."[84] Hampson further remarks that: "The names of the 131 goal territories read like a list of the least important places in the world."[85]

The list of territories with no Baha'is for West Africa included: the Ashanti Protectorate, British Cameroons, British Togoland, the Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands, French Equatorial Africa, French West Africa, French Cameroons, French Togoland, Gambia, Northern Territories Protectorate (in the future Ghana), Portuguese Guinea, Spanish Guinea, and St. Thomas Island. All of these areas did, indeed, receive at least one Baha'i pioneer during the first year of the Ten Year Plan.

Table 4.3 provides detailed information on the first Baha'is who settled in the various countries of West Africa, including their names

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[83] Shoghi Effendi to the American Baha'i community, July 18, 1953, published in Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 116–17.

[84] Hampson, "The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith," p. 397.

[85] Ibid.

and dates of arrival. Also included are the names of the first native Baha'is enrolled in each place.[86] The table includes the achievements of both the two-year Africa Plan and the first year of the Ten Year World Crusade. As can be seen from Table 4.3, besides the American and Iranian pioneers, many of the 'virgin territories' were settled by new African converts to the Baha'i faith.

In addition to goals of dispersion, the Ten Year Plan included goals for consolidation (that is, strengthening) of Baha'i communities in areas where they were already established, the translation of Baha'i literature into 31 new African languages, and eventually the purchase of land and of buildings as local Baha'i meeting places (*haziratu'l-quds*,[87] or Baha'i centers).

Once a territory was settled, it was supposed to increase both in the number of Baha'is and in the establishment of local Spiritual Assemblies. Impressive growth was accomplished in these terms. In April 1955, Musa Banani was able to report the formation of 75 new local Assemblies in Africa, making a total of 124 for the whole continent. Eight of these new Assemblies were formed in British Cameroons (making a total of nine), one in British Togoland, and one in the Gold Coast.[88] Since the count had been 26 at the end of the Africa Plan in 1953,[89] and since there had been only 10 local Assemblies in Africa (all in North Africa and Ethiopia) in 1950,[90] there had been enormous growth in five years—at least in institutional terms.

The crowning institutional achievement was reached in April 1956, when the Baha'is of North and West Africa elected their first regional National Spiritual Assembly. This provided the region with institutional autonomy, ending the initial period during which foreign National Assemblies had exercised jurisdiction over various territories in the area—the National Assembly of the British Isles, for British Cameroons, British Togoland, Gold Coast, Madeira, and Sierra Leone; the National Assembly of Persia, for the Ashanti Protectorate;

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[86] That is, the first converts.

[87] Arabic: sacred fold; the official Baha'i term for a building used as a meeting place. Sometimes referred to in English as the 'Hazira,' but most often simply as the local 'Baha'i Center.'

[88] *Bahá'í News*, No. 293 (July 1955) p. 3; No. 295 (September 1955) p. 5.

[89] Only one in West Africa, in Monrovia, Liberia.

[90] *The Bahá'í World 1946–1950*, Vol. 11, pp. 520–24.

Table 4.3. Pioneers and First Baha'is in West Africa

| Country | First Baha'is to Settle (Date) | First Native Baha'i (Date) |
|---|---|---|
| Benin (Dahomey) | David Tanyi (1954) | Atanley II and Cosme Kponton (1954) |
| Cameroon | | |
| British Cameroons | Enoch Olinga (Oct. 1953) | |
| French Cameroons | Samuel Njiki (Apr. 1954)<br>Mehrangiz Munsiff (Apr. 1954) | Enoch Ngompek |
| Central African Republic | Samson Nkeng (Jan. 1956) | Charles Morgan<br>Pierre Sangha |
| Gambia | Fariborz Roozbehyan (Feb. 1954) | Nicolas Banna (1954)[91] |
| Ghana | | Albert Nyarko Buapiah (Oct. 1953) |
| Gold Coast | Ethel Stephens (Oct. 1951) | |
| Ashanti Protectorate | Benedict Eballa (Apr. 1954) | |
| British Togoland | Edward Tabe<br>Albert Buapiah (Apr. 1954) | |
| Northern Territories | Julius Edwards (Sept. 1953)<br>Martin Manga (Apr. 1954) | |
| Guinea Bissau (Portuguese Guinea) | José and Hilda Xavier<br>E. Rodrigues (Aug. 1953) | Duarte Vieira[92] (Feb. 1961) |
| Ivory Coast | Labib Esfahani (1955) | Uri Bodo (1960) |
| Liberia | William Foster (Jan. 1952)<br>Valerie Wilson (Nov. 1952) | Benjamin Miller[93] (June 1952) |
| Nigeria[94] | | Thomas Beresford Macauley (1940s) |
| Senegal | Labib Esfahani (Nov. 1953)<br>Habib Esfahani (April 1954) | N. Thomas (1957) |
| Sierra Leone | Arthur W. Cole (June 1952) | Joseph Hingston (Nov. 1953) |
| Togo (French Togoland) | David Tanyi (Apr. 1954) | Carl Allotey (June 1954) |

Source: "Reference list of pioneers and first Baha'is in Africa" in Van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," pp. 30–33, with additions and corrections.

[91] Banna was a Syrian Arab living in Gambia. The first Gambian convert was Nelson Ethan Thomas, a Christian (Methodist). His first Muslim convert was al-Hassan Jagne. (F. Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth* [N.p. (Denmark?): by the author, n.d. (1960?)] pp. 66–71.)

[92] Later designated the first African Baha'i martyr. See below.

[93] Miller was "an Afro-American from Cincinnati who moved to Liberia and became a member of the Uai [Vai] ethnic group." ("Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," p. 31, n. 146.) Also known as Jala Massaquoi, Miller lived in the hinterlands of Liberia. He left the Liberia in June 1954. (Interview with Valerie Wilson, Menlo Park, 6/17/83.)

[94] By 1950, when the Africa Campaign was proposed, there were already "some Baha'is" living in Nigeria. Therefore, it was not included among the goals of the plan.

and the National Assembly of India, Pakistan, and Burma for French Cameroons and Gambia.[95]

The territory of the new regional National Spiritual Assembly included a vast area.[96] Elected in April 1956, by delegates chosen by the existing local Spiritual Assemblies, the members were: Enoch Olinga (pioneer from Uganda), Elsie Austin (pioneer from the United States), Shoghi Ghadimi (an Iranian), William Foster (pioneer from the United States), Mustapha Bouchoucha, S. Riad Ruhani (an Iranian), Valerie Wilson (pioneer from the United States), Rowshan Mustapha, and Abdul-Hamid El Khamire.[97]

This huge zone, although the Baha'is had succeeded in erecting a skeleton of new institutions within it, contained fewer than 1,000 Baha'is. Realistically, since the Baha'i population of Gambia was ephemeral, the number was actually fewer than 600—with about half of these located in British Cameroons. Table 4.4 provides the official count of Baha'is in each country under the jurisdiction of the regional National Assembly as of April 1956. The numbers include foreign pioneers. Valerie Wilson noted at this time that 170 of the Baha'is in the area were 'non-African,' being pioneers from other countries, and 749 Baha'is were 'African,' meaning indigenous to their areas.[98]

These numbers were not made public at the time. As can be seen from Table 4.4, the growth of the religion in West Africa was discon-

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(Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles, June 28, 1950, published in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 253.) See discussion of Nigeria below.

[95] Delegate information for "National Convention of the Baha'is of North-West Africa, Tunis, [Baha'i year]113—[A.D.]1956," issued by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Egypt and Sudan, March 29, 1956. Valerie Wilson papers.

[96] With its administrative headquarters established in Tunis, the territory under its jurisdiction included: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco (International Zone), Spanish Morocco, French Morocco, Rio de Oro, Spanish Sahara, French West Africa, Gambia, Portuguese Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gold Coast, Ashanti Protectorate, Northern Territories Protectorate, British Togoland, French Togoland, Nigeria, British Cameroons, French Cameroons, Spanish Guinea, St. Thomas Island, Cape Verde Islands, Canary Islands, and Madeira. This regional Assembly continued until April 1964, when the National Assemblies of West Africa and West Central Africa were elected. Since then, separate National Assemblies have been elected for all countries in the region. (Van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," p. 19.)

[97] Delegate information, Valerie Wilson papers. Solomon Hilton, a Sierra Leonean (Mende) who had been Valerie Wilson's first convert in Liberia, was almost elected to the regional National Spiritual Assembly. He tied with Abdul-Hamid El Khamire for the ninth spot on the Assembly. However, in a tie-breaker vote, El Khamire was elected. (Ibid.; Membership book, Valerie Wilson papers.)

[98] Wilson hand notes in Delegate information, inside back cover, Valerie Wilson papers. I presume that this figure includes the 302 African Baha'is in Gambia who quickly disappeared. So, a more realistic count is about 450 African Baha'is in West Africa, the majority of whom lived in the British Cameroons.

Table 4.4. Numbers of Baha'is in Northwest Africa, April 1956

| Country or Territory | Baha'is |
|---|---|
| Algeria | 14 |
| Ashanti Protectorate | 17 |
| British Cameroons | 279 |
| British Togoland | 29 |
| Canary Islands | 19 |
| Cape Verde Islands | 2 |
| French Cameroons | 9 |
| French Morocco | 28 |
| French Togoland | 24 |
| French West Africa | 5 |
| Gambia | 302 |
| Gold Coast | 34 |
| Liberia | 39 |
| Madeira Islands | 2 |
| Morocco Int'l Zone | 13 |
| Nigeria | 14 |
| Northern Territories | 12 |
| Rio de Oro | 0 |
| Sierra Leone | 1 |
| Spanish Guinea | 1 |
| Spanish Morocco | 28 |
| Spanish Sahara | 0 |
| St. Thomas | 0 |
| Tunisia | 18 |
| **Total** | 920 |

Source: Musa Banani, "Circular Letter," Ridván 1956, Box 1, File 41, Africa Teaching Committee Records, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

tinuous and highly uneven. The British Cameroons was by far the most successful area in terms of the number of new Baha'is. When Gambia is factored out, the 279 Baha'is in the British Cameroons represent almost half of the Baha'is in the region, and a large majority of the 447 African Baha'is in the region. Except for British Cameroons, no country in West Africa could claim that many more than two dozen Baha'is lived there. The development of the Baha'i faith in British Cameroons will be treated in some detail in Chapter Six. The early history of Baha'is in other West African countries will be discussed briefly below, specific to each country.

[99] The Africa Teaching Committee in the United States noted the "virtual loss" of all six local Spiritual Assemblies and all 300 Baha'is in Gambia in 1957. Dated

In November 1957, Shoghi Effendi died suddenly and unexpectedly while on a trip to London,[100] without leaving a successor.[101] With his passing, the Baha'i community not only lost its spiritual leader, but also the mastermind and architect of the Ten Year Plan that it was pursuing. The Hands of the Cause,[102] who had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi as his deputies and assistants, temporarily assumed the leadership of the Baha'i religion in his stead. They arranged for the election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme international Baha'i body, to be held in April 1963. But the remaining goals of the Ten Year World Crusade were achieved under the direction of the Hands of the Cause.

By 1958, there were over 4,000 Baha'is living in Africa, and about 3,000 of these were native Africans. The Hands of the Cause could also report that same year that in Africa there were "no less than one hundred and fifty spiritual assemblies; the introduction of the Faith into more than two hundred tribes, the translation of its literature into more than seventy languages, the purchase of numerous Haziratu'l-Quds and endowments[103] both national and local; . . . and the increase in the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside to over six hundred."[104]

In these terms, the growth of the Baha'i faith in Africa continued to the end of the plan. The number of Baha'is overall continued to increase, and the number of local Assemblies, groups, and localities continued to multiply. Table 4.5 provides a statistical summary of this growth. But these numbers are for the whole continent. The development of the Baha'i community continued to be uneven when considered country by country. Uganda, Congo, and British Cameroons witnessed the entry of thousands of new converts and became the real

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10/10/57, AFR 4/60, 12/57(?), National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois, cited in van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index," p. 31.

[100] His residence was in Haifa, Palestine.

[101] According to Baha'i scripture (that is, the instructions left by 'Abdu'l-Baha in his last Will and Testament), Shoghi Effendi was to appoint his first-born son as the next Guardian. Failing this, he could appoint any other male descendant of Baha'u'llah to this position. However, Shoghi Effendi had no children, and by the time of his passing, he had expelled all eligible successors from the Baha'i community as 'Covenant-breakers.' (Cf. *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944 (1971)] p. 12.)

[102] Including Enoch Olinga, who was the only African Hand of the Cause.

[103] Undeveloped land.

[104] "Message From the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land to the Intercontinental Conference in Kampala" published in *Bahá'í News*, No. 325 (March 1958) pp. 1–2.

success stories. Other countries lagged behind, or failed to grow at all, as we shall see.

But such statistics hardly tell the whole story. The worldwide Baha'i community developed a master narrative of growth and victory surrounding the recent history of the religion in Africa. This narrative was virtually predetermined by the symbolic nature of the goals of the Ten Year World Crusade and the metaphors that were used to support that effort. The symbolic action was the conquest of the countries of Africa, and that goal could be accomplished by the movement of a lone pioneer to a single city within a nation, or certainly by the formation of a local Spiritual Assembly—even if most of its members were foreigners.

Inevitably then, the early Baha'i history of West Africa will be understood, especially by Baha'is, as the story of the triumphal growth of the religion in a region where it had previously been virtually unknown. However, a narrative of growth and expansion provides an unsatisfactory history of the early years of the Baha'i faith in West Africa. Such an approach is limited, one-sided, and obscures more developments than it explains. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter, and more especially in Chapter Six. Nonetheless, expansion did take place—even though it is only one element in the full history of Baha'is in West Africa. Some aspects of that expansion are discussed below.

## *Gambia*

The first Baha'i pioneer to settle in Gambia was Fariborz Roozbehyan, who was originally from Bombay, born into a Baha'i family of Zoroastrian background.[105] He had attended St. Xavier College in Bombay, but had to withdraw in 1907 due to illness. He was advised to

[105] His father, Keykhusrow Esfendiar, had been a member of the local Spiritual Assembly of Bombay in 1905 when Sydney Sprague, an American Baha'i teacher, visited India. Keykhusrow became celebrated in the American Baha'i community as the friend who traveled from Bombay to Lahore (where an epidemic of cholera was raging) to nurse Sprague back to health after he had fallen gravely ill with typhoid fever. Unfortunately, Keykhusrow died of cholera while in Lahore, symbolically giving his life for his fellow-Baha'i from America. (Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 1–5; Sydney Sprague, *A Year With the Bahá'ís in India and Burma*, Reprint [Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986 (1908)] pp. 49–53.)

Table 4.5. Statistical Summary of African Territories, 1952–1963

| Year | Baha'is[106] | LSAs[107] | Groups[108] | Localities[109] | NSAs[110] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 | <200 | 12 | 9 | | 1 |
| 1953 | 200 | 16 | | | 1 |
| 1954 | 800 | 24 | 20 | | 1 |
| 1955 | 1,300 | 90[111] | >120 | 300 | 1 |
| 1957 | 3,000 | 197 | 124(?) | | 4 |
| 1958[112] | 4,000 | 150 | | 600 | 4 |
| 1960[113] | 15,000 | 376 | | 1,140 | 4 |
| 1961[114] | 20,000 | | | 1,500 | 4 |
| 1963 | >40,000[115] | 1,076 | 2,900 | | 4 |

Source: van den Hoonaard, "A Survey of the Baha'i Faith in Africa," Appendix B, p. 34, with additions and corrections.

leave India for health reasons and lived for many years in Iran.[116] After attending a Baha'i conference in India in 1953, he decided to settle in Bhutan, one of the goals of the Ten Year Crusade; but he was unable to obtain a visa. Determined to become the first Baha'i to open some goal country, Roozbehyan changed his destination to Gambia—which was one of the goals of the plan that had been assigned to the National Assembly of India, Pakistan, and Burma.[117]

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[106] Estimated number of Baha'is in all of Africa.

[107] Local Spiritual Assemblies. There must be at least 9 adult Baha'is living in an area to form a local Spiritual Assembly. These Assemblies are usually elected by the Baha'is locally.

[108] A group is any area where at least 2 Baha'is live where a local Spiritual Assembly has not been formed. Usually, this means that there are 2 to 8 Baha'is living there.

[109] Any place where at least one Baha'i resides. These include local Assembly areas, groups, and isolated believers.

[110] National Spiritual Assemblies.

[111] There were 124 LSAs in all of Africa as of April 1955. (*Bahá'í News*, No. 293 [July 1955] p. 3.) Thus, van den Hoonaard's figure of 90 refers, perhaps, only to sub-Saharan Africa.

[112] Information for 1958, added from *Bahá'í News*, No. 325 (March 1958) pp. 1–2.

[113] Information for 1960, added from *Bahá'í News*, No. 351 (June 1960) p. 3, and No. 354 (September 1960) p. 1.

[114] Information for 1961, added from *Bahá'í News*, No. 363 (June 1961) pp. 4 and 6.

[115] Approximately half of these Baha'is were in the Congo. (*The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, Vol. 13, p. 287.) Although van den Hoonaard does not indicate it on his chart, the figure of 40,000 represents only the Baha'is of Central and East Africa in 1963. (Ibid.)

[116] In 1907–1908 he was attacked by cholera, but he also suffered from chronic malaria. (Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, p. 6.)

[117] Actually, a regional body that governed the Baha'i affairs in all three countries.

He arrived in Bathurst (now Banjul), Gambia, on February 19, 1954. However, he was an older man, and in poor health, so that he was hospitalized repeatedly during his stay in the country.[118] Nonetheless, his Baha'i teaching efforts were highly successful. He soon convinced a wealthy Syrian Christian merchant,[119] a Gambian Methodist (an Aku),[120] and a Gambian Muslim (a Wolof)[121] to become Baha'is. The Muslim convert was extremely helpful and introduced Roozbehyan to his network of friends. A number of them became Baha'is. By April 1955, four local Spiritual Assemblies were elected in Gambia: Bathurst, Serrekunda, Lamin, and Brikama.[122] By June 1955, Roozbehyan reported that there were 106 Baha'is in Gambia.[123] In April 1956, two new Assemblies were formed in addition to those already existing, for a total of six. By that time, there were 300 Baha'is in the country.[124] But all of these gains were soon to be lost.

Roozbehyan's ill health finally forced him to leave Gambia and return to Iran. He left in April 1956.[125] Almost immediately, the Baha'i community collapsed. In October 1957, the Africa Teaching Committee in the United States received a report of the virtual loss of all local Spiritual Assemblies and all 300 Baha'is in Gambia.[126] The community had been completely dependent on the one pioneer. Even though Roozbehyan returned to Gambia in September 1957, at the specific request of Shoghi Effendi (who must have been informed of the situation in Gambia), the community did not recover. Roozbehyan was so ill that he could not leave the hospital during his brief return. He went back to Iran.[127]

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[118] Since Roozbehyan left college in 1907, he must have been in his mid-sixties by 1954. He was hospitalized initially for asthma and 'fever.' During his first six-month stay in Gambia, he was hospitalized four times for stays of ten or fifteen days each. He found his first Gambian convert during his fourth hospitalization. (Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 66–70.)

[119] Nicolas Banna.

[120] Nelson Ethan Thomas.

[121] al-Hassan Jagne.

[122] Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 66–73; Roberta Al-Salihi, "The Gambia," 2nd edited draft (1994), an unpublished article written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, Ill.

[123] F. Roosbehyan [sic] to Africa Teaching Committee, June 19, 1955, AFR 1/1–11, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[124] Al-Salihi, "The Gambia"; AFR 4/57, September 24, 1956, AFR 9/39, February 13, 1958, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.; Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, p. 74.

[125] Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 76–77.

[126] AFR 4/60, December 1957?, Africa Teaching Committee records, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[127] Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 81–82.

Illustration 4.2. Baha'i House of Worship, Kampala, Uganda

The Baha'i Temple of Africa is located in Kawempe Division, in northern Kampala, Uganda. Designated by Baha'is as the 'Mother Temple of Africa,' its foundation stone was laid in 1958, and it was dedicated on January 13, 1961. Source: Wikipedia. org/wiki/Kampala.

An Iranian couple, Enayatu'llah and Eshrat Fananapazir, with their three children, arrived as pioneers in April 1957. They began the Baha'i teaching work anew, and remained in Gambia until March 1962. Shoghi Riaz Rohani also settled in the country as a pioneer in 1962, and he stayed for one year. In 1963, there were again Baha'is living in 31 localities in Gambia, and 21 of these communities had formed local Assemblies. But with the departure of Mr. Rohani, again there was no pioneer in the country for some years, and these gains were also lost. The situation remained stagnant until 1967, when another Iranian pioneer, 'Ali-Muhammad Jalali arrived and reorganized the community. By 1973, there were reported to be 1,800 Baha'is in Gambia, and they had formed 27 local Spiritual Assemblies. A large percentage of Baha'is were from the Jola minority, though all major ethnic groups were represented.[128] Apparently, there was no further loss of membership after that.

However, the question that arises from this short summary of the early history of Baha'is in Gambia is not why the progress that was made was so easily lost. It is rather why converts were so easily made here in the first place. Gambia is a tiny country, whose population in 1950 was only 294,000.[129] A British colony until 1965, its people are overwhelmingly Muslim. Yet, as the chart above has indicated, in 1956 there were more Baha'is living there than in any other country in West Africa[130]—hundreds, rather than dozens. In 1963, more than one out of six local Assemblies in all of Northwest Africa existed in Gambia.[131] How can we explain this Baha'i success?

Again, we come up against the limits of a narrative of expansion. Of course, the successes were all the work of Persian pioneers. This might suggest that Iranian Baha'is were more effective than their American counterparts in propagating the religion. Iranian success in Uganda, and similar success in the British Cameroons achieved by an African Baha'i trained by Iranians, might reinforce this conclusion. (See Chapter 5.) However, such an answer only begs the question. Why should Persian pioneers be more successful than Americans, and

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[128] Al-Salihi, "The Gambia."

[129] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, (http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp).

[130] Of course, British Cameroons was not far behind.

[131] There were 115 local Spiritual Assemblies in the jurisdiction of the National Assembly of North West Africa in 1963. (Al-Salihi, "The Gambia.")

specifically why in Gambia? What message did Iranian Baha'is deliver to those they were teaching, and how was that message understood and received—received more enthusiastically than in other parts of West Africa?

These questions cannot be answered from the records I have available.[132] Of course, there are more records: the archives at the Baha'i World Center, the reports of the Hands of the Cause and Auxiliary Board members, personal diaries and recorded public talks of pioneers, and so forth. But it seems to me that even all these sources would be of little help with these basic questions. Institutional records reflect institutional concerns. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the overwhelming concern of the Baha'i institutions and of the pioneers was the Ten Year Plan. These goals were addressed to the exclusion of all other issues. The records of the time are tightly focused on these goals. Notes on the unorthodox beliefs of the new Baha'is, their form and practice of the religion, even testimonies of faith and accounts of conversion experiences, are conspicuously absent.

Since Gambia was a British colony during the 1950s and early 1960s, it is possible that colonial records may hold some clues to the history of the Baha'i faith there. Colonial police are known to have kept close track of foreigners, and an Iranian Baha'i teacher may have attracted some attention. This would also be true for most of the other countries in West Africa. Police files in metropolitan capitals may prove to be the most useful and illuminating sources of Baha'i social history.[133]

The story of what motivated Roozbehyan's first wave of 300 converts to become Baha'is has never been told, at least not from the point of view of the converts. Perhaps, that aspect of Baha'i history will never be told. The information may remain only in the memories of the first believers themselves, most of whom are by now certainly deceased.

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[132] For this short account, I have relied entirely on the memoirs of Roozbehyan, the records of the Africa Teaching Committee in the United States, and the draft Baha'i encyclopedia article.

[133] Moojan Momen's use of colonial police files has been useful in providing information on the history of the Baha'i faith in India and Burma, for example. Around 1891, the police succeeded in infiltrating the inner circle of the emerging Baha'i movement there. Regular reports were sent to the British authorities on Baha'i activities and concealed beliefs. See his article, "Jamál Effendi and the Bahá'í Faith in Asia," in *Search for Values: Ethics in Bahá'í Thought*, *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Vol. 15, ed. by John Danesh and Seena Fazel (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004) pp. 185–88, 190–94.

Nonetheless, an effort to collect the personal reminiscences of some of these individuals is called for.[134]

Despite the paucity of evidence available to us, Roozbehyan himself has left a clue that might explain his unusual success. During the time he was in Gambia as a pioneer, he developed a healing practice. This may have become the key to his teaching and the source of attraction for new Baha'is. The first native Gambian became a Baha'i in Roozbehyan's hospital after doctors gave up on him. Roozbehyan chanted a Baha'i healing prayer at his bedside and the man recovered the next day. The patient soon became a Baha'i. It seems that this healing became the talk of the hospital among the doctors and nurses.[135] Some time later, the daughter of a wealthy Gambian merchant lay in a coma. Roozbehyan prayed at her bedside, and she regained her health. Her father did not become a Baha'i, but everyone heard about his daughter's recovery. No doubt, after two miraculous healings, there were many requests for Roozbehyan's services as a healer. How this relates to the large number of new Baha'is in Gambia is not clear. The Baha'i faith 'on the ground' may have been a healing movement. Roozbehyan remembers that: "Naturally many heard about this healing power of the Baha'i Tablet[136] so came to me and made enquiries about the Holy Faith and some of them embraced the Cause."[137]

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[134] How any of these early Baha'is could be located is another matter. The task would certainly be difficult.

[135] Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 68–70.

[136] The Long Healing Prayer in Arabic. An English translation is published in *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 1991 Edition (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991). It is not clear whether Roozbehyan recited the prayer in English or in Arabic for his healings. I assume Arabic.

[137] Roozbehyan, *The Paradise on Earth*, pp. 75–76. How miraculous healing attached to the whole Baha'i religious system in the minds of the new Baha'is is not clear, but it may have become a point of entry. Roozbehyan's memoirs report two miraculous healings that he experienced at the hands of 'Abdu'l-Baha himself. Such healing was certainly a part of his own understanding of the power of Baha'i prayers. His memoirs include the story of his father's service in India to a deathly ill American Baha'i, Sydney Sprague, and Sprague's miraculous healing (in exchange for the father's life).

I experienced a similar situation within the Baha'i community myself. In the summer of 1968, I lived in northeastern Spain for a few months, in the town of Tarrazza, near Barcelona. I was there as the leader of a Baha'i youth project (a mission) along with other young Baha'is. We were surprised to learn during our stay that most of the Baha'is in Catalonia had been brought into the faith by one man, who was a folk healer. He held regular healing sessions at his home, using Baha'i prayers (also laying on hands), and sometimes he would travel to other cities, at least in part as a way of finding new Baha'i converts. All of his converts had been attracted to him

## *Sierra Leone*

The early history of the Baha'is in Sierra Leone contrasts sharply with that in Gambia. The first Baha'i there was a Sierra Leonean, Aaron B. Wellesley Cole (also known as Arthur Cole), who had become a Baha'i in England, and returned to his country in June 1952.[138] Cole was a barrister and returned to Sierra Leone to practice law. He had taken part in the Six-Year Plan undertaken by the Baha'is in Britain (1944–1950), meaning that he had relocated to serve on one of the nineteen local Spiritual Assemblies that were elected in the country by the end of the plan.[139] However, after his return to Sierra Leone, he appears to have lost interest in the Baha'i religion.[140] He remained a member of the Baha'i community, but was regarded as 'inactive.'[141]

After Wilson and Foster began their Baha'i work in Liberia, since most of their converts were foreigners, some Sierra Leoneans who had become Baha'is through them began returning to Sierra Leone. Joseph A. F. S. Hingston,[142] a Creole from Sierra Leone and a schoolteacher, became a Baha'i in Liberia in November 1955, through the American

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initially because of his reputation as a healer. The Baha'is in Madrid, and even in Barcelona, were somewhat embarrassed by this man's healing practice. I was told that the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain had even asked him to stop it. But he continued undeterred, and since his work was the source of most of the new believers in his area, he was left alone. The healer certainly saw his work (at least loosely) in Baha'i terms. When I questioned him about his healing practice, he opened a copy of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* (then a standard Baha'i text) and simply pointed to the chapter on "Health and Healing." The chapter had nothing to do with what he was doing, but it seemed to justify his work in his mind.

Most of the new Gambian Baha'is had been Muslims, but Christian missionaries were often regarded as healers in Africa. Indeed, they often used Western medicine as a point of entry into African societies, urging people to abandon their traditional healers in favor of the more powerful 'medicine' of Christ.

[138] Susan Kouchekzadeh, "Sierra Leone," 1st edited draft (1990), an unpublished article written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, Ill. Used with the author's kind permission.

[139] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 10/5, June 15, 1952, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

[140] Cole did not reply to Valerie Wilson's several letters asking him to contact her, from 1954 through 1956. Valerie Wilson to A. Wellesley Cole, October 2, 1954 (making reference to a previous letter dated June 23, 1954), and June 23, 1956 (making reference to "several" letters), Valerie Wilson papers.

[141] See, for example, "Auxiliary Board Member Report," for Sierra Leone, March 1963, Valerie Wilson papers. Cole is listed as living in Makeni and designated as inactive.

[142] Joseph Arthur Frederick Shodupeh Hingston. ("Letter of Intent," July 3, 1963. Valerie Wilson papers. With this document, Hingston ceded some land he owned in Songo Town to the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa.)

pioneer family the Dunnes. He returned to his country as a Baha'i pioneer himself in June 1958,[143] and settled at Wilberforce village, close to Freetown. At first, he received a small subsidy from the National Spiritual Assembly for his pioneering efforts.[144]

Hingston had some success in teaching, but by 1963 there were still only 13 Baha'is, living in five 'localities,' in Sierra Leone, with 12 of them (all but Hingston himself) listed as inactive. No local Spiritual Assembly had been formed.[145] In 1966, when a young Anglo-Iranian couple, Shidan and Susan Kouchekzadeh, arrived in the country, they were unable to find any trace of Hingston's earlier Baha'i group. It was not until 1970 that the first local Assembly was elected in Freetown. However, by 1979, there were 1,112 Baha'is in the country, and 25 local Spiritual Assemblies. By 1992, the number of Assemblies had increased to 67.[146]

### *Liberia*

Part of the history of the Baha'is in Liberia has been discussed above in connection with the stories of the first African American pioneers who landed there. Americans were able to settle in Liberia more easily than in the British and French colonies in West Africa, where they were often refused residence visas. Therefore, American Baha'is played a dominant role in the early history of the Liberian Baha'i community. At least the institutional aspects of that history are well documented in Valerie Wilson's papers, since she lived in Monrovia.

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[143] Membership Book, Liberia and Sierra Leone, p. 29, Valerie Wilson paper. This was the source of controversy. Since Hingston was returning to his own country, the Baha'i institutions had difficulty in classifying him as a 'pioneer.' A pioneer is generally someone who leaves his home country to teach the Baha'i faith in a foreign land. Eventually, Hingston was redesignated as 'resident teacher' and his subsidy was cut off. (J. A. F. S. Hingston to the Regional Teaching Committee No. 7, Freetown, Sierra Leone, "Annual Report [1958–1959], [April 14, 1959]; M. Mustapha to Valerie Wilson, August 21, 1959; "Auxiliary Board Member Report," for Sierra Leone, March 1963, Valerie Wilson papers.

[144] Susan Kouchekzadeh, "Sierra Leone"; J. A. F. S. Hingston to the Regional Teaching Committee No. 7, Freetown, Sierra Leone, "Annual Report [1958–1959], [April 14, 1959]," Valerie Wilson papers.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Susan Kouchekzadeh, "Sierra Leone." The article does not include a figure for the number of Baha'is in Sierra Leone in 1992. However, we can assume that it had increased since 1979. In 1976, there were three all-Baha'i villages in the country. (Ibid.)

However, Baha'is had only limited success in finding converts in Liberia. By the middle of 1954, there were 28 Baha'is in the country, and one local Assembly had been elected in Monrovia. In addition, there was one group (of fewer than nine) and one center (meaning, a single Baha'i in a locality). By 1956, the count of Baha'is was at 39, with 2 Assemblies, 2 groups, and 2 centers. By 1960, the number of Assemblies had increased to 4; and by 1962, to 5.[147] The international Baha'i yearbook for 1963 listed 5 Assemblies, 3 groups, and 11 isolated centers in its directory.[148]

### *Portuguese Guinea (Guinea Bissau)*

Portuguese Guinea was assigned as a goal to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States to 'open to the Faith' (with at least one pioneer), as part of the Ten Year World Crusade. A Baha'i couple, José and Hilda Rodriquez, arrived in Bissau in September 1953. However, by March 1955, they had been forced to leave the country by the Portuguese authorities.[149] It seems that there were no resident Baha'is in the country after that, though a few Baha'is were able to visit for brief periods in 1956 and 1957, and again in 1960. Nonetheless, no Baha'i group or local Spiritual Assembly could be formed, and there were no indigenous Baha'is in the country.[150] The rest of the story of the early years of the Baha'i faith in Portuguese Guinea is tragic.

The first long-term resident African Baha'i was Eduardo Duarte Vieira, who had been born a Catholic in the Portuguese colony, where he was educated and eventually promoted to the position of Director of Tourism within the colonial government. During a brief visit to Lisbon in 1961, Vieira learned of the Baha'is and converted to the new religion. When he returned to his own country, he brought the Baha'i teachings with him.

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[147] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 7/12, June 14, 1954; 7/54, March 19, 1956; 4/63, October 1960; 9/6, October 18, 1962.

[148] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, p. 1015.

[149] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 6/45, September 23, 1953; AFR 6/48, April 1, 1955; AFR 4/56, June 4, 1956, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill. All references to the Africa Teaching Committee records for Portuguese Guinea are cited from van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index."

[150] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 4/56, June 4, 1956; AFR 4/61, January 11, 1961; AFR 1/1–11, December 10, 1960, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

Illustration 4.3. The First Baha'is in Liberia, 1952

Standing (l. to r.): Benjamin Oconnor, unknown, unknown, Dan Demor, Dan D. K. Ocloo, unknown, Alfred Lewis, Patrick Amagashe. Sitting on chairs (l. to r.): Irene Agatha Thomas, Melissa Oconnor, William Foster, Valerie Wilson, Sophie Abdullah. Sitting on the floor (l. to r.): Fred Letchah, Rudolf Amartey, Mangus Amagashe.[151] Source: *Bahá'í News*, No. 265 (March 1953) p. 11.

[151] Identifications by Valerie Wilson, Interview, Menlo Park, 6/16/83. Wilson could not remember the names of some of those in the photo, who are designated as "unknown." She could not remember the name of the first woman seated on the left. But since there were only three Baha'i women in Monrovia at that time, I have added the name of Irene Agatha Thomas. The photo was taken on November 22, 1952, on the occasion of the celebration of the Feast of Qawl (Speech) at Wilson's home at the time, which was the government guesthouse in Monrovia.

In March 1962, upon returning to Bissau, he openly severed his affiliation with the Catholic Church in Portuguese Guinea. He succeeded in converting his wife, Antonia, and establishing a circle of about fifteen new Baha'is in the city. However, these activities provoked a reaction from both the church and the state. He was forced to retire from his government position, and he was denied travel documents. Strict censorship was imposed on all his correspondence. Eventually, his house was raided, his Baha'i books were confiscated, and he was forbidden to hold meetings in his home. He was arrested repeatedly on various pretexts. His final arrest, on a charge of subversive political activity, took place in March 1966, about two months after his forced retirement. He died in prison shortly thereafter, under uncertain circumstances, on March 31, 1966. His body showed signs of torture.

Before his death, he was able to write a final message to his wife, crudely scratched with a sharp instrument on the metal biscuit box she used to transport food into the prison for him. It reads:

> Tonia: This is the way of destiny. All is terminated. Love your fellowman and raise your children with love. Love everybody. Forgive all the wrongs I have done. Be able to face life with naturalness. Goodbye, and I wish you a long life. Duarte 29-3-1966.[152]

Vieira is regarded as the first African martyr of the Baha'i faith.

### *Nigeria*

The early history of the Baha'i faith in Nigeria differs somewhat from the narratives of other West African countries, since there were Baha'is in Nigeria from the 1940s—before Shoghi Effendi called for Baha'i

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[152] All material on Vieira is from *The Baha'i World 1963–1968* (Haifa:The Universal House of Justice, 1974) Volume 14, pp. 389–390; see also, Vol. 16, p. 568; and Anthony A. Lee, "Eduardo Duarte Vieira" in *Holy People of the World* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2004) p. 893.

I remember William Maxwell (an African American, a former member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, and a former member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Africa) some years ago, telling Vieira's story as part of a lecture to a gathering of Baha'is in the United States. He noted that Vieira's wife, Antonia, and his children were in desperate circumstances after his death. But they were unable to contact any Baha'is, and their whereabouts were unknown for some time (years). When the family was finally located, the Universal House of Justice was able to send her a large sum of money for her support and for the education of the children.

pioneers to disperse to Africa. Although Nigeria was (and is) by far the largest country in West Africa,[153] the development of the Baha'i religion there was slow, and the number of Baha'is few.[154]

Before the mainstream Baha'i community had any presence in Nigeria, the New History Society and the Caravan of East and West had established themselves there. These two organizations were founded by Ahmad Sohrab, an Iranian Baha'i in New York who had broken with Shoghi Effendi and rejected his leadership of the religion. Baha'is who remained loyal to their Guardian shunned Sohrab and his followers and excoriated them as 'Covenant-breakers.'[155] Nonetheless, Sohrab's organizations carried on, by correspondence, various international activities dedicated to world unity. By 1940, there was at least one Caravan chapter for children in Nigeria. Other chapters were eventually organized, especially for children and youth, and dedicated to international correspondence. Their number and size are not known, and they have since died out.[156]

In the mid-1940s, a New York City Baha'i began a correspondence with Thomas Beresford Macauley, a Nigerian corporal. Macauley became a Baha'i by mail and formed a study group with other Nigerians interested in the Baha'i religion. By 1947, he was listed as a contact person for the Baha'is of Nigeria, with an address in Ebute-Metta, a town just north of Lagos.[157] There was also a Baha'i study group in 'Oshogbo/Jebba.'[158] Little is known about these Baha'is. However, because of this tenuous Baha'i presence, Nigeria was not included in the goals of the Africa Plan, 1950–1952. It was not regarded as a

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[153] The population of Nigeria in 1950 was 32,769,000. In 2005, 131,530,000. (GeoHive, "Countries with Highest Population for 1950, 2005, and 2050," http://www.geohive.com/charts/population2.aspx.)

[154] There were about 15,000 Baha'is in Nigeria around the year 2000. (Loni Bramson-Lerche and Martha Garman, "Nigeria," 1st edited draft (2006), an unpublished article written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, Ill. I am grateful to Dr. Bramson for permission to use this article.)

[155] The New History Society was formed in 1929. See William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, p. 108; Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 124–26; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 327 (Sohrab is referred to here as "a former secretary" of 'Abdu'l-Baha).

[156] Loni Bramson-Lerche and Martha Garman, "Nigeria."

[157] *World Order*, Vol. 13, no. 8 (November 1947) p. 287; *The Bahá'í World, 1947–1950*, Vol. 11, p. 523.

[158] *Bahá'í News*, No. 198, pp. 1, 7. Bramson-Lerche and Garman note that Oshogbo is in modern-day Osun State and Jebba is in Kwara State, so the location is curious and widespread—possibly erroneous.

virgin territory in the Ten Year World Crusade, but was assigned to the British National Spiritual Assembly as a goal for strengthening and consolidation.

Baha'i pioneers eventually began arriving in Nigeria in 1956–1957: an American couple, Glen and Lois Lissner, who settled at Owo, in the west; an English school teacher, Margaret Lloyd, at Kano (Zaria), in the north; and a recent Cameroonian convert, Oscar Njang, at Calabar in the east.[159] There were no Baha'is in Lagos, however, until another American couple, Sherman and Lillie Rosenberg, moved there in 1958.[160] In 1956, there had been only 14 Baha'is in the whole country.[161]

Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed at Owo (1957), in the east at Enugu (1957), and at Akpabuyo (1958). By 1963, there were Baha'is living in 23 'localities,' and 11 local Assemblies had been formed. Almost all the Baha'is were living in the eastern states; some were in the west; but, only one Baha'i lived in the northern (mainly Muslim) part of the country.[162] It seems, therefore, that there would have been fewer than 200 Baha'is living in Nigeria by that time.[163]

### *Ghana*[164]

The Ghana of today was, in the early 1950s, under British colonial rule, divided into a number of different territorial jurisdictions: the Ashanti Protectorate, the Gold Coast colony, the Northern Territories Protectorate, and British Togoland. Each of these territories was regarded as a separate goal of the Ten Year Plan, and so the future Ghana received four sets of Baha'i pioneers. (See Table 4.3.) The

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[159] Njang's story will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

[160] Bramson-Lerche and Garman, "Nigeria."

[161] See chart above.

[162] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, Vol. 13, p. 106; Bramson-Lerche and Garman, "Nigeria."

[163] The 11 Assembly areas would have had at least nine Baha'is each. But the remaining 12 'localities' must have had fewer. There were nine or more Baha'is living in the Assembly areas, but possibly as few as one or two in all other localities.

[164] The section on Ghana could, no doubt, be expanded by reference to the book *Conquering the Hearts: A Brief History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ghana 1951–1995*, published under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ghana in 2004. (See *The Bahá'í World 2004–2005* [Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006] pp. 50–51.) However, I have been unable to locate a copy of this book, despite repeated efforts.

short residence of Ethel Stephens in the Gold Coast has already been discussed.

However, the earliest references to the Baha'i religion in Ghana date from the 1940s. As in Nigeria, the Caravan of East and West carried on activities by correspondence in Ghana during this time—especially in the Gold Coast, where it organized 80 chapters. These activities were not only dedicated to promoting international goodwill, but were also specifically Baha'i in character. The Caravan's celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab was reported in the *Gold Coast Daily News* (May 24, 1944). Baha'is discovered an elderly Ghanaian man in 1991, who by then lived in Ojobi, Central Region. He told them that he had been a member of the 'Caravan Church' in Ghana in the 1950s. However, it appears that by the 1960s, the Caravan had ceased activity in Ghana and only a few followers were left.[165] Nonetheless, there were Ghanaians in the country who had considered themselves Baha'is before the arrival of the first pioneers of the Ten Year Crusade.

In May 1953, Major and Zara Dunne (see above) arrived in Accra as Baha'i pioneers. Failing to find work there, they relocated to Topremang, in the Eastern Region. Their first Ghanaian convert was Albert Nyarko Buapiah, who became a Baha'i in Topremang in October 1953. He was followed by his wife, Grace, and another Ghanaian, Abu Appiah Sam. By November, there were ten Baha'is in Topremang, and they were joined by a Ghanaian student, Godwill Fiawoo (Seawood), who had become a Baha'i while studying in the United States. The first local Assemblies were elected in Topremang and in Osenase, where Buapiah had moved. However, the Dunnes were unable to remain in Ghana; they left for Liberia in January 1954.[166]

Julius Edwards, a Baha'i from Jamaica, arrived as a pioneer in Tamale, in the Northern Territories, in September 1953, becoming the first Baha'i in that region. He was able to remain in the country only for a few months, eventually leaving for Liberia. Among the other pioneers to come to Ghana were three new Baha'is from the British Cameroons: Benedict Eballa, who moved to the Ashanti Protectorate; Edward Tabe, British Togoland; and Martin Manga, Northern Territories. Another

[165] Akwasi O. Osei and Prince K. Abaidoo, "Ghana," 2nd edited draft (1994), an unpublished article written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, Ill.
[166] Ibid.

Cameroonian Baha'i, James Mbu, arrived in the Northern Territories in early 1956. David Tanyi, another young Cameroonian Baha'i, had initially moved to French Togoland; but in 1957, with his wife (Esther) and children, he relocated to the Northern Territories as well. Albert Buapiah moved to British Togoland to spread the religion there.[167]

These early Baha'i teachers had some limited success. Although in 1952 there were no Baha'is in the Gold Coast, for instance—by April 1956, Baha'is could report 2 new local Spiritual Assemblies, 5 'groups,' and 7 'isolated centers' there.[168] In the same year, British Togoland had 1 Assembly, 2 'groups,' and 5 'isolated centers.'[169] In 1956, there were 92 Baha'is in the four territories combined.[170] But these gains were modest, and they were soon reversed. By 1962, there were only 3 local Assemblies still standing in the now independent country of Ghana—at Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale.[171] In 1970, the Baha'is published the names of 11 Assemblies, 13 groups, and 16 'isolated centers' in the country.[172] In that year, the count of Baha'is in the country had increased to 395.[173] These Baha'is were able to elect the first National Spiritual Assembly for Ghana in 1970, but five of the nine members of the Assembly were foreigners.[174] In 1993, there were approximately 17,300 Baha'is in Ghana, in 267 'localities,' and 121 local Spiritual Assemblies.[175] In 2005, the count of Assemblies was 63.[176]

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[167] Ibid.; *The Bahá'í World 2004–2005* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006) pp. 50–51; Valerie Wilson, "Report of Board Member for Jan. 31st, 1957," sent to Musa Banani, Valerie Wilson papers. As far as I can tell, all of the early pioneers to Ghana mentioned in this paragraph were given subsidies from the Baha'i funds to maintain themselves in their pioneer posts. In the case of Mbu, he bitterly protested that his subsidy of £20 per month was inadequate for his expenses and that he could not send for his wife to join him on such a small allowance. (Ibid.)

[168] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 10/1, September 30, 1952; AFR 4/57, September 24, 1956.

[169] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 1/1–11, March 24, 1962.

[170] Osei and Abaidoo, "Ghana."

[171] Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 4/57, September 24, 1956. All of the Africa Teaching Committee records in this section are cited in van den Hoonaard, "Annotated Index."

[172] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, pp. 1013–1016. These are supposed to date back to 1963, but that seems unlikely to me.

[173] Osei and Abaidoo, "Ghana."

[174] Ibid.

[175] Osei and Abaidoo, "Ghana."

[176] *The Bahá'í World 2004–2005*, p. 51. There are no published statistics on the number of Baha'is in the country.

Illustration 4.4. Baha'is in Tamale, Northern Ghana, 1960

David Tanyi, an early pioneer from British Cameroons, stands in the back row (fourth from left, in white shirt). His wife, Esther, is seated in the middle (holding child). Source: Bahá'í World News Service <http://news.bahai.org/photo/1205>.

### *French Cameroons*

The French United Nations mandate territory of Cameroons was assigned to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan, and Burma as a goal of the Ten Year World Crusade. But the first Baha'i to arrive there was a new Cameroonian convert, Samuel Njiki. He was followed a short time later by an Indian-Iranian woman, Mehrangiz Munsiff. Together they were given credit for 'opening' the French Cameroons to the Baha'i religion. However, after that, not much progress

was made. As in all of French-speaking West Africa, there was not much growth or expansion of the Baha'i community.

Njiki had been a Baha'i for only two weeks when Enoch Olinga, who had taught him the religion, urged him to relocate to Duala in the French sector of Cameroon. Njiki had attended Basel Mission primary schools. His uncle was a catechist who worked for the mission, and he eventually found employment as a typist there too. However, he had rejected the Mission when he was refused communion by the missionaries because his church dues were not paid up. He found another job with the Cameroon Development Corporation as a clerk.[177]

After meeting Olinga, Njiki became the first Bamiliki Baha'i in Cameroon. Almost immediately, he resigned his job and moved to Duala, where he had some relatives. He was supported by a subsidy from the Baha'i funds. However, he could not speak French, and so could not interact much with the local population. Most of his friends and acquaintances were English-speaking Banyangi men, and he lived in the Banyangi quarter of Duala. Munsiff could speak French. The two of them taught the Baha'i faith together for a short while. But within a year, Munsiff fell very ill and had to return to London for medical treatment. Njiki remained the lone pioneer in French Cameroons.[178]

Eventually, Njiki was able to find enough Baha'i converts to form a local Spiritual Assembly in April 1955. However, in 1960 there was still only one local Assembly established in the territory, along with five 'isolated centers.'[179] The same count for Assemblies and centers was reported for 1963.[180] That would suggest that there were never more than a handful of Baha'is in the area (perhaps, only fifteen or twenty) during this period.

Something similar could be said about other French-speaking areas of West Africa. During the 1950s and early 1960s, almost all the Baha'i pioneers were Americans or Iranians, or new Baha'is from the British Cameroons. France itself was a goal of the Ten Year Plan and only formed its National Spiritual Assembly in 1958. Therefore,

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[177] Don Addison interview with Samuel Njiki, December 27, 1982, Don Addison papers.

[178] Ibid. Munsiff left the country before April 1955, when the first local Spiritual Assembly was elected in Duala.

[179] Ibid.; Africa Teaching Committee records, AFR 4/63, October 1960. Njiki left the French territories in 1960, because he no longer wanted to be supported by the Baha'i funds.

[180] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, p. 1014.

there were virtually no French-speaking Baha'is available to teach the religion in Africa. In 1963, the former French Togoland (later, Togo) had fewer than nine Baha'is in the country, all living in Lomé. All of what had been French West Africa (Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta) could report only three local Assemblies, one 'group,' and two isolated Baha'is by 1963. That would suggest a Baha'i population of fewer than 50 for the whole vast region.[181]

### *British Cameroons*

The history of the early years of the Baha'i faith in the British Cameroons will be discussed in the next chapters. But even from what has been written so far, it can be seen that it is the great exception to the usual story of Baha'i expansion in West Africa during the decade of 1952–1962. In most countries, during this period, the Baha'i community remained small and heavily institutionalized. The American Baha'is who brought the religion to this part of the world, for the most part, succeeded in replicating in the places where they settled the general contours of the Baha'i community they had known in the United States.

The Baha'i community in the United States was small. Groups of ten or twenty Baha'is in a city were the norm. Where there were more the Baha'is rarely numbered more than one hundred. Most groups were focused around the institution of the local Assembly and had few collective goals other than creating more local Assemblies. The Baha'is maintained strict requirements for membership and understood their community to have rigidly defined boundaries. They were made up of literate and middle-class adults who organized themselves as voluntary societies—with members holding general business meetings, taking minutes, and observing Robert's Rules of Order in their proceedings. Most of this would have been foreign to most African people during this period.

As has been seen, another exception to this pattern was created by an Iranian pioneer in Gambia. His experience of the Baha'i religion had pointed him in a direction that broke the American pattern. While

[181] Ibid.

local Assemblies were, of course, elected according to the goals of the Ten Year Plan, there were large-scale conversions of native Africans. We might speculate that the Baha'i experiences of the new Gambian Baha'is must have centered around healing, rather than around business meetings. But Baha'i successes in Gambia were, during this decade, short lived.

The other great exception to the American pattern was found in the British Cameroons. Here Baha'i teaching centered around the Ugandan pioneer, Enoch Olinga, who was able to pursue his activities with little American influence, and virtually no interference. Under these circumstances, he was able to create a religious movement that delivered the most impressive successes for Baha'is in the area during this period. Even in the strictest institutional terms, in 1963, the British Cameroons could report—in sharp contrast to the modest success found elsewhere—the establishment of 54 local Spiritual Assemblies, 8 'groups,' and 3 'isolated centers.'[182]

[182] *The Bahá'í World 1954–1963*, p. 1013.

CHAPTER FIVE

# THE ROOTS OF BAHA'I CONVERSION IN BRITISH CAMEROONS

Since the British Cameroons was the place where the Baha'i religion was most successful in the 1950s in West Africa, at least in terms of conversions and the establishment of Baha'i institutions, this study will attempt to look in depth at the origins of the Cameroonian Baha'i community. But I will not be so much interested in the institutional growth of the religion as I will be in discerning the message that was being delivered by the Baha'is there and how it was received and understood. I am ultimately interested in asking why some people decided to adopt the Baha'i faith as their own, how they reshaped the message, what that meant to them, and the effect that their conversions had on the larger Baha'i international community.

Cameroon appears to be one of the only places in West Africa during this period where the Baha'i message overwhelmed its institutional boundaries to become an organic religious movement—especially among African Christians within the Basel Mission. The religion not only grew openly and publicly, as elsewhere, but also as an underground movement within this Basel Mission community. I am interested in why this should have been so: What were the vulnerabilities of the Basel Mission that allowed it to become the locus of the development of a new religious movement within its midst? Why did whole communities of Basel Mission Presbyterians become Baha'is? And how did the Mission respond to this development?

This chapter, in an attempt to answer these questions, will introduce the 'underground movement' and look briefly at the history of the Basel Mission in Cameroon and in Ghana—taking particular note of the dynamics of that mission community at the end of the colonial era. It will then discuss the conversion of large numbers of Africans to the Baha'i faith in Uganda in 1952, as a result of the efforts of Enoch Olinga, then a recent convert, and the impact of these conversions on the Baha'is of the world. Attempts will be made to determine the

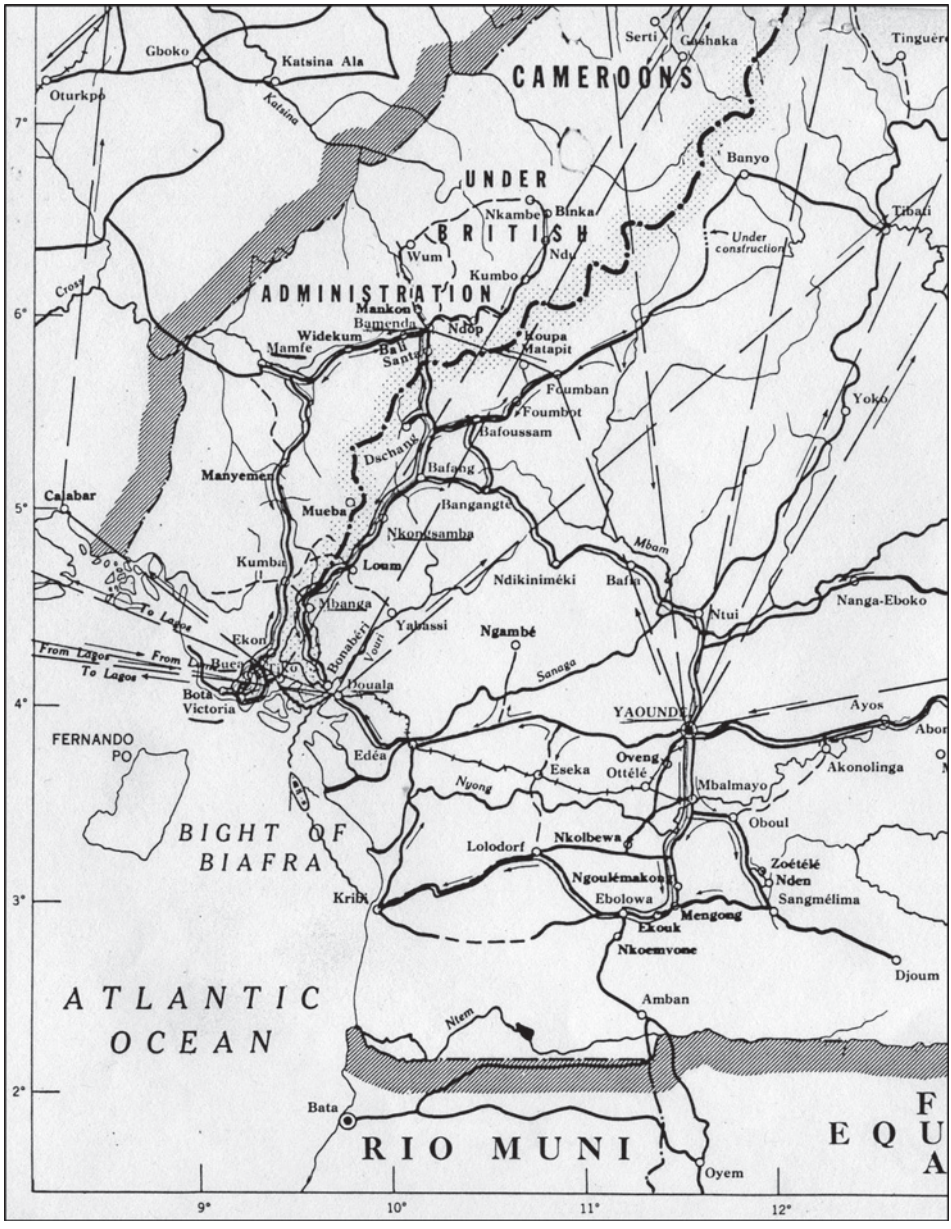
nature of the Baha'i message in Uganda—both as it was taught and as it was received. It was this message that Olinga carried to West Africa, and it proved to be successful. In Chapter Six, I will turn my attention to the British Cameroons and the history of the Baha'i community there, a history that begins with the arrival of Olinga in Victoria (Limbe) in 1953.

## *The Underground Movement*

On November 29, 1959, Samuel Kima—a native of Bakebe Village in Cameroon, who was working as a teacher within the Basel Mission system—sat down to write a letter of inquiry to Valerie Wilson, an African-American Baha'i pioneer living in Liberia. By then, Wilson was, within the Baha'i administrative system, an Auxiliary Board member, and perhaps the Baha'i in the West African region who was in most direct contact with sources of funding coming from the United States.[1]

The letter is of singular interest, as it demonstrates how the Baha'i faith, by 1959—in Cameroon, at least—had broken out of its organizational mold and become an organic social movement, spreading in unofficial and sometimes clandestine ways, especially within the Basel Mission system. The brief exchange of correspondence between the mission teacher and the Baha'i pioneer also demonstrates the clear disconnect between the African version of the Baha'i teachings, which seems to have had reproduced itself with great success in Cameroon by then, and the American Baha'i understanding of things held by organization-minded pioneers like Wilson. The letter is, therefore, worth quoting in full:

[1] She had no control over those funds, though this may not have been known to Kima.




Map 5.1. Detail of a Map of South British Cameroons, 1956

Note that Valerie Wilson underlined the names of localities where Baha'is were living at this time. Source: Valerie Wilson papers, dated 1956. (Original map source: "United Nations Visiting Missions to the Trust Territories of the Cameroons," Map No. 796, February 1956, United Nations)

[ Rec: Dec. 7th ][2]
Samuel M. Kima
c/o Hare Jones
Three Corner, —Bakebe
Mamfe,
Southern Cameroons
29th Nov., 1959

Dear Mrs. Wilson,

I have to write here and explain to you my live [read: life] as a Baha'i.

I am a protestant christian [sic] in the Presbyterian church. I have been educated by this Mission hence I was employed under them as a teacher. I had also attained Grade #7 Teachers' certificate under them. This training was to bind me under them for four years. All this time I have close contact with Mr. Olinga Hand of the Cause in Victoria. I came in contact with the Bahai faith in 1954. I had enough contact with Mr. Olinga. Also I was teaching the faith to the group at Ossing from 1954–1957. But all this time, I didn't declare as a Bahai. It was in 1958 that I was asked by my employer whether I was a Bahai. Knowing that I have not yet filled my declaration form, I told him I am not a Bahai, but my family members are Bahais and most of the people from my village (Bakebe). This happened when I was not aware of the underground movement. Not until 27th July 1959, that I sent in my declaration form to Mr. Olinga, then he brought the secret into light. I told him, the approach my employer made. Having discussed at length with him and fully convinced, I told him I shall resign because this may be a hindrance to my faith.

All this time, my dreams always take me to unknown countries teaching the faith. So I feel that if also I write to you, you may solve this problem after investigating the truth from Hand of the Cause at Victoria or to the nearest David Tanyi at Tamaleh. I am very eager to be a Bahai as called by Bahaullah. And there are many regions which need the faith; I hope pioneers could be sent to prepare the way.

Waiting to hear favorably from you.

While,
I remain
Yos [Yours?]
in the name of Bahaullah
Samuel Kima. [3]

[2] Note added by Valerie Wilson to indicate when she received the letter.
[3] Samuel M. Kima to Valerie Wilson, November 29, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers.

Samuel Kima had considered himself a Baha'i (at least in some sense) since 1954. He says that he had been secretly 'teaching the faith' to others in Ossing since that time. About four months before he wrote this letter, he had decided to end his charade and to make his membership in the Baha'i religion official. It appears that Olinga accepted his official application for enrollment as a Baha'i, but then revealed to him that he was not alone. There was an 'underground movement' within the Mission which seems to have been made up of men like himself who had become Baha'is, but who found it difficult to break their ties to the Presbyterian Church, due to employment or other reasons. It appears that this advice from Olinga amounted to permission for Kima to continue his employment in the Mission and to keep his formal declaration of faith a secret.

The Basel Mission authorities had made it clear to Kima a year earlier, and in the most direct way, that they were not going to tolerate Baha'is working as teachers within the mission system. And so, he had been forced to repudiate his Baha'i identity at that time. While it was technically true that he was not a Baha'i in any official sense, his dissimulation seems to have pained him. We might imagine that he later felt even more uncomfortable as a registered Baha'i on the official membership lists still pretending to be a Presbyterian of the Basel Mission. In this letter, he seems determined to break his ties with the missionary church, if he can find a way to do so and not find himself impoverished. He suggests to Wilson—in language that is subtle and polite, but nonetheless quite clear and unmistakable—that she might be able to arrange for him to be supported as a Baha'i pioneer in some other region of Africa.

Wilson seems herself to have been unaware of 'the underground movement' within the Basel Mission. In her reply to Kima, she queried his statement that he was "a protestant christian," saying that she was confused by it. She also questioned the idea that he could have been teaching the faith from 1954, without formally declaring. She asks directly if he has, in fact, resigned his employment with the Basel Mission now that he has enrolled as a Baha'i.

She understood his polite request to become a Baha'i pioneer, saying: "This is very commendable and certainly brings joy to my heart." She goes on to admonish him that Baha'i pioneers must be "…dedicated, consecrated and willing to sacrifice in many ways so that what they say will attract the waiting soul[s]." However, she explains

that he should write to the appropriate Baha'i institutions with his request.[4] She makes no mention of 'the underground movement,' and clearly she did not want to inquire any further about this aspect of his Baha'i experience. The letter goes on to say that she will inform Enoch Olinga of Kima's request.[5]

It seems that Wilson conceived of Baha'i faith and practice in terms of the (then) common American model of a properly functioning bureaucracy (the 'Administrative Order'), with workers filled with a spirit of joy, service, and sacrifice. Wilson herself was actually the embodiment of this ideal. As a pioneer and Auxiliary Board member, she told me that she would regularly spend about five hours a day writing letters, keeping records, and maintaining Baha'i files. I have relied heavily on her papers in writing this book. There is no record indicating that Kima wrote back to her.

## *The Basel Mission in Cameroon*[6]

The origins of the Basel Mission in Africa trace back to the Evangelical movements that emerged in Protestant churches in Central Europe during the eighteenth century. Known as the 'Pietists,' these early Evangelicals were convinced that each individual Christian could converse directly with God in prayer and through ecstatic experience. They also believed that God intervened, directly and personally, in their lives to correct their errors and to guide them toward a higher standard of living than that found among ordinary Christians. Through careful

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[4] The proper institutions being the National Spiritual Assembly and Regional Teaching Committee #10.

[5] Valerie Wilson to Samuel M. Kima, December 12, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers.

[6] This section will rely heavily on the official church history written by Rev. Werner Keller, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon: A Survey of the General Development of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon up to 1960* (Victoria, Cameroon: Radio and Literature Department of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon, 1969). While the text of the book is usually celebratory, even triumphant, and sometimes even hagiographic, it provides the only detailed account of the development of the Basel Mission in Cameroon. Other sources used in this section will be cited as appropriate. I am aware of Guy Thomas's doctoral dissertation, "Why Do we Need the White Man's God? African Contributions and Responses to the Formation of a Christian Movement in Cameroon, 1914–1968" (University of London, 2002), which is an assessment of the Basel Mission. However, it has not been published, and I have been unable to obtain a copy. Stephen F. Miescher's *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) is focused on Ghana, but is also of interest as a study of Basel Mission activity.

attention to the events of daily life, through regular Bible study, and especially through prayer and religious practice, the Pietists believed that they could know God's will for their individual lives.[7]

In 1730, Dr. J. A. Urlsperger founded the German Society for the Advancement of Christian Truth and Godly Piety with its center in Basel, Switzerland. Similar groups were being formed in other places in German-speaking Europe. From its beginnings, these Evangelical missionary efforts had an ecumenical dimension. In Berlin, the Evangelical Mission Institute worked closely with various Protestant churches and with missionary societies in England, for example. The Basel Mission (The Evangelical Missionary Society in Basel) came into being in 1815, an offshoot of the German Society, as an interdenominational school where students of various missions could prepare themselves for the field. It quickly developed into a mission in its own right.[8]

The Basel Mission avoided theological controversies and collaborated closely with a variety of international missionary societies. The Mission became a service agency to other churches, in fact, providing trained missionaries without regard to denominational or national barriers. As a consequence, Basel missionaries worked within a variety of Christian denominations internationally. By 1861, some 86 Basel missionaries could be found in diverse parts of the world.

The first Christian missionary work in Cameroons was begun in 1844, by a group of English Baptists, some of whom were Jamaicans. They were eventually joined by other English Baptist missionaries in 1858, after the latter were expelled from the island of Fernando Po by the Catholic authorities there. The newcomers founded a town on Ambas Bay at the mouth of the Limbe River and named it Victoria, after the British queen reigning at that time. Although the missionaries established schools and churches, the work of the missions was slow and costly, especially in European lives. Lack of resources, political instability in the area, and the persecution of Christians by the local people meant that there were few conversions and that new African Christians were marginalized and vulnerable. The annexation of the Cameroons by Germany in 1885 made the work even more difficult,

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[7] Paul Jenkins, *A Short History of the Basel Mission*, Texts and Documents Series, No. 10 (Basel: Basel Mission, 1989) p. 3.

[8] Jonas N. Dah, *Missionary Motivations and Methods: A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon 1886–1914* (Basel Mission, 1983) p. 6.

especially since the Germans insisted on school instruction in the German language.

The English Baptist missionaries, therefore, approached the Basel Mission—as a Swiss-German missionary society—with a proposal that they might take over their work in the Cameroons. Although the Basel Mission was a Presbyterian society, the two organizations stressed their common Evangelical roots to accomplish the transfer. The first German Basel missionaries arrived in Duala at the end of 1886 to assume full control of the Baptist churches, schools, and congregations. They apparently believed that denominational differences would be no barrier to a smooth transition.

At the time the Basel Mission took over from the English, there were ten Baptist congregations in southern Cameroon. Some of these were headed by African lay preachers and catechists. Two African ministers were in charge of the congregations at Bethel and Victoria, and a Jamaican minister headed the church at Bakundu. A census of the church at the end of 1887 showed an adult Christian membership of 172 souls, with 238 children enrolled in Baptist schools. This was the sum result of over forty years of missionary labor and Baptist loyalty.[9]

In an effort to gain the allegiance of the African Baptists, and to create confidence in their own leadership, the Basel missionaries offered some doctrinal compromises to teachers, ministers, and congregations. Although these compromises may seem slight to us from a contemporary perspective, no doubt in 1886 they seemed enormous to the participants. The Basel missionaries stressed the common evangelical truth that united the Baptists to themselves. Pastors and catechists working for the Baptist mission were hired on to the Basel Mission—but with the condition that they must preach only doctrines and truths the denominations might hold in common, and leave off teaching any specifically Baptist doctrine. Baptist pastors were not to be forced to baptize infants or children, if it was against their conscience. Likewise, they could baptize their own children in later years, if they preferred. But the new Basel Mission made it clear that the German missionaries would not change their practice of infant baptism just because it might offend the Baptists. In all other matters, the newly acquired Baptist

[9] Keller, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, pp. 12–13.

congregations were to follow the rule, order, and discipline practiced by the Basel Mission.

The work of gaining the allegiance of the indigenous Baptist congregations was unsuccessful, however. Within a year, the congregation at Bethel separated itself from the Basel Mission and formed an independent Christian church. They wrote the following petition to the Basel Mission:

1. We the Elders of the Church of Bethel do not approve of sprinkling, we agree so far to abide in the old mode of immersion,
2. to support our own Pastor as before also to carry out all affairs under our own expenses,
3. to govern our own Church and matter[s] subjected to the Elders be referred to the Church for approval and settlement,
4. that as your Mission is new to us, we are willing that the infant be sprinkling according to your mode.[10]

Eventually, the congregations at Bell Town and Victoria also withdrew from Basel Mission control. The official Presbyterian church history for Cameroon complains that the Baptist separatist congregations displayed a lack of discipline and order that the new missionaries could not tolerate. The congregations were involved in drinking alcohol and also trading in it. The Basel Mission demanded that they stop. There were disagreements over the proper form of baptism, over church organization, and over the decision to choose Duala as the official church language.

No doubt, there were real struggles over such issues. However, in the end, separatist Baptist churches were formed by African Christians who simply refused to subordinate themselves or their churches to missionary authority. No matter how many doctrinal issues divided the Baptist congregations from the new Basel Mission, the most significant point of division was the question of African autonomy vs. European control. After the separation, the Baptists at Victoria and Bethel carried on their preaching and schools without outside help. Their rebellion was successful and established a history of independence that the Basel Mission could never ignore. In the 1950s, for example, the congregation at Mwasundem withdrew from the Mission

[10] Ibid., p. 13.

and affiliated itself with another Protestant denomination as the result of a dispute with church authorities. As late as 1983, the Presbyterian congregation at Nyasoso was threatening to do the same thing in protest over a decision to relocate a planned theological college.[11]

## *A Place to Feel at Home*

African Independent Christian Churches have been discussed in the academic literature since at least the 1940s.[12] There is a considerable body of academic research, therefore, on both the phenomenon of Christian independency and on a number of specific independent Christian churches and movements.[13] All of these independent movements are understood to be motivated in large part by issues of African identity and autonomy within the framework of Christianity.

Welbourn and Ogot's classic book, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya*,[14] takes this approach. The authors argue that a new state of anonymity was the consequence

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[11] Heinrich Balz, *Where the Faith Has to Live*, Studies in Bakossi Society and Religion (Basel Mission, 1984), p. viii.

[12] Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961 [Lutterworth Press, 1948]).

[13] Monica Wilson, *Communal Rituals of the Nyakusa* (Oxford University Press, 1959); C. G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SMC Press, 1962); Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults* (New York: Knopf, 1963); F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Harold W. Turner, *African Independent Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); John D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1968; David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of 6,000 Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968); idem., ed., *African Initiatives in Religion* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971); B. G. M. Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); E. W. Fashole-Luke, et al., eds., *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978); Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *African Apostles: Ritual and Conversion in the Church of John Maranke* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); idem., *The New Religions of Africa* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1979); Sheila S. Walker, *The Religious Revolution in Ivory Coast: The Prophet Harris and the Harrist Church* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Wyatt MacGaffey, *Modern Kongo Prophets: Religion in a Plural Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Brigid M. Sackey, *New Directions in Gender and Religion: The Changing Status of Women in African Independent Churches* (Lanhan, Md: Lexington Books, 2006); and so on. (This list is by no means exhaustive.)

[14] Cited above.

of the social disruption brought on by the colonial era. The collapse of the village and clan as the primary indicators of social identity, and the threat of anomie in a colonial society, required Africans to search for new labels to "place themselves in a home and thus identify themselves in their own eyes and in the eyes of other men." African Independent Churches, therefore, gave persons in colonial societies a chance to signify, for themselves and for others, "I am, after all, So-and-So."[15] Welbourn and Ogot make much use of the idea of 'home' as a broad metaphor for the need for personal identity, psychological security, social support, and ritual protection.

These authors argue, however, that European missions finally could not provide a 'home' for African Christians in the midst of social disruption:

> It is hardly surprising if they [Africans] thus identified themselves in many ways. There was the possibility of joining the mission churches, of saying, in effect, "I am a black European", of taking in baptism a European name, of getting a literary education, of hoping for promotion in the service of mission or government. There was, here, no lasting chance of finding a home. Control remained firmly in the hands of foreigners; and, outside the church building, there was little hope of social acceptance. Men who came in this way tended to find their way out into nationalist politics…[16]

The missions could not be 'homes.' According to Welbourn and Ogot, they had become too large and bureaucratic for that. Their hierarchies had entrenched some converts as elites and subordinated Christians of lower status. Their message had become irrelevant to the concerns of most ordinary people. Finally, they remained indifferent to the emergence of new African national identities developing in the colonial era. In response, African Independent Churches developed to fill all these needs. They discarded European control; provided intimate, face-to-face communities for uneducated Africans; and created churches that could address their cultural and ritual concerns.[17]

African Independent Churches were often formed as a consequence of disputes between African Christians and European missionaries, as a result of what seemed to the former to be arbitrary decisions and high-handed treatment on the part of the latter. The resulting anger

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[15] Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 139.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., pp. 139–42.

and indignation of African converts might lead them to create independent movements free of European control. For example, in 1924, in Tanzania, in events very similar to the Baptist/Basel situation in Cameroon, all of the Christians residing in the Nassa Sultanate converted to the Malakite church of Uganda—"a native independent Church." The Christian headmen of the area invited the independent church to shepherd them because they resented the transfer of their congregations, without their consent, from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to the African Inland Mission by European missionaries.[18] The African Christian leaders naturally resented finding themselves suddenly under a new church administration, subject to new rules, and subordinated to new mission authorities. The Tanzanian rebellion was short-lived, however, since the colonial authorities intervened and demanded that the Nassa Christians withdraw from the new church. In Cameroon, the separation of the Baptists was permanent.

### *Growth of the Basel Mission*

The Basel Mission in Cameroon continued its work with the old African Baptists—the ones who did not leave—establishing new schools and converting people to Christianity, all under European control. By 1914, the mission had established some 90 missionary outstations, servicing 6,600 students and a baptized congregation of 1,150.[19] In its work, the mission stressed the use of native languages, to the consternation and dismay of their congregations. Duala became the medium of instruction and worship in the Forest Region and Bali (or Mungaka) in the Grassfields to the north. This decision became the source of endless tensions between parents of school children and missionaries. Africans for whom Duala, for example, was not their native language saw no reason for their children to learn to read and write in it.

The African Christians of the Basel Mission characteristically demonstrated independence from the missionary society and a willingness to challenge European leadership. In 1910, for example, the German colonial authorities decided to expropriate a large amount of land at

[18] Terence O. Ranger, "Christian Independency in Tanzania," in Barrett, *African Initiatives*, p. 126.

[19] Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (George Allen & Unwin, 1983) p. 118.

Duala and move the people living on it from the banks of the river to new areas. The decision was vigorously opposed by the landowners and resulted in protests and threats of rebellion that continued for years. As these controversies continued, the Duala residents believed that the Basel Mission had failed to defend their legitimate interests appropriately against the Germans. Good relations between Africans, including African Christians, and the mission soured. Even the church congregation joined in attacking the mission.[20]

News of the outbreak of World War I reached Cameroon in August of 1914. The war would quickly result in over a decade of relative independence and autonomy for the African Christians of the Basel Mission. Within a month, British warships had entered Cameroonian waters, and by the end of September, British and French troops had occupied Duala.[21] Eventually, the entire German territory was occupied by the British and French who divided the country into two separate spheres. With this division, the Basel Mission lost the French sector of the country permanently. From that point, their work continued on only in the English-speaking British zone.

With the Allied occupation, the Basel Mission's German missionaries were interned and the Swiss missionaries were sent home. Only one missionary, an Australian (and hence a subject of the Queen), was allowed to remain, and his activities were restricted. Most of the mission schools were closed, and a number of African teachers left their work for fear of being labeled as German agents.[22] Nonetheless, many of the mission's congregations were prepared to carry on their religious lives without European supervision. The church, in fact, expanded and flourished free of missionary control.

An academic history of this period of Basel Mission history has not been written—nor is it possible to write one here. But the official church histories hint at a number of indigenous Christian movements that sprang up among the Basel churches in the years 1914–1925. Among the Bakweri, for example, in 1915, a combination of famine and the prophetic preaching of the mother (not herself a Christian) of

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[20] Keller, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.

[21] For a full military history of the war in Cameroon, see Bryon Farwell, *The Great War in Africa, 1914–1918* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986) pp. 31–71; see also, Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin, 2004), which has a full chapter on Africa.

[22] Keller, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, p. 48.

a Basel catechist, resulted in a large number of conversions and baptisms accomplished without missionary oversight.[23]

Under British occupation, some Christians returned to their ancestral religion for comfort and ritual protection. Others were fully prepared to carry on as Christians without the Basel Mission. The only two ordained Cameroonian ministers in the country remained faithful to Christianity, even though they seemed to believe that the Basel Mission would not return. When the people taunted them, saying, "It is all finished, the Mission is dead, everybody can do as he likes," the pastors are said to have replied: "Though Basel is dead, God is alive." Their retort is celebrated in Basel Mission history as a testimony of their steadfastness. But we should note that it is as much a declaration of independence from the Basel Mission as it is a statement of faith.[24]

With the departure of the missionaries, the indigenous Christians simply took over the work of their congregations, as they were clearly qualified to do. Schools were reopened and conferences held to organize and direct Christian evangelism. This work was carried on, for the most part, by elders and catechists—and even students. It was not until 1925 that the British authorities allowed three Swiss Basel missionaries to reestablish themselves in Cameroon.[25]

Without the Europeans, the Basel congregations grew in organic fashion. For instance, in 1922, a Basel catechist with no missionary supervision, together with a few of his helpers, succeeded in instructing about a thousand people in Christianity in central Cameroons, the Grassfields. In the same year, in Mamfe District, a Cameroonian minister discovered that the gospel was being preached by a group of young men who had organized choirs singing Christian hymns and had introduced the hymns in various places. The minister was able to baptize about one hundred converts on the spot.[26]

African autonomy was highly successful in terms of the growth of the church. The number of Christians increased fivefold between 1914 and 1925. The growth of the church in the Grassfields area (near Bali) in the interior of the country was remarkable—the number of Christians multiplied twenty-three times. The official church history provides a chart of growth by presbytery:

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 49.
[25] Ibid., p. 58.
[26] Ibid., pp. 55 and 57.

Table 5.1. Growth of the Basel Mission in Cameroons, 1914–1925
Numbers of Baptized Christian by Presbytery

| | As of January 1914 | As of December 1925 |
|---|---|---|
| Victoria | 826 | 2,203 |
| Buea | 656 | 1,808 |
| Bombe (Kumba) | 113 | 1,600 |
| Nyasoso | 57 | 985 |
| Besongabang | 43 | 365 |
| Bali [Grassfields] | 73 | 1,954 |
| Total | 1,768 | 8,915[27] |

Source: Keller, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, p. 59.

Although the missionaries regained at least nominal control of the Basel Mission in 1925, the day-to-day administration of schools and congregations had passed into African hands. The church had experienced an important period of African initiative and autonomy. With the coming of World War II in 1939, German missionaries were again interned or expelled from the Cameroons. Six Swiss missionaries were allowed to remain, with their families. Only three mission stations out of thirteen could be staffed by Europeans, as a consequence. Eventually, the Swiss missionaries were obliged to leave the country for health reasons. The Basel Mission was left in the hands of ten ordained African ministers, assisted by catechists and teachers.[28]

After the war, the European missionaries returned, of course. By the middle of 1947, the number of Europeans was back up to twenty-nine, though German workers were not allowed to reenter the British Cameroons until 1959. By 1957, however, the Basel Mission had legally conceded what was already an established reality on the ground—the full independence of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and its administration by African Christians.

### *The Basel Mission at the End of the Colonial Era*

The Baha'i faith entered the Cameroons in the early 1950s, as the colonial era was drawing to its close. The Basel Mission was a well

[27] Total has been corrected. The text reads 8,913.
[28] Ibid., p. 80.

established church by that time. John Middleton has published an anthropological sketch of a Basel Mission church in one town in Ghana that—since there is no comparable study for Cameroon—may give us an idea of the form and dynamics of the mission's work. Middleton's study is suggestive for understanding the Basel Mission as it stood at the end of the colonial era and why it became such a locus of Baha'i conversions during this time.[29]

When the Basel Mission was introduced to Middleton's Ghanaian town in 1835, its relationship to local African society was one of opposition, mutual antagonism, and frequently even open hostility on both sides. The first Christian converts were minor princes, slaves, widows, and other persons of low or ambiguous social status. Christians lived in their own part of the town, wore European clothing, rejected many local customs, and maintained a deliberate separation from non-Christians, whom they considered immoral and 'heathen.' Middleton argues that from the 1860s, this initial period of hostility began to moderate. A period of ambivalence and compromise followed, until about the Second World War. After that, Middleton sees the Christian church increasingly becoming an integral part of local society, accepted by all. During its history, the church's role in the town changed radically from that of a new religious movement in opposition to society, to an institution of the 'establishment' with an essentially conservative role.[30] From its missionary beginnings, the church successfully integrated into the ordinary life of the town.

Middleton maintains that the various churches and religious rites that exist side by side in a certain Ghanaian town, although they may appear to be incompatible and mutually exclusive, should be considered as a single religious complex that reflects the diversity and complexity of a single community. It is his view that any detailed figures or statistics that might purport to show numbers of converts or adherents

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[29] John Middleton, "One Hundred and Fifty Years of Christianity in a Ghanaian Town," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 53, no. 3 (1983) pp. 2–19. I am grateful to Paul Jenkins, who was then the archivist of the Basel Mission in Switzerland, for bringing this article to my attention. He suggested to me that this study provided an honest assessment of a Basel Mission community in Africa. Middleton's research was carried out in the mid-1970s in the local congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (formerly Basel Mission) in the town of Akuropon, the capital of the eastern Akan kingdom of Akuape, some twenty-five miles north of Accra. Therefore, it cannot be applied uncritically to the British Cameroons in the 1950s. However, the outlines of the sociological picture of the church are suggestive.

[30] Ibid., pp. 3–7.

of one church or another are misleading in that they imply that people accept and identify with only one of the churches or cults available to them. In fact, most ordinary people in the town he studied participated in more than one of the various religious opportunities, rites, and confessions that were established within their community.

Middleton does not make use of terms such as 'dual identity' or 'multiple identities.' Nor does he think that such a view of fragmentary identities is useful. The townspeople, in his view, maintain a single identity of 'belonging' to their town, and they accept whatever things are 'there' as aspects of daily life that coexist in a more or less organic relationship. With this view, they may participate in various religious practices as the need arises for healing, worship, protection, purification, etc. Middleton notes that the people of the town: "…may appear to the [outside] observer as indecisive or even insincere [that is, hypocritical], by attending rites of different faiths which are in many ways opposed to one another." However, he insists: "Rather than indicating indecision or insincerity, their behaviour is a function of moral and cosmological complexity and of a need for ritual protection."[31]

There are, of course, some people in the town who feel differently, and these believers can be fiercely and exclusively loyal to only one religious practice. There are conflicts of religion between various segments of the townspeople. Middleton does not suggest that belonging to a single, multifaceted religious system eliminates conflict or leads to harmony and mutual respect. Various struggles within the society for rank, wealth, power, and autonomy are played out largely in religious terms. However, he does suggest that the various religious systems that compete for the attention of the townspeople are linked together in a single complex that is as organic and as unified as the town itself is.

Within this system, the Presbyterian congregation of the Basel Mission was widely accepted and understood as a way of displaying and validating one's high status and rank in the town. Church services and activities were regularly attended by "stalwart and well-reputed Christians." These were mostly women who were dressed in fine clothing. There were at that time many women who wanted to attend services, but they could not, because it was considered shameful for a woman to attend two successive functions wearing the same clothes, or wearing old clothes. Attendance at communion, every six weeks, was

[31] Ibid., p. 12.

limited to those whose church dues were paid up. As a consequence, many attended church only very occasionally. There were many fewer church attendees than nominal church members (who were often owing dues). Church attendance was a public demonstration that a townsperson was recognized to have high social and moral standing, had attained a fairly good standard of education, and belonged to a family with reasonable wealth, social position, and reputation.[32]

Other segments of the town—those who could not afford the dues and fees required by the mission, women who were unable to maintain the required standard of dress, those who were illiterate, or families of a generally low social position—tended to be attracted to the newer, independent or Pentecostal churches and prayer groups, or to the shrines of traditional (non-Christian) religion. Middleton notes that participation in services of the Basel Mission was an increasingly important marker for the measurement of class and educational differences within the town. This resulted in the alienation of younger, poorer Christian men and women, who sought out other forms of religious expression—"perhaps as a sign of rebellion against their elders."[33] The new churches were also attended by non-Christian townspeople, when they believed the services might help solve their difficulties.

Middleton asks why so many more women attended church services and activities than did men. Those at church services tended to be older women, or younger women visiting their families from other towns. He suggests that men were expected to be more concerned with their business ambitions and economic success, which were not regarded as church concerns. Men of high status spent their Sundays in town meetings discussing community affairs. Women were expected to be more concerned with the social status of their families, and so they represented their families at church services. In addition, the men in this Ghanaian society were traditionally and ideally polygamous. Christians who had more than one wife were allowed to attend church, but were barred from communion and other activities. Therefore, they tended to be less active in the church.

Middleton also suggests that the message of the Basel Mission may have become rather stale over time as its position evolved within the political economy of the town over the last century of its history. The

[32] Ibid., pp. 12–13.
[33] Ibid., p. 14.

original prophetic and innovative role of the mission became routinized and conservative. Active participation in church activities was now a sign of wealth and high social position. No longer a symbol of opposition to the status quo, the church transformed into an important institution in the town and increasingly identified itself with the rituals and apparatus of the state. As a result, it no longer had a unique message to offer—rather, it supported the commonly accepted mores and values of the society around it.[34] Such a critique is similar to the analysis of mission churches made by Welbourn and Ogot for Western Kenya.

It may seem counterintuitive to suppose that the Basel Mission in Cameroon would provide a fertile field for conversions to the Baha'i faith in the 1950s. One might imagine that the mission, with its extensive networks of schools and Christian instruction, with African teachers and catechists on its payroll, and under strict European supervision, might be the most resistant segment of an African society to the introduction of a new religion. However, quite the opposite proved to be true. Virtually all of the new Baha'is whom Enoch Olinga managed to bring into the new faith in Cameroon were Presbyterians of the Basel Mission.

Middleton's analysis of a Basel Mission church in Ghana may be suggestive in explaining why some Basel Christians in another West African country found the Baha'i religion so attractive. Most of the early Baha'is were male, were of low status—both within the church and within society—and were fascinated by a new message that presented itself as a way to revolutionize the status quo. These are precisely the areas of weakness that Middleton identifies within the Basel Mission system by the end of World War II.

### *Enoch Olinga Starts a Movement*

Enoch Olinga was born on June 24, 1926, the second son of a family of Christian converts (Native Anglican Church of Uganda, associated

[34] Ibid., pp. 14–16.

Illustration 5.1. Enoch Olinga (1926–1979)

Source: *The Bahá'i World*, Vol. 18, 1979–1983, p. 618.

with the CMS).[35] His father, Samusan Okadakina, was Teso.[36] The father was a catechist and teacher for the Anglican Mission. In 1920, he had volunteered to establish a mission station in Soroti, central Uganda, where he lived until 1927, when he returned with his wife and children to his home village of Tilling, to the northeast. Olinga was, therefore, educated in missionary schools. He received his early education in Tilling and later went to school in Ngora, a small town near his home, and to high school in Mbale District. Afterwards, he attended Makerere University, but did not graduate.[37]

During World War II, in 1941, when he was fifteen years old, Olinga was drafted into the British Army Education Corps and was sent to Nairobi. During the war, he served in the East African King's Rifles Corps in South Asia: Burma, Ceylon, and India. When he returned to Uganda in 1946, he was employed by the colonial Department of Public Relations and Welfare. He was trained as an economist and worked as a translator. He produced two books in his own language, Ateso, for the Department of Education in Teso district. Initially stationed

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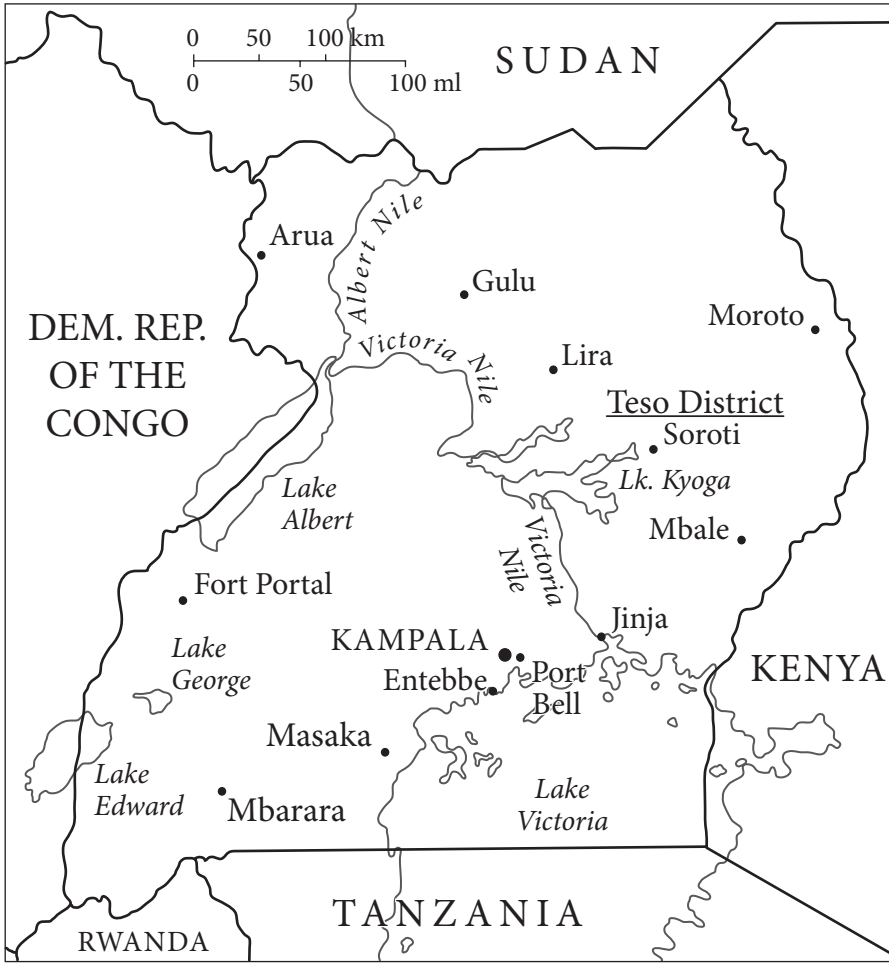
[35] Baron Deems Harper, *Lights of Fortitude: Glimpses into the Lives of the Hands of the Cause of God* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1997) p. 462. There are few written sources of information on Enoch Olinga's life, especially on his life before becoming a Baha'i. Most information remains in the memories of his Baha'i friends and of his remaining family. For biographical information, I have relied upon Harper's short, hagiographic account; on the official memorial essay written by Ruhiyyih Khanum Rabbani after his tragic murder, "In Memoriam: Enoch Olinga," in *The Baha'i World: An International Record* (1979–1983), Volume 18 (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1986) pp. 618–635; a short entry that contains some primary material in Hugh C. Adamson and Philip Hainsworth, *Historical Dictionary of the Bahá'í Faith*, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, No. 17 (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 1998); an internet article apparently using information gleaned from some original research, Richard Francis, "Enoch Olinga: Hand of the Cause of God, Father of Victories," 1998 (http://bahai-library.com/?file=francis_olinga_biography); and on a memorial video program produced by Olinga's family, "Enoch Olinga: Knight of Baha'u'llah, Father of Victories, Hand of the Cause of God," (Wilmette, Ill.: Olinga Productions Association, 2000). Also, my own article, Anthony A. Lee, "Enoch Olinga," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Revised Edition, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 278–79.

[36] His mother's name was Eseza Iyamitai. She was also an Anglican Christian. (Francis, "Enoch Olinga," p. 1)

[37] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/19/91. I was able to interview Samiheh (Mama-jan) Banani carefully on two occasions, March 15, 1991 and March 19, 1991, and to speak to her informally at other times during that same period when she happened to be visiting her son and daughter-in-law, Amin and Sheila Banani, in Santa Monica, California. Most of the following account of Enoch Olinga's Baha'i activities in Uganda is based on her recollections.




Map 5.2. Uganda, Showing Teso District

Source: U.S. Department of State <www.state.gov/p/af/ci/ug/>.

in Soroti and in Mbale, he eventually moved to Kampala. During this time, he married his first wife, Eunice, with whom he eventually had six children.

In 1951, Olinga was dismissed from his job because of heavy drinking. Depressed and disillusioned with his rather desolate life, he began to study the Baha'i religion with 'Ali and Violette Nakhjavani, Baha'is from Iran who had only recently arrived in Uganda. It is significant, perhaps, that the initial Baha'i influences on Enoch Olinga were not American, but Iranian. The Baha'is of Iran at this time were, generally speaking, less focused on the organizational and administrative aspects of Baha'i practice than their American co-religionists were. This broader, Persian outlook, with its deeper historical perspective and greater flexibility in matters of detail, may have provided more opportunity for the rapid conversion of Africans that Olinga was soon able to initiate in Uganda. The Baha'i community in Iran, after all, had been well established in rural parts of that country for a hundred years and had experienced rapid growth in villages in earlier periods of its history.[38] The much younger American Baha'i community had no such experience behind it.

'Ali and Violette Nakhjavani with their daughter, and along with Violette's parents—Musa and Samiheh Banani—had settled in Kampala, Uganda, as part of the two-year Africa Plan (1951–1953) given to the British National Spiritual Assembly by Shoghi Effendi.[39] One of the goals of that plan was to establish small groups of Baha'is living in at least three British colonies in Africa.[40] This could be accomplished only by convincing Baha'is living in other parts of the world to move to those areas as 'pioneers.'[41]

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[38] This rapid growth probably took place in the early years of the Babi era, of course. Nonetheless, this Babi history was fully incorporated into Iranian Baha'i consciousness as part of its heritage. For a comprehensive listing of the 'localities' (cities, towns, and villages) where Baha'is lived in Iran in 1950, see *The Bahá'í World, 1946–1950*, Vol. 11 (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1952) pp. 542–63.

[39] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/19/91.

[40] See Chapter Four of this book. Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 245–93 passim; Adamson and Hainsworth, *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 333–35.

[41] As mentioned in Chapter Four, these teachers were never called 'missionaries,' which Baha'is regarded as a Christian term to be avoided. Ideally, Baha'i pioneers were supposed to be self-supporting, and they were encouraged to find jobs or establish businesses in the places where they settled. However, many pioneers (including African pioneers) were sent monthly allowances from Baha'i sources in Europe and America. Musa Banani and his family were wealthy, and they were indeed able to support themselves in Uganda and give financial support to other pioneers in Africa.

Musa Banani was a wealthy businessman who had been living in Tehran. He was an Iraqi Jew by birth and had converted to the Baha'i religion in 1912. Samiheh, his wife (universally known as Mama-jan among the Baha'is), was born in a ('Muslim') family that had been Baha'i for three or four generations. Although he spoke no English, and she very little, the couple left Iran in December 1950, with the intention of becoming Baha'i pioneers. They made their way to England. From there, they wrote to Shoghi Effendi for directions on where they should settle. He replied that they should go to Africa and take their daughter and son-in-law with them. 'Ali and Violette were English-speakers, and it is probably for this reason that the Baha'i leader thought it advisable that they accompany the Bananis to the British colonies in Africa. 'Ali was, at that time, a prominent Baha'i in Iran, a pioneer to Shiraz, and a member of the Iranian National Spiritual Assembly. The couple had a three-year-old daughter.

The Nakhjavanis left Iran, on the instructions of Shoghi Effendi, and traveled to England to join the Bananis. The family first journeyed to Dar es Salaam.[42] From there, they moved on to Nairobi, but eventually settled in Kampala on August 8, 1951. Since they could find no suitable house to rent, they were forced to live in rooms in a hotel for some time. Their lodging was the initial obstacle to their Baha'i work. They had a difficult time making contact with Ugandans, because they were not allowed to bring Africans into their European hotel. 'Ali was the teacher in the group, and he would go to the park to meet people and teach them about the Baha'i religion. He had little success. Nonetheless, after seven months in Uganda, he had two African converts who had become Baha'is. Enoch Olinga would be the third.

It is difficult to know exactly what message 'Ali Nakhjavani delivered when teaching the Baha'i faith to Africans. It seems that most people he met were Christians, and that 'Ali's teaching was oriented around the Bible. Mrs. Banani recalled that he had compiled a notebook of prophecies from the Bible that he would use to convince his students that the coming of the Baha'i prophets had been foretold in the Bible. And since there were a few Muslims who had become interested in learning about Baha'i teachings, he also made reference to prophe-

[42] Mrs. Banani indicated that they were also able to pay the expenses for a British Baha'i, Philip Hainsworth, to come with them as a pioneer to East Africa. Hainsworth settled in Nairobi.

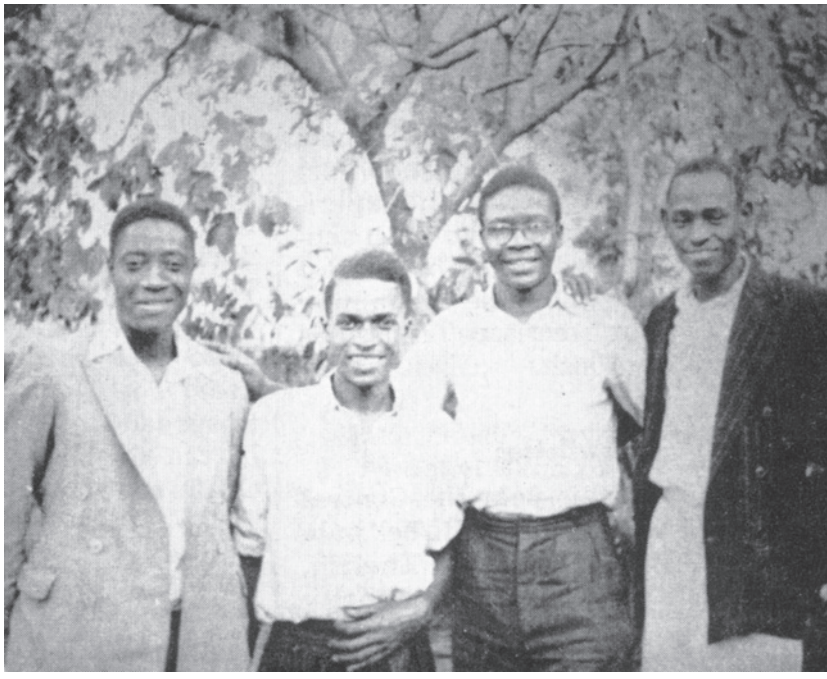

Illustration 5.2. Four New African Baha'is, Kampala, Uganda, 1952

The first four African Baha'i converts. Enoch Olinga is third from the left. Source: *Bahá'í News*, No. 260 [October 1952] p. 7.

cies that he had compiled from Muslim scriptures.[43] One Muslim man became a Baha'i, as a result. [44]

[43] This curious practice of teaching the Baha'i religion by placing prophecies from the Bible and prophecies from the Qur'an side by side—almost without distinction—was carried on by Iranian pioneers to East Africa in later years. I received a manuscript of this kind, in the mid-1980s, compiled by Nabil I. Hanna, a pioneer to Tanzania at the time. Hanna was an Egyptian Baha'i of Coptic Christian background. It consisted entirely of quotations from the Bible and from the Qur'an on a variety of subjects, including prophecy. The juxtaposition was seamless. Quotations from the Qur'an and from other Muslim sources followed biblical passages with the implicit assumption that all of them should be regarded as Holy Scripture. Since quotations from Muslim scriptures were not regarded as suitable for an American, Christian audience, they were removed in the editing process. The book that resulted was published as: Nabil I. Hanna, *Bible Proofs: A Fireside Aid for Teaching Christians* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988).

[44] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/15/91. A short time later, the Muslim convert murdered his wife in a crime of passion and served a prison sentence. But he remained

The fundamental claim of the Baha'i religion to be proven by Bible prophecy would be, at least in the Western Baha'i community, that Jesus Christ had returned to earth in the person of Baha'u'llah. But it is not clear that Nakhjavani went that far in teaching African Christians. I have seen no reference to Baha'is making any claim that Christ had returned in materials from that period, nor is such an idea mentioned in the personal reminiscences of Baha'is who were in Africa at that time. Possibly, such a central Baha'i doctrine is simply taken for granted, and so not discussed explicitly. On the other hand, 'Ali may have used his Bible (and Qur'an) references to demonstrate that these are the 'Last Days,' a time foretold when there would be moral decay and decadence—a time in need of religious renewal. That would certainly have presented a less shocking message to Christians, and it would have taken advantage of familiar Christian themes. In this case, 'Ali's message may have been similar to the message of Christian Revival in Rwanda and Tanganyika discussed earlier in this study.[45] As we will see, at this time new Baha'is were not asked to withdraw from Christian congregations, resign their church memberships, or separate themselves from their established religious communities. So, we might suppose that the idea of Baha'u'llah as 'Christ returned' was not, therefore, the central message being taught and did not form the core of Baha'i identity—even if it were mentioned in passing by Baha'i teachers.

In any case, Enoch Olinga's conversion marked a turning point in the growth of the Baha'i religion in Uganda, and later in Cameroon. Evidently, once he became a Baha'i he accomplished a radical change in his habits and in his life. The Baha'is recall that he stopped drinking altogether[46] and began to study Baha'i books avidly. The change in his conduct and attitude was so remarkable that his wife, Eunice—who had, of course, suffered on account of his previous behavior—was convinced that she should become a Baha'i also. She did, but the marriage remained an unhappy one. Olinga had a Catholic friend, Peter Motavazi, who had worked with him at his government job and knew

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a Baha'i and was responsible for a number of conversions within the prison. (Ibid.) I do not know whether his converts were Muslims or Christians.

[45] See Chapter Three.

[46] As in Islam, the consumption of alcohol and other intoxicating drinks is forbidden by Baha'i religious law. See Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i Aqdas, K119; *A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1973) p. 47; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 214.

him well. He also looked into the Baha'i teachings after he observed the changes in Olinga's conduct and became the fifth convert to the Baha'i faith in Uganda.[47]

At the time that Olinga decided to become a Baha'i, the official procedure for enrollment in the Ugandan Baha'i community was for the new believer to write a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Britain. This letter would be a declaration of faith and a request to be admitted to the Baha'i community. The same procedure for enrollment (that is, writing a letter to a Baha'i institution) was observed in Britain and in the United States. However, such a requirement limited converts to those who were literate and fairly well educated. It also left acceptance of new converts under the control of the British Baha'is. In April 1952, there were enough Baha'is living in Kampala to permit a local Spiritual Assembly to be formed there. Olinga became a member of that body, as did the Bananis and Nakhjavanis. Thereafter, the local Assembly in Kampala accepted all new enrollments.[48] This was certainly a necessary condition for what was to come.

Shortly after the Kampala Assembly was elected, and only two months after Enoch Olinga had become a Baha'i, he returned to his home village of Tilling to visit his family. He spoke to people about the Baha'i religion in the towns where he stayed along the way. Some of these wanted to become Baha'is, and Olinga sent postcards back to the Iranian pioneers in Kampala telling them about the new believers. When he got to Teso district, he also talked about the Baha'i teachings and found that many people wanted to become Baha'is. Olinga's father, and also an uncle, became Baha'is. It seems that all of the new Baha'is were from Olinga's lineage or clan.[49]

Soon, Olinga wrote to ʻAli Nakhjavani and asked that he come to join him in Tilling, because there were many new Baha'is there. They had questions about the religion that Olinga could not answer. Nakhjavani joined him, and he returned to the area many times in later months on such teaching trips. Initially, there were about 90 converts.[50] Very soon, hundreds of Teso people had become Baha'is. These conversions

[47] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/19/91.
[48] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/15/91.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Harper, *Lights*, p. 464.

represented the first substantial entry of sub-Saharan African peoples into the Baha'i religion since its nineteenth-century beginnings.

## *A Gentle Message*

It is hard to know what teachings Enoch Olinga brought to Teso as the Baha'i message and why so many people were willing to become Baha'is so quickly. One factor was, of course, not the message but the messenger. Olinga was an educated and successful son of the area, a member of an important Christian family, and—no doubt—a symbol of prosperity, urbanity, and modernity in his home village. We also know that all those who became Baha'is in Olinga's area were Christians (Anglicans) and that they continued to attend their churches. He did not ask that they break their established religious affiliations, at this point. Mrs. Banani recalled that even some Christian 'ministers' (perhaps meaning, catechists or teachers) became Baha'is and continued their professions.[51]

Mrs. Banani explained that Shoghi Effendi had instructed the pioneers that they should not insist on strict obedience to Baha'i laws and regulations on the part of the new African Baha'is.[52] The Bananis and the Nakhjavanis apparently took this to mean that they should not ask the new Baha'is to leave their churches.[53] Therefore, the new Baha'is accepted a message that they did not find incompatible with their current Christian identities or with regular church attendance.

Very early on, it had become international Baha'i policy to adapt teaching methods in Africa to the cultures into which they were introduced. Baha'i pioneers were urged to make a distinction between elements of the Baha'i teachings that were to be regarded as 'central' or 'pivotal' and those that were 'controversial' and 'secondary.' It was considered best that teachers avoid discussing secondary matters with new Baha'is and those interested in the religion, if at all possible. Therefore, the Baha'i message that was used to attract new believers was to be a

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[51] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/15/91.

[52] Ibid.

[53] There is no reason to believe that their understanding of Shoghi Effendi's instructions was mistaken. Musa and Samiheh Banani had made a pilgrimage to the World Center of the Baha'i religion in Israel in February of 1952. During their visit they had many opportunities to speak to Shoghi Effendi personally about Baha'i activities and affairs in Africa and to receive his verbal instructions.

broad and general one focused around principles such as the unity of all religions and the oneness of the human race—rather than around the specifics of Baha'i law or teachings that might be in conflict with traditional African customs.

This was made explicit in an article entitled "Teaching in Africa: Laws, Minor Observances and Secondary Aspects of the Faith," published in Britain in March 1951.[54] The article reads in full:

> In teaching we should try to avoid controversial issues in the beginning, the Guardian once wrote. As we Baha'is know, many of the secondary elements of the religion are controversial, for opinions may legitimately differ about them and indeed do differ, as people adhere to the laws of particular dispensations of the past.[55]
>
> There are two good reasons for not volunteering information on the secondary elements of the Baha'i Faith, such as monogamy,[56] avoidance of alcohol, the equality of the sexes,[57] treatment of criminals,[58] etc. First, it is not tactful to shock people and fail to approach them from their own point of view. Second, a long way has to be traversed before people are

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[54] In *Africa News*, No. 3 (March 1951) issued by the Africa Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles. Copied in the Valerie Wilson papers.

[55] Here, "dispensations of the past" refers to all religions before the advent of the Baha'i religion—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.

[56] At this point in Baha'i history, monogamy was enforced by Baha'i law within the community (as it is today), though this had not always been the case. See Anthony A. Lee, "Choice Wine: The Kitab-i Aqdas and the Development of Baha'i Law" presented at the Fifth Annual Colloquium on Scriptural Studies (1995), Baha'i Studies Institute, Wilmette, Illinois. Published at: http://bahailibrary.org/conferences/wine.html. Baha'u'llah had only recommended monogamy in his book of laws, the Kitab-i Aqdas, while legally limiting Baha'i men to no more than two wives. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i Aqdas, K63) Baha'u'llah himself married three wives. Even today, polygamous men who convert to the Baha'i religion, regardless of the number of their wives, are permitted to keep all of them (although they are forbidden to take any more).

[57] It is curious that the principle of the equality of men and women could be listed here as one of the 'secondary elements' of the Baha'i faith. Since 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to the West in 1911–1912, it had been regarded by Baha'is around the world as one of the basic principles of the religion. Nonetheless, because it was apparently 'controversial' in Africa, it could be passed over. This suggests, of course, that the real concern here is the avoidance of controversy when teaching the Baha'i faith to Africans, rather than any serious classification of Baha'i teachings as primary or secondary on their merits.

[58] In his book of laws, the Kitab-i Aqdas, Baha'u'llah seems to fix harsh punishments for murderers, thieves, and arsonists. These provisions have been a source of controversy both within the Baha'i community and with Christian detractors of the Baha'i teachings. Baha'u'llah, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, K45, K62, and K73, with notes and comments. Cf., William McElwee Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1974), especially Chapter 8 and Appendix I (which is Miller's translation of the Kitab-i Aqdas into English).

ready for the full bounties of Baha'u'llah's wise provision, as is shown by the fact that many laws are not yet promulgated for compulsory observance in the West.[59]

There is a strong likelihood that some of the laws of Baha'u'llah run directly counter to African practice, since ideas of the value of women and of property, for example, are founded on tribal custom and are of immemorial age.[60] To upset such a long held practice deliberately at the beginning with any individual might well evoke collective opposition and perhaps set back the advance of the Cause by decades.

On the other hand we must not allow ourselves at any time to compromise the Teachings or prevaricate if we are asked a direct question on a particular. In such a case it is best to turn up the passage in Scripture or Esslemont,[61] and quote it or show it to the enquirer, preferably on his own.

We are wisest if we seek first to demonstrate and teach the meaning of Baha'i living, the pivotal teaching of the oneness of humankind, the idea of progressive religion, and the central issue of Who the Bab and Baha'u'llah were. We thereby give prominence to the dynamic, constructive principles of the Cause which are best in keeping with the needs and spirit of the age.

We can do no better than try to bear in mind the example of the Master ['Abdu'l-Baha] as given by the Guardian: "Wise and tactful in His approach, wakeful and attentive in His early intercourse, broad and liberal in all His public utterances, cautious and gradual in the unfolding of the essential verities of the Cause, passionate in His appeal yet sober in argument, confident in tone, unswerving in conviction, dignified in [his] manners,"[62] and suit the message to the susceptibilities and varying capacities of our hearers.

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[59] At that time, there was no official translation of Baha'u'llah's (Arabic) Kitab-i Aqdas into English, or into any other language. Therefore, most of the provisions and regulations to be found in that book were not considered to be 'binding' on the Baha'is of the West. To a large extent, this was true in the 'East,' as well. But the Iranian Baha'is were expected to observe some religious ordinances (e.g., ablutions before obligatory prayers, observance of the formal period of engagement before marriage, payment of a 'dowry' to the bride by the bridegroom, etc.) which were unknown to Baha'is in other countries. For the most part, such ordinances are still not practiced by Baha'is in the West.

[60] Of course, such customs—although they were supposed by Europeans to be of 'immemorial age'—can often be shown to be of quite recent origin.

[61] The comprehensive and (at the time) ubiquitous book of introduction to the Baha'i teachings, John E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950 [originally, London: Allen & Unwin, 1923]).

[62] From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i world, September 24, 1924, published in *Bahá'í Administration* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1928 [1974]) pp. 69–70. The quotation is not referenced in the copy that I have of this article.

This approach to delivering the Baha'i message was widely understood and had more or less been observed by Baha'i teachers (as the quotation from the Guardian indicates) from the early years of the twentieth century. Therefore, its specific application to the new African situation was not much of an innovation. This is, no doubt, how Enoch Olinga was taught, and he certainly followed these prescriptions. As we will see below, he was able to make a sharp distinction between essentials and 'inconsequentialities' in pursuing his future Baha'i work in West Africa.

It is worth noting how radically this gradual Baha'i approach to teaching and conversion differs from the stereotypical and widely reported missionary approach to evangelism. As Middleton notes, Christian missionaries often assumed a much more hostile and confrontational stance toward African cultures and traditional beliefs. Rather than downplaying or concealing Christian opposition to traditional practices, missionaries generally advertised such incompatibilities, demanded immediate conformity from new converts, and regarded traditional customs as 'heathen,' the antithesis of Christian standards.[63] Baha'i practice, on the other hand, was much more accepting of local cultures and practices, even when they were in conflict with basic Baha'i religious principles. Baha'i teachers expected a much more gradual conformity to the laws and ideals of the religion on the part of their new believers and new Baha'i communities, a process that might span generations.[64]

## *The Successful Teaching*

There is no record of the content of Enoch Olinga's teaching—specifically what he said and what message he brought—in his home area of

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[63] Middleton, "Christianity in a Ghanaian Town," pp. 3–6. See also, T. O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) especially, Chapters 7 and 8.

[64] In this sense, the Baha'i attitudes may be closer to Islamic modes of thought than to Christian ideas of conversion. The introduction of Islam into Africa and its spread into various societies was generally a gradual process that spanned generations. See Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, "Introduction: Patterns of Islamization and Varieties of Religious Experience among Muslims of Africa" in idem., eds., *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000) pp. 1–18; see especially, Edward A. Alpers, "East Central Africa," pp. 303–325.

Teso, nor of ʻAli Nakhjavani's for that matter. The often-told stories of the beginnings of the Baha'i religion in East Africa are simply silent on this point. While the story of Enoch Olinga's conversion in Kampala was told in great detail, with miraculous overtones and suggestions—the story of his teaching successes in his home village contains no such richness or contour.[65] Olinga himself wrote no memoir. Therefore, information about his life has been written from the perspective of the Baha'is who knew him, and they were not direct witnesses to the early events in Teso that brought so many new believers into the Baha'i religion. So, we can only surmise what the details of this teaching activity must have been.[66] Whatever they were, this teaching certainly established the background for Enoch Olinga's Baha'i work in later years in British Cameroons, where he was able to repeat his conversion successes.

A tape of a talk given by Olinga many years later may provide some clues to his approach to the Baha'i message. In 1970, Olinga was in the United States visiting Baha'i communities. While he was in Seattle, he made an audiotape to send greetings to the Baha'is of California, Nevada, and Wyoming. It appears, from what he says, that he had intended to visit Baha'i communities in those states, but he had been forced to change his plans. Therefore, in lieu of a visit, he was sending them a tape.[67]

This recorded talk was addressed only to Baha'is and was not intended for teaching purposes. Nonetheless, it reflects Olinga's understanding of the Baha'i faith. For example, I am struck by the Christian flavor of the talk and his use of language and terms that can be found in Christian discourse—'sisters and brothers,' 'seek the will of the Lord,' 'grace,' etc. Such language would not normally be

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[65] Cf. Harper, *Lights*, pp. 463–64; Rabbani, "In Memoriam: Enoch Olinga," *Bahá'í World*, Vol. 18, pp. 619–20.

[66] Samiheh Banani told me directly that Enoch Olinga had come up with a new way of teaching the Baha'i faith that resulted in many conversions. But she was not sure about exactly what he said or how he did it. She was not present when he taught the Faith outside of Kampala; and during the early years, her English was not good and she could not understand everything he said when she heard him teaching in the city. Nonetheless, she insisted that it was Enoch Olinga who had developed the new teaching techniques, and not her son-in-law, ʻAli Nakhjavani. (Interview, 3/15/91.) ʻAli Nakhjavani is still alive. But he has given no detailed account of these matters. I have met him on a number of occasions, but I have never been able to question him about his pioneering activities. He has declined to write a memoir of these events.

[67] Talk of Enoch Olinga in 1970 from Seattle to the Baha'is of California, Nevada, and Wyoming. Don Addison papers.

expected in Baha'i talks of any kind in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Olinga speaks in a very slow, impressive manner—in a deep voice that would be appropriate from the pulpit. The urgency of his remarks is almost millenarian in tone. Part of the talk reads:

> Beloved sisters and brothers. Let us seek the will of the Lord. And let us win the favor and grace of the Blessed Beauty [Baha'u'llah], so that he may through his grace and purpose reveal to us the time of his grace.
>
> In the Hidden Words, the Lord says: "Magnify my Cause that I may reveal unto thee the mysteries of my greatness…"[68]
>
> We are fighting war, dearly loved ones. The army of light is engaged in a battle against the dark forces of ignorance, injustices, prejudice, and unbelief. The battlefield has many fronts. May each of us participate in this colossal enterprise. Africa is awaiting you with wide-open arms. Come one, come all, and win victories for the Blessed Beauty. This is the day to make mention of the Lord, to celebrate his praise, and serve him.
>
> We are at war, dear sisters and brothers. The general, said the beloved Master ['Abdu'l-Baha], does not love most the man in the back of the ranks. He loves most the man in the front.
>
> *Ya Baha'u'l-Abha!*[69] *Ya Baha'u'l-Abha! Ya Baha'u'l-Abha! Allah-u Abha!*[70]

Despite the distance of time and place, we might imagine that a similar message would have seemed attractive to a Christian audience in Olinga's home village of Tilling in 1952, eighteen years earlier. After all, without the references to Baha'u'llah, and without the Arabic phrases, virtually the same exhortations to righteousness and renewal might be heard in Christian churches any Sunday morning. But, at the same time, the message was new—and the Arabic words and references (even if only the word 'Baha'i') would have been an unmistakable mark of its newness. Promises of righteousness and renewal are always seductive, after all, especially in exotic dress. This may have been the kind of message that Olinga brought to the people of Teso, and later to Cameroon, a message that was immediately attractive and successful in creating new Baha'is. At least among the local men.

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[68] Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words, Arabic #41. This short book of scripture has been published in many editions around the world, e.g., Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939 [1994].

[69] Arabic: O Thou Glory of the All-Glorious One. An invocation of the name of Baha'u'llah, also used as a prayer.

[70] Arabic: God, the Most Glorious. A distinctively Baha'i invocation of the name of God. (As distinct from the Muslim *Allah-u Akbar*). It is used as a greeting and a departing salutation among Baha'is, and sometimes as a prayer.

It is known that almost all of the new Baha'is in Teso were men. One report indicates that, in late 1952, when there were 72 new Baha'is in Teso and Mbale (the districts where Enoch Olinga was teaching)—only one of these was a woman, Olinga's sister-in-law.[71] Apparently, men found the new religious message appealing, and women did not. Such an extreme gender imbalance indicates that men and women in rural Uganda had very different responses to the Baha'i faith as it was being taught. It is not clear why this should have been the case, but the differences were radical.[72]

Ruhiyyih Khanum Rabbani (the wife of Shoghi Effendi) has related a story she heard in this regard.[73] Before the Africa Intercontinental Conference was held in Kampala in February 1953, Shoghi Effendi had sent a sum of money to Musa Banani that he directed should be used to bring a number of the new Baha'is from Teso to attend the conference as his guests. She goes on:

> …this meant that about 200 people would be brought down by bus from this north-eastern province, which was a trip of over 200 miles. 'Alí Nakhjavání went to escort the friends and invite them to be Shoghi Effendi's guests. When the men got on the buses many of the women wept and wailed because they were afraid their men were being taken off to be slaves![74]

It appears that all of those who made the trip to Kampala, the '200 people,' were men. They had apparently accepted the Guardian's invitation in large numbers. The women, on the other hand, had very

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[71] *Bahá'í News*, No. 262 (December, 1952) p. 12.

[72] Of course, Middleton's arguments (above) may be suggestive in explaining the attraction of men to the Baha'i religion. The Christian church may have been regarded as a woman's concern. But this is only a suggestion. More historical work certainly needs to be done on the specific events in Uganda.

[73] She was not there and did not attend the conference she refers to. However, she was in a unique position to hear first-hand accounts of these events.

[74] Rabbani, "In Memoriam: Enoch Olinga," *The Bahá'í World*, p. 620. I do not think that the women literally believed that their husbands were being taken into slavery, since the slave trade had largely ended by the early part of the twentieth century—slavery continued on the Kenyan coast until 1907, however, and on the coast of German East Africa (Tanganyika) until 1919. (Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya and Richard Pankhurst, *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* [Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003] p. 11.) Slave trading was nonetheless the idiom which the women could use to express their anxieties, and it was obviously still an evocative trope within their society. In any case, it is clear that the women expressed their loud protest to the trip. It is just as clear that the men were willing to defy the objections of the women and dismiss lingering fears of slave trading.

Illustration 5.3. Leroy Ioas greeting the New Baha'is at the Intercontinental Baha'i Teaching Conference, in Kampala, Uganda on February 12–18, 1953

Mr. Ioas, an American Baha'i, had been appointed by the Guardian of the Baha'i faith, Shoghi Effendi, as a Hand of the Cause of God in 1951. He was asked, along with several other Hands of the Cause, to attend this conference. Shoghi Effendi asked Mr. Ioas specifically to greet each one of the new Baha'is from Teso individually on his behalf at this conference.[75] All of the African men here appear to be young. There are a couple of women in the group, one standing to the right of Mr. Ioas. Source: *Bahá'í News*, No. 267 [May 1953] p. 7.

different ideas, and their behavior as the men boarded the buses indicates they had deep suspicions about the Baha'is that the men apparently did not share. A review of the photographs of the Kampala conference published at the time confirms that almost all of the Africans who attended were men.[76]

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[75] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/19/91. Mrs. Banani actually said in this interview that Mr. John Ferraby, a British Hand of the Cause, had been asked to perform this task. But Mr. Ferraby did not attend the conference. She probably simply misspoke and intended Mr. Ioas.

[76] *Bahá'í News*, No. 266 (April, 1953) p. 12; No. 267 (May, 1953) p. 7; No. 268 (June, 1953) p. 10. In the last photograph, a few African women and girls are prominently seated in front of the group. However, these are probably not Baha'is from Teso. (See photo below.)

Illustration 5.4. Africa Intercontinental Conference, Kampala, Uganda, February 12–18, 1953

Prominent Baha'is from all over the world attended the conference, particularly Iranians and Americans. In this formal photograph, they seem to be posed in the front with some Ugandan girls. The new Baha'is from Teso are standing in the back rows. Source: *Bahá'í News*, No. 268 [June, 1953] p. 10.

### *Impact on the Worldwide Baha'i Community*

It is impossible to overestimate the impact that the news of Enoch Olinga's teaching success in Uganda had on the Baha'i leadership and on Baha'is around the world. It is important to remember that the number of Baha'is in every country in the world—with the exception of Iran—was very tiny indeed. By 1950 in all of Britain, Baha'is could count only 340 adult believers.[77] In the United States, there were

[77] Phillip R. Smith, "The Development and Influence of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in Great Britain, 1914–1950" in *Community Histories*, ed. by Richard Hollinger,

Illustration 5.5. New Baha'is from Teso, February 1953

Nathan Olei is shown here translating from English into Teso at the Intercontinental Baha'i Teaching Conference held in Kampala, Uganda, February 12–18, 1953. Note that all of the new Teso Baha'is in the photograph are men. All appear to be relatively young. Source: *Bahá'í News*, No. 267 [May 1953] p. 7.

perhaps 6,000 Baha'is, at that point—and fewer than 10,000 Baha'is in the entire world outside of Iran.[78] So, Olinga's initial conversion of some 90 new believers[79] in Teso was regarded as a stunning achievement. The subsequent enrollment of hundreds of new Ugandan Baha'is

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p. 204. In 1944, there had been fewer than 150 Baha'is in Britain (ibid.). The growth of the Baha'i community there in the six years that followed seemed triumphant to the Baha'is. The message that Shoghi Effendi sent to the National Baha'i Convention for Britain in 1950, referring to this growth in numbers and the successful completion of their six-year goals, was enthusiastic. The telegram reads in part: HEART FLOODED JOY STRIKING EVIDENCE BOUNTIFUL GRACE BAHA'U'LLAH ENABLING VALOROUS DEARLY LOVED BAHA'I COMMUNITY BRITISH ISLES TRIUMPHANTLY CONCLUDE FIRST HISTORIC PLAN HALF CENTURY BRITISH BAHA'I HISTORY. HERALD AUTHOR FAITH [the Bab and Baha'u'llah] CENTRE COVENANT ['Abdu'l-Baha] CONCOURSE ON HIGH [i.e., the heavenly hosts] ACCLAIM SUPERB COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENT IMMORTALIZING OPENING DECADE SECOND BAHA'I CENTURY UNPRECEDENTED HISTORY FAITH BRITISH ISLES UNRIVALLED ANNALS ANY BAHA'I COMMUNITY EUROPEAN CONTINENT . . . HISTORIC PLEDGE BRITISH BAHA'I COMMUNITY NOBLY REDEEMED. TRIBUTE MEMORY MARTYR PROPHET FAITH WORTHILY PAID. . . . (quoted in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 245)

[78] William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, p. 112.

[79] One official report states that the initial count of new believers was 72. (*The Bahá'í World*, Vol. 12 [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956] p. 53.)

seemed virtually miraculous.[80] The previous fifty-some years of Baha'i teaching in the West had accustomed the Baha'i community to much more modest progress. Suddenly and unexpectedly, there was a new kind of rapid conversion that raised the potential of establishing large Baha'i communities in Africa—communities that might surpass in numbers the Baha'i communities in Britain and in the United States.

There had been a period of rapid and large-scale conversion to the Babi/Baha'i religions in Iran in the nineteenth century. But that was now in the distant past, remembered as the 'Heroic Age' of Baha'i history.[81] By the mid-point of the twentieth century, there were approximately 200,000 Baha'is living in Iran.[82] This number probably represented a considerable decrease from earlier decades.[83] Of course, the definition of what it meant to be a Baha'i in Iran had changed from earlier times, as well. The history of the changing nature of Baha'i identity has yet to be written.[84] But we can discern that the meaning of being a Baha'i

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[80] Cf., for example, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 460: "The progress made in Africa is truly miraculous…" (from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles, dated 30 August 1951); also Leroy Ioas's letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, n.d., published in "The Continent of Africa is Pre-eminent," *Bahá'í News*, No. 280 (June 1954) p. 5.

[81] A term coined by Shoghi Effendi and used often in his writings. See, for example, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944) pp. 3, 35, 46, 50, 55, and passim.

[82] Baha'is today claim "some 300,000" in Iran. (*The Bahá'í World, 2002–2003* [Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2004] p. 248.)

[83] Dr. Roy Mottahedeh (presently at Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) is a Baha'i. He told me in personal conversation, some years ago, that while he was conducting research in the International Baha'i Archives, in Haifa, Israel, he had come across a census that had been taken of the Baha'is in Iran shortly after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha (1921). This count had been carried out at the direction of 'Abdu'l-Baha's sister, Bahiyyih Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf (the daughter of Baha'u'llah). who assumed de-facto leadership of the Baha'i community for a few years after her brother died. (Although there was no change of official leadership, and the new Guardian spent at least a part of each year in the Holy Land, the Greatest Holy Leaf directed the day-to-day activities of the international Baha'i community, acting on behalf of Shoghi Effendi since he spent most of his time in retreat in Europe.) This census, according to Dr. Mottahedeh, indicated that there were half a million Baha'is in Iran at that time. The International Baha'i Archives are, unfortunately, closed to most researchers. But the figure of one-half million (and even one million) has been discussed and disputed online and in print. See Peter Smith, "A Note on Babi and Baha'i Numbers in Iran," *Iranian Studies,* Vol. 15 (1984) pp. 295–301.

[84] For a preliminary discussion of this process as it evolved in Iran, at least with regard to Jewish conversions to the Baha'i faith, see Mehrdad Amanat, "Negotiation

in Iran transformed over time. Beginning as what many regarded as a purely personal (and often secretly held) theological conviction, Baha'i identity moved to an open identification with a distinct confessional community within the context of Islam; later to a balance of negotiated multiple identities; then further, to a rejection (or at least a partial repudiation) of previous religious identifications. Later, being a Baha'i implied an acceptance of a new religious organization and structure with all of its myriad institutions, laws, principles, leaders, officials, and policies. Similarly, in the West, the meaning of what it meant to be a Baha'i evolved from its nineteenth century beginnings.[85] I suggest that the meaning of Baha'i identity continued to evolve in the locus of Uganda in the early 1950s. That is, a new definition of Baha'i membership and identity was created.

As we discussed in Chapter Four, in 1950 the Baha'i religion was virtually unknown in Africa. Beyond Egypt and Sudan, where there were small Baha'i communities—counting scores of believers, not hundreds—there were only about 25 Baha'is living in seven dispersed localities on the whole continent.[86] The first efforts of Shoghi Effendi to encourage the dispersal of Baha'is to Africa were not ambitious. His two-year plan initiated in April 1950, later known as the Africa Plan, called on the National Spiritual Assemblies of Egypt, Britain, and the United States to cooperate to send Baha'i pioneers to Africa. The British Baha'is were initially asked to establish only a minimum Baha'i presence (presumably, one pioneer) in any three British territories in sub-Saharan Africa within the two-year goal.[87] The American Baha'is

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Identities: Iranian Jews, Muslims and Baha'is in the Memoirs of Rayhan Rayhani (1859–1939)," Ph.D. dissertation (UCLA, 2006), published as *Jewish Identities in Iran: Resistance and Conversion to Islam and the Baha'i Faith* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

[85] Cf. Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations," mentioned in Chapter One.

[86] *The Bahá'í World, 1946–1950*, Vol. 11 (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1952) pp. 520–24; Arthur Hampson, *The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Hawaii, 1980) p. 382. Hampson's numbers are from 1945, but there was little change by 1950.

[87] The Guardian's telegram to the British National Baha'i Convention of 1950 reads, in part: HOUR STRUCK UNDERTAKE PRELIMINARY STEPS IMPLANT BANNER FAITH AMIDST AFRICAN TRIBES...SIGNALISING ASSOCIATION VICTORIOUS BRITISH BAHA'I COMMUNITY WITH SISTER COMMUNITIES UNITED STATES EGYPT DESIGNATED LAY STRUCTURAL BASIS BAHA'I ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER SCALE COMPARABLE FOUNDATION ALREADY ESTABLISHED NORTH SOUTH AMERICAN EUROPEAN AUSTRALIAN

were asked to assist with this task. It is clear that the intention of these first tentative goals was not to enroll large numbers (or even small numbers) of new African Baha'is. Rather, it was to establish Baha'i outposts of pioneers, and eventually to form local Spiritual Assemblies, that would act as hubs for the later diffusion of Baha'is into Africa. Shoghi Effendi had relied heavily on this strategy of diffusion in earlier Baha'i teaching plans in Europe, in Britain, and in Latin America.[88] His messages indicate that he, like everyone else, expected that the Africa Plan would initiate the same slow and painstaking pattern of growth that had characterized Baha'i activity on other continents.

Such expectations were universal. When the first Spiritual Assembly of Kampala was elected in April 1952, there were twelve Baha'is in the country, including the Iranian, and some American, pioneers. That Assembly soon adopted the goal of doubling its membership—from twelve to twenty-four—as part of a seven-month plan. This was regarded as a daring, ambitious, and extremely challenging ideal. No one anticipated the events of the coming months for which Enoch Olinga became the catalyst.

On January 5, 1953, Shoghi Effendi sent out the following dramatic telegram message addressed to "Entire Baha'i World":

> REJOICE SHARE BAHA'I COMMUNITIES EAST WEST THRILLING REPORTS FEATS ACHIEVED HEROIC BAND BAHA'I PIONEERS LABOURING DIVERS WIDELY-SCATTERED AFRICAN TERRITORIES, PARTICULARLY UGANDA HEART CONTINENT, REMINISCENT ALIKE EPISODES RELATED BOOK ACTS, RAPID DRAMATIC PROPAGATION FAITH INSTRUMENTALITY DAWN-BREAKERS [i.e., early heroes and martyrs of Baha'i history] HEROIC AGE BAHA'I DISPENSATION. MARVELLOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS SIGNALISING RISE ESTABLISHMENT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER FAITH LATIN AMERICA ECLIPSED. EXPLOITS IMMORTALISING RECENTLY LAUNCHED CRUSADE EUROPEAN CONTINENT SURPASSED. GOAL SEVEN-MONTH PLAN INITIATED KAMPALA ASSEMBLY AIMING DOUBLING TWELVE ENROLLED BELIEVERS OUT-STRIPPED. NUMBER AFRICANS CONVERTED COURSE LAST FIFTEEN MONTHS RESIDING KAMPALA, OUTLYING DISTRICTS, PROTESTANT CATHOLIC PAGAN BACKGROUNDS, LETTERED UNLETTERED, BOTH SEXES, REPRESENTATIVE NO LESS SIXTEEN TRIBES, PASSED TWO HUNDRED MARK.

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CONTINENTS . . . OBJECTIVE FORMATION NUCLEI THREE DEPENDENCIES BRITISH CROWN EITHER EAST WEST AFRICA . . . (*Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 245–46.)

[88] Hampson, "The Growth and Spread," p. 375.

> EFFULGENT RAYS GOD'S TRIUMPHANT CAUSE RADIATING FOCAL CENTRE FAST AWAKENING CONTINENT, PENETRATING ACCELERATING RATE ISOLATED REGIONS UNFREQUENTED WHITE MEN, ENVELOPING THEIR RADIANCE SOULS HITHERTO INDIFFERENT PERSISTENT HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES, CHRISTIAN MISSIONS, CIVILISING INFLUENCE CIVIL AUTHORITIES. NO LESS NINE LOCALITIES QUALIFIED ATTAIN COMING RIDVAN ASSEMBLY STATUS WITHIN SINGLE TERRITORY LONG-SLUMBERING CONTINENT....
>
> DESIRE PAY SPECIAL TRIBUTE STRENUOUS EFFORTS EXERTED ALI NAKHJAVANI SETTING EXAMPLE DEDICATION, FREEDOM PREJUDICE FELLOW PIONEERS LABOURING INHOSPITABLE SURROUNDINGS CONFRONTED MANIFOLD FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES....[89]

The language of the telegram was both ecstatic and triumphant, as Shoghi Effendi gave news to the Baha'i world of the rapid and unanticipated growth of the Baha'i faith in Africa. He compares these events first to the early growth of Christianity chronicled in the Book of Acts, and then to the history of the rapid growth of the religion in its 'Heroic' early years in Iran (1844–1850), which Western Baha'is would be familiar with through reading the Guardian's own book, *The Dawn-Breakers*.[90] He announces that this progress has 'surpassed,' even 'eclipsed,' the teaching successes achieved in South America and in Europe—thereby focusing the attention and admiration of the worldwide Baha'i community on Africa.

Some of the romantic assumptions found in this particular message are rather jarring to contemporary sensibilities. The references to "isolated regions unfrequented by white men" and to African souls indifferent to humanitarian efforts, to Christian missions, and to the "civilizing influence" of colonial authorities are certainly mistaken. At least in the case of Uganda, the first Baha'is were—after all—Christians, and had been for generations. They were familiar enough with white missionaries, colonial officers, and other European influences.

It appears that Shoghi Effendi was simply misinformed on these points. To his credit, such stereotypical images of Africa quickly disappeared from his vocabulary. Perhaps the Baha'i pioneers provided him with better information about the new believers in Uganda.

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[89] Quoted in *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 290–91. Punctuation added.

[90] *The Dawn-Breakers* was translated, edited, and reworked from the original Persian by Shoghi Effendi. It had been published in the United States in 1932.

Perhaps the new Baha'is asserted themselves. In any case, almost immediately, once there was a substantial number of indigenous African Baha'is, it appears that a new logic of fraternity and equality fell into place. References to the "dark continent" and to "backward peoples," seen in earlier correspondence, were no longer found in the Guardian's discourse.[91]

Moreover, Olinga's success in converting hundreds of his Teso countrymen to the Baha'i religion seems to have infused a new optimism into the international goals and plans that were being developed by Shoghi Effendi at the Baha'i World Center. Almost immediately, he recognized the new African Baha'is as competent to be regarded as a source of pioneers who might accelerate the diffusion of the Baha'i religion to other parts of Africa.[92] With this new resource, the goals of Shoghi Effendi's plans for Africa became considerably more ambitious than they had been before. In his message addressed to the first African Baha'i Intercontinental Conference, held in February 1953, he called on Baha'is to settle in thirty-three African countries and terri-

[91] *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 251. See also, p. 245 and *Citadel of Faith*, p. 98. In his message addressed to the Africa Intercontinental Conference, February 1953, where the majority of those attending were new African Baha'is, the Guardian wrote: "I feel particularly gratified by the substantial participation in this epoch-making Conference of the members of a race dwelling in a continent which for the most part has retained its primitive simplicity and remained uncontaminated by the evils of a gross, a rampant and cancerous materialism undermining the fabric of human society alike in the East and in the West, eating into the vitals of the conflicting peoples and races inhabiting the American, the European and the Asiatic continents, and alas threatening to engulf in one common catastrophic convulsion the generality of mankind [referring to the possibility of nuclear war]…." (quoted in *Bahá'í News*, No. 265 [March, 1953] p. 1). But here there has been a change of emphasis. Now Africans are praised for their supposed 'simplicity' and their presumed freedom from materialistic corruption, rather than seen as remote, uncivilized, and resistant to change. This theme of pristine simplicity, spiritual receptivity, and freedom from materialism as related to Third-World peoples would become a familiar one in Baha'i discourse for many decades afterward. In the same message, the Baha'i Guardian suggests that the growth of the Baha'i faith in Africa augurs well for "a corresponding multiplication of the number of representatives of the yellow, red and brown races of mankind…" within the Baha'i community, which will bring more ethnic balance to the "world-embracing Baha'i Fellowship." It appears that the Baha'i community now discovered that, not just Africa, but all developing parts of the world might be a fertile field for new converts. This insight would have enormous significance in the decades to come.

[92] Shoghi Effendi to National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, 13 May 1953, in *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 299. Cf. Remarks of Leroy Ioas—reporting the Guardian's words—to the new African Baha'is at the Africa Intercontinental Conference, February 1953, in *Bahá'í News*, No. 267 (May, 1953) p. 7.

tories where no Baha'is yet lived. That number is eleven times greater than the goals assigned to the British Baha'i community just two years earlier. It seems clear that Baha'i conversions in Uganda had broadened the vision and the ambitions of the entire Baha'i world.

CHAPTER SIX

# BRITISH CAMEROONS: A MOVEMENT DEVELOPS

This chapter will follow the successful Ugandan teacher, Enoch Olinga, to the British Cameroons, as the first Baha'i pioneer to establish himself in that country. It was his continuous successes that created the largest Baha'i communities in West Africa. I will, therefore, look in some detail at the growth of the Baha'i religion in the British Cameroons, especially within the Basel Mission. I will ask what the secrets of its success were, and look briefly at ways in which the religion was 'Africanized' in this Cameroonian context.

Finally, I will look at evidence of the Basel Mission's response to these developments, which was surprisingly mild. Nonetheless, missionary testimony provides a needed perspective on Baha'i expansion. It also provides hints concerning the nature of that expansion, which in important ways seems similar to traditional patterns of religious renewal found in the larger West African culture.

In response to Shoghi Effendi's call at the Intercontinental Conference in Kampala, February 12–18, 1953, for additional pioneers to disperse to various locations in Africa, three of the new African Baha'is in Uganda volunteered to move to areas where no Baha'is lived. Enoch Olinga left Uganda to settle in the British Cameroons. To make this journey, he separated from his wife and children, leaving them in the care of the Bananis, who agreed to support his family in his absence.[1] Indeed, the separation may have been a part of Olinga's motivation to leave Uganda. He was no stranger to travel, in any case, but his marriage was a troubled one.[2]

All of the new African volunteers left Kampala by motorcar with 'Ali and Violette Nakhjavani, in August of 1953. Samson Mungono was dropped off in Kamina, in the (then) Belgian Congo; Max Kenyerezi

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[1] Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/15/91.

[2] In 1957, he returned to Uganda to collect his family. His wife and children relocated to Cameroons at that point. But the reconciliation lasted only three years. Although his wife was a Baha'i, she was not an educated woman, and this was a major source of discord. His wife returned to Uganda in 1960, and the couple were divorced in 1961. (Harper, *Lights of Fortitude*, pp. 467–68; Interview with Samiheh Banani, 3/15/91.)

was settled at Brazzaville, in (then) French Equatorial Africa. Finally, after two months of travel, the Nakhjavanis and Olinga reached Mamfe District, in the British Cameroons, in October 1953.[3] Olinga would remain in Cameroon for the next ten years and establish a new religious movement there.

The Nakhjavanis and Olinga continued south from Mamfe to Victoria, in British Cameroons. However, they were apparently concerned that the association of an Iranian couple with a black man from Uganda would attract unwanted attention from the colonial authorities. The Nakhjavanis had, of course, experienced persecution of Baha'is in Iran, and that experience may have influenced their decisions. They were certainly more cautious in this situation than American Baha'i pioneers would have been. In any case, Olinga was dropped off at a government rest house in Victoria, while the Nakhjavanis continued on to find lodging in Duala. Soon, Olinga found a room in the home of David and Esther Tanyi in Victoria. The Tanyis were Christians attached to the Basel Mission. David Tanyi would eventually become one of Olinga's first converts.[4]

Olinga's arrival appears to have caused some stir in Victoria, which was only a small town at the time. Everyone knew that he was a foreigner. But since it was regarded as impolite, even taboo, to ask any stranger where he was from, Olinga became the object of much mystery and speculation. It seems that he did not volunteer any information about himself. Oscar Njang was a taxi driver in Victoria at this time, and he was hired to bring Olinga from the rest house to the Tanyi home. Njang says that Olinga was traveling with a heavy box of luggage, and he was convinced that it must be filled with money! Some people believed that Olinga must be an American because he spoke English with a foreign accent. We can imagine that rumors of a rich American Negro moving into town must have attracted a lot of attention.[5]

Olinga began his Baha'i teaching cautiously. He invited people to 'tea parties' in his room in the Tanyi home. At this time, in Cameroon,

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[3] Ruhiyyih Khanum, "In Memoriam: Enoch Olinga," pp. 621–22.

[4] Ibid., p. 622.

[5] Interview of Oscar Njang, National Spiritual Assembly of Nigeria, 1/92. Cf. also, interview of Addison with Jacob Tabot Awo, 1/2/83, National Baha'i Center, Limbe (Victoria), Cameroon. Don Addison papers. (Awo suggests that Olinga would answer questions about his origins, if asked.)

tea was considered a refreshment of the white man. It was also thought to be expensive. So, the picture of a foreigner generously entertaining his guests with free tea only added to Olinga's mystique as a kind, wealthy, and sophisticated man. His tea parties were popular and were attended by men, women, and children.[6] He gradually introduced the subject of the Baha'i religion at these parties and began to gain converts. It would seem that his tea parties were a re-creation of the Baha'i meetings he had attended in the Banani home in Kampala.[7] We might imagine that his message was the same one that he had delivered successfully to villagers in Teso in Uganda. But now he was finding converts in an urban setting. All of the new Baha'is were Christians of the Basel Mission.

Since he was highly qualified, Olinga had no trouble finding a job with the British colonial administration. He was quickly hired by the Cameroons Development Corporation as a typist, and then as a clerical assistant. Eventually, he became the private secretary of one of the managers. This lasted for only a short time, however. At one point, his boss drafted a letter and gave it to him to type. It seems that Olinga made some minor corrections to the text, and this enraged the manager who felt that he had no right to do this. The general supervisor of the office realized that the manager was wrong and apologized to Olinga for the manager's behavior. He offered to have Olinga transferred to another office. But at this point, Olinga felt it best to resign to be sure that the same problem would not be repeated. Perhaps this was again a reflection of his extreme caution when dealing with authorities.[8]

In any case, by the end of the year he had quit his job. By then, however, he had made a place for himself in the community and apparently lived off the kindness and generosity of his friends and supporters. Naturally, he was living in one room in the Tanyi's house with an ordinary, simple African lifestyle, so he had few expenses.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Serving tea in one's home has been an essential ingredient of Iranian hospitality since the nineteenth century, and it continues to be so today. Baha'i meetings in Iran were famous for serving generous quantities of tea. Muslim clerics would sometimes attribute Muslim conversions to the Baha'i religion to the magical qualities of the tea that was served at these meetings. Tea is also typically served at Baha'i meetings (especially at firesides, i.e., introductory meetings) in the United States.

[8] Interview of Samuel Bakare with Don Addison, 12/6/82, Afrikpo, Nigeria. Transcript of an interview of Samuel Njiki with Don Addison, 12/27/1982, Baha'i Center, New Town, Limbe (Victoria), Cameroon.

Samuel Bakare recalled that: "After that, he had no job. He stood as a pioneer." But he was able to survive because: "By then, he has got so many friends."[9]

His resignation seems to have freed up his time, and he became more bold and open in teaching the Baha'i religion.[10] Within a very short time, Olinga was able to convert a small circle of Baha'is to his new message. Almost immediately, Shoghi Effendi, at the World Center of the religion in Israel, saw this little group of men[11] in Victoria, Cameroon, as a new source of pioneers who might spread the religion to other countries in Africa. Within a few months, he asked Olinga to find volunteers among his new converts who would be willing to move to five territories in West Africa that had no Baha'is living in them. The new Victoria Baha'is responded enthusiastically.[12] By April 1954, David Tanyi had moved to French Togo, Edward Tabe to British Togoland, Samuel Njiki to French Cameroons, Benedict Eballa to Ashanti Protectorate, and Martin Manga to the Northern Territories of Nigeria.[13]

Eight months after his arrival in Cameroon, Olinga wrote the following letter to Shoghi Effendi in Israel:

> [14 June 1954]
>
> My Well-Beloved Guardian,
>
> I must first thank my Well-Beloved Guardian for continually praying for my spiritual welfare as well as of those who are now serving the Ancient Beauty [Baha'u'llah], and for the Beloved Guardian's guidance, without which the present spiritual achievements of our beloved Faith would have not been possible.
>
> Furthermore, I very humbly beg to assure my dearly loved Guardian of my unreserved loving devotion to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh,[14] and my submissiveness to every one of the Guardian's admonitions in the way

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[9] Interview of Samuel Bakare with Don Addison.

[10] Ibid.

[11] All of the early converts were men, with the exception of David Tanyi's wife.

[12] Enoch Olinga to Haifa (Shoghi Effendi?) in "Letter from Baha'i Brother in Africa," *Bahá'í News*, No. 280 (June 1954) p. 10. 'Ali Nakhjavani returned to the British Cameroons briefly to encourage the new Baha'is to become pioneers. He probably also brought money to distribute for their support.

[13] Rabbani, "In Memoriam," in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. 18, p. 623.

[14] The accent marks that have been added above the letters in the spelling of the name 'Baha'u'llah' in the published version of this letter, as well as the other diacritical marks used in the published version, indicate that the text has been edited. It is not likely that Olinga would have used diacritical marks in his correspondence, no matter how formal it was. There are probably other editorial additions or deletions, as well.

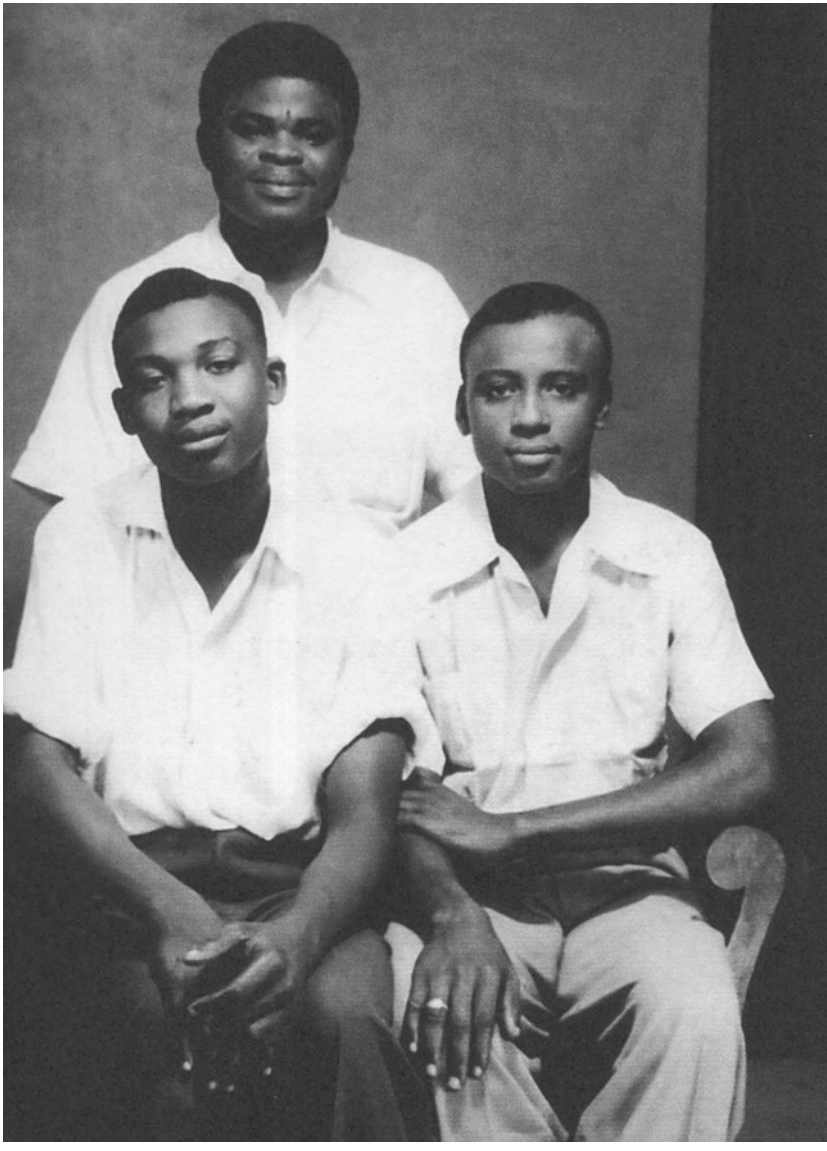

Illustration 6.1. Three Cameroonian Baha'is

David Tanyi (standing) and Benedict Eballa (left), both early pioneers to Ghana, with Samuel Njiki (right), pioneer to French Cameroons. Source: *The Bahá'í World, 2004–2005: An International Record*, p. 50.

of promoting the fundamental interests of our Faith, which is now overshadowing the entire world. May I also be permitted to express the joy and delight which the letters received by the individual Bahá'ís from the Beloved Guardian have brought to the hearts of all the believers of this nascent community. These letters, like the fervent prayers of the Beloved Guardian, do wonders here. Our daily prayer and hope is that God, the All-Compelling, the All-Protecting may prolong the days of our Beloved Guardian's unbroken service to His Cause and mankind.

As my Beloved Guardian may be aware, an Assembly was elected here last Ridván, and through the Beloved's [Baha'u'llah's] Grace the coming Ridván may bring us a number of local Assemblies. I have just returned from a two weeks' teaching trip which took me right inside the country where I had quite thrilling and exciting experiences; especially when I had to live among the villagers who believe in witchcraft and potency of 'Juju' (fetish, I think) [sic] practices. Quite terrifying it was to hear very frightful stories told by 'Juju' adherents, but with much confidence in Bahá'u'lláh I was never deterred. Fortunately enough a few of them were enabled to see the Truth of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh—may my life, soul and spirit be a sacrifice unto the lowliest of His servants!

It may please my Beloved Guardian to know that ten new centres [towns or villages where Baha'is live] have been opened to the Faith, making a total of twelve centres in British Cameroons. We want to develop all the eleven towards Assembly status before the next Ridván.[15] We really need our Well-Beloved Guardian's special prayers for success in this somewhat ambitious project.

We receive very encouraging letters from all our five pioneers who have gone to open virgin territories. They all seem very happy there and are waiting for the doors of success to be opened for them. We all hope and pray that in time they will find jobs they can do. This is not only because they will thereby be able to support themselves, but also because they will feel so much more happy and settled when they have jobs of work to do. They will take root and feel they belong. We always encourage them to remain there as much as we can when we write to them.

My Well-Beloved Guardian may be interested to know that the number of believers is increasing very rapidly in British Cameroons. The present situation is accepted believers, up to 30; declarations, up to 40; centres now opened to the Faith, 12.

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[15] In fact, nine local Spiritual Assemblies were formed in British Cameroons at Ridvan (April 20–21, a Baha'i holy day) 1955. These were in the towns of: Victoria, Moliwe, Likomba, Lobe, Tiko, Bakebe, Mbehektok, Mbonge, and Tombel. At that point, there were 180 Baha'is in the territory. (Questionnaire, Report of the Cameroons Teaching Committee, November 1955, sent to Valerie Wilson by Enoch Olinga. Valerie Wilson papers.) The formation of a Spiritual Assembly in these towns indicates that there were at least nine adult Baha'is living there at the time of the formation. Exact numbers of enrolled adults are given in the report.

Please, my Beloved Guardian, I know how much busy you are, therefore I shall not dwell on inconsequentialities.

I very reverently beg to send my loving greetings and best wishes to my Beloved Guardian and all members of [his?] family.

With warmest Bahá'í Love from Victoria believers,

I beg to remain,
my Beloved Guardian,
Your devoted servant,
Enoch Olinga[16]

The first thing that strikes the reader about this letter is Olinga's use of English. He is fully conversant in the language of Baha'i piety, and he uses it profusely. Every opportunity is taken to express his devotion and submission to the Guardian of the Baha'i faith, Shoghi Effendi. Indeed, such language would appear to the secular reader to be extreme. Even in some Baha'i contexts, in the West at least, it might be regarded as such. But for Iranian Baha'is it would appear quite normal, and even expected. For Iranian Baha'is, expressions of faith, devotion, and subservience that may appear to outsiders to be overly pious are simply thought of as polite. Any Iranian believer writing to the Guardian would be expected to adopt a similar tone and to confess obedience and loyalty to his leadership. Of course, Olinga was taught the Baha'i faith by ʻAli and Violette Nakhjavani, who were Persian Baha'is with little experience in the West. When considering Olinga's work in Cameroon, it is also important to remember that this Iranian influence was paramount—as opposed to the American approach to all things Baha'i, which dominated in most of the rest of West Africa and which, while always careful, sincere, and correct, tended to be considerably less effusive in the use of language.

Beyond this, Olinga's full competence in the English language demonstrates his high level of education. He is fully literate in the most formal English letter-writing prose, such that the unexpected lapses in grammar ("how much busy you are") seem out of place.[17] In any case, the letter demonstrates, as no other published document does, how fully equipped Olinga was to assume a position of leadership within

[16] Published in Rabbani, "In Memoriam," in *The Bahá'í World*, Volume 18, pp. 623–24.

[17] Of course, as mentioned above, I do not have access to the original of this letter and am working from a published text. I do not know how much the original may be been edited for publication.

the African (and the worldwide) Baha'i community. He was certainly a part of the mission-educated elite that was rising to positions of leadership all over Africa in the 1950s.

The letter includes some numerical information. In June of 1954, the number of Baha'is in British Cameroons was officially 40, with some 30 more applications for enrollment in hand.[18] This is not counting the five who had left for other countries. Clearly, the growth accomplished was impressive in Baha'i terms, and it would become more so.

Olinga states that he had just returned from a two-week trip to the interior area of Cameroon. Therefore, we can assume that he had no regular job that kept him tied down in Victoria by this time. "He stood as a pioneer"[19]—a full-time Baha'i teacher, which was certainly an important factor in his success.

The attitudes that he expresses toward villagers practicing African Traditional Religions ('Juju') may seem surprising, at first. However, Olinga had been born into a strict Christian family in Uganda, and these attitudes are precisely those taught in Christian schools and churches. This lack of familiarity with non-Christian religions demonstrates how completely Olinga was working from a Christianized perspective. Without question, he finds the pagan villagers he encounters benighted, and he appears genuinely frightened by their capacity to perform evil. He imagines himself struggling against this evil, with the protection of Baha'u'llah. Such a vision certainly recapitulates Olinga's father's early work as an Anglican teacher in Uganda. The correspondence is almost exact. As his father had found successful methods of teaching Christianity to non-Christians, so Olinga would be successful with his Baha'i message.

As this letter shows, Olinga had had little contact with Africans who were not Christians. He operated within the society of Christian townspeople, and his Baha'i teaching was directed towards them. The normal path of conversion then would be from the Basel Mission into the Baha'i community.

Most of all, however, the very narrow range of concerns that Olinga chooses to bring to the Guardian's attention is instructive. His letter is focused almost exclusively on the accomplishment of the goals of Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Crusade. All other matters are regarded

[18] Declarations of faith had to be accepted officially in Britain, at this point.
[19] See footnote 9 above.

as 'inconsequentialities.' He speaks primarily about the formation of local Spiritual Assemblies, the opening of 'localities' to the faith, and about the Cameroonian pioneers to various countries in West Africa and their need to become self-supporting. Olinga mentions his teaching trip into the interior without much detail, and he reports on the number of Baha'is in Cameroon almost as an afterthought, at the end of the letter.

Such a strict focus on the needs of the plan would have been seen as admirable by Baha'is at the time. The Ten-Year Crusade was, after all, the top priority of all Baha'i teaching activity anywhere in the world. However, by deeming everything else as inconsequential (the 'secondary' matters of official Baha'i policy), a wide area of discretion and variation is left open to Olinga and to other African Baha'is. Such matters as the methods of teaching and conversion, the content of the Baha'i message, the understanding (or misunderstanding) the new converts had of their religion, their knowledge of and adherence to Baha'i law, their relationship to their former churches, their maintenance of traditional religious practices, their openness about their new beliefs, their expectations of material aid, their willingness to be publicly identified as Baha'is—all these, and more, are 'inconsequentialities' left to the individual discretion of the new believers. Including, it can be noted, the existence of any underground movement of Baha'is within the Basel Mission. This is, after all, a very wide swath, which must have made the yoke of the Baha'i religion seem very easy indeed.[20]

In recognition of his teaching successes in Cameroon, Olinga was invited by Shoghi Effendi to make a pilgrimage to the Baha'i holy shrines in Israel during February of 1957.[21] He was the first black African Baha'i to make such a journey. Interestingly, Shoghi Effendi saw to it that he was lodged in the Oriental Pilgrim House[22] in Haifa, where he would be separated from the Americans and Europeans, who would be staying in the Western Pilgrim House. While Olinga was in Israel, Shoghi Effendi took the unusual step of giving him the honorific title of Abu'l-Futuh (Arabic: Father of Victories), intended to

[20] Matt. 11:30. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

[21] I assume that Olinga was invited to visit the Guardian in the Holy Land at least partially as a reward for his teaching successes. But there may have been other reasons, as well. Shoghi Effendi may have wished to take the opportunity to gather first-hand information about the new Baha'is in Africa, for example.

[22] The Baha'i hostel house normally used by Iranian pilgrims. This might suggest that Shoghi Effendi was attempting to isolate Olinga from American influences.

increase his stature among Baha'is. Shortly thereafter, in October of 1957, the Guardian informed the Baha'i world that he had appointed Olinga as a 'Hand of the Cause of God,' one of a cadre of his special deputies with responsibilities for the propagation and protection of the Baha'i religion. This assured him an honored place in the international Baha'i community. At the age of 31, he was the youngest of the Hands—and having converted to the religion only four years earlier, he was also their most junior member. One month after that, Shoghi Effendi died suddenly without a successor, and the Hands of the Cause collectively assumed de-facto leadership of the religion until 1963, when the international Baha'i community elected its governing Universal House of Justice. During the six-year 'interregnum'[23] Olinga served at the highest rank of Baha'i leadership.[24]

With no American or Iranian pioneers present in Cameroon, and without international constraints, Olinga was virtually free to invent new forms of Baha'i community. This would soon result in the rapid spread of the Baha'i faith as a religious movement in some rural areas. At the end of 1957, Olinga was the most senior Baha'i in West Africa. After the unexpected passing of Shoghi Effendi, he found himself serving on the highest Baha'i councils in the world. He stood in a powerful position to negotiate with the wider Baha'i community on

[23] Within the Baha'i administrative system, the Hands of the Cause—being deputies of the Guardian—had no authority. Authority was invested in elected institutions, the National Spiritual Assemblies and local Spiritual Assemblies—and, of course, in the Guardian, as the head of the faith. The unexpected death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 created a complete absence of legitimate international authority within the Baha'i community. The Hands of the Cause, being the only international institution of the Baha'i faith that existed, assumed leadership of the religion on an ad-hoc basis. But they remained keenly aware of their lack of charisma and legitimacy. When the Universal House of Justice (ordained by Baha'u'llah in his writings) was elected by the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world in 1963, legitimate international authority was reestablished. (See Ruhíyyih Khánum, Preface to *The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963* [Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1992] pp. xix–xxii.)

[24] Olinga eventually returned to East Africa to live in his native Uganda. He traveled extensively as a Baha'i teacher and was especially loved by Baha'i communities around the world. His journeys took him to all parts of Africa, to India, Southeast Asia, Australia, Japan, the Pacific Islands, North and South America, and Europe. When the Baha'i faith was banned in Uganda in 1977, by the Idi Amin government, Olinga remained there, caring for the (closed) Baha'i Temple properties and encouraging the persecuted Baha'is. In 1979, after the fall of the regime, but while Uganda was still in a chaotic state of near anarchy, armed gunmen attacked Olinga's house in Kampala. Their motives are unknown. Olinga, his (second) wife, Elizabeth, and three of their children were brutally murdered. Their bodies were interred near the Baha'i Temple in Kampala.

behalf of West African Baha'is and to shelter their autonomy and local practices.

### *An African Faith in Cameroon*

In November 1955, Enoch Olinga, acting as secretary of the Cameroons Teaching Committee, sent a report of Baha'i membership to Valerie Wilson. The fourteen-page report lists the name of every Baha'i in the territory, the officers of every local Assembly, and their postal addresses. Appended to the report is Olinga's response to a questionnaire that Wilson had sent to Baha'i communities in all areas of West Africa. Some of Olinga's answers to the questions read as follows:

8. **Total number of localities in the Territory:** 22.
9. **Total approximate number of adult believers in the territory:** 157.
10. **Total approximate number of native African adult believers residing in the territory:** 157.
11. **Total approximate number of youths:**[25] 23, all African.
12. **Names of the African tribes represented in the community of the territory:** Bayenge; Igbo; Bassa; Bakossi; Bakweri; Ibibio; Keaka; Douala; Bametta; Calabar; Ekoi; Ekwe; Barombi; Balundu; Ngollo-Batanga; Bali; Bafia; Yoruba; Bafuti; Mbonge; Bana; Efik; Bafow; Bambele; Bafang; Nkambe.[26]

A little more than a year after Olinga's letter to the Guardian, the number of Baha'i converts had more than quadrupled. There were now 180 Baha'is in Cameroons, adults and youth.[27] Despite the looseness of the term 'African tribes' used in the questionnaire, it is clear that the community was diverse—and that a number of the Baha'is were Nigerians. More importantly, all of the Baha'is were Africans. The Cameroonians were pursuing their development as a community without the influence of American or Iranian pioneers. This is the only Baha'i community in West Africa that could make such a claim. Free of foreign influence, the Cameroonians achieved a growth that no

[25] Baha'is between the ages of 15 and 20.

[26] "List of Voting Baha'is, arranged alphabetically. British Cameroons, West Africa—1955" and "Cameroons Teaching Committee. Questionnaire: November, 1955" by Enoch Olinga. Valerie Wilson papers.

[27] Children were not counted.

other Baha'i community in West Africa could rival. At the same time, they developed distinctively African forms of the religion.

Just exactly what these new forms were is hard to discern from the written documentation. Occasionally, however, one can catch a glimpse. The testimony of Jacob Tabot Awo provides an example.

In the Baha'i literature on Cameroon, David Tanyi is named as Olinga's first convert in the country.[28] However, Awo claims that he was the first to declare his belief, by about two hours. Awo was a Christian in the Basel Mission, and his father had been a catechist.[29] In an interview in 1983, he mentioned that he had gone to Mamfe District to teach the Baha'i faith at Olinga's direction. He says:

> …So the Faith was spreading very smooth. But accepting the Faith, the Guardian says that when he [Enoch Olinga] comes here, it is a Banyangi man who will accept the Faith before. Everybody is supposed to follow—to come into the Faith. The Guardian foretold this when he was sending Enoch Olinga here in West Africa. But he said he will settle in Cameroon, in Victoria. Then a Banyangi man will accept this Faith. Then everybody will come in, to accept the Faith. He said: Without so, nobody will accept the Faith. And it was true. But I know the Guardian knew that. You know, they have spiritual eyes to see. How did he know that a Banyangi man who saw a vision is around, and then he must come to accept the Faith?
>
> Question: And that's you?
>
> Answer: And that's me. So, I accepted the Faith and then remembered my vision, which I was fourteen years old, and then I saw this vision of Christ. Then I accepted the Faith here in 1953, September.[30]

Since this prophecy attributed to Shoghi Effendi is recorded nowhere else, it is highly unlikely that it is authentic.[31] We are probably safe in supposing that the Guardian was altogether unfamiliar with the Banyangi people before they entered the Baha'i religion in Cameroon in 1953. Yet, the prophecy was important to Awo. He relates it in a matter-of-fact way that suggests that it was a commonplace belief, at least among the Banyangi Baha'is. The story not only reinforces

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[28] Harper, *Lights of Fortitude*, p. 466; Rabbani, "In Memoriam," in *The Bahá'í World*, Volume 18, p. 622.

[29] Interview of Addison with Awo, 1/2/83, National Baha'i Center, Limbe (Victoria), Cameroon. Don Addison papers.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Shoghi Effendi never claimed any ability to predict the future, in any case.

Awo's claim to be Olinga's first convert in Cameroon; it also sacralizes Banyangi ethnic identity—making it the center of a prophecy. The Banyangi are the people who will lead the way; they will precede all other ethnicities in the country as Baha'is.

The story suggests, perhaps, that there was some ethnic tension within the Baha'i community of Cameroon, at least in 1983, when the interview was collected. Why there should be a need to assert the primacy of the Banyangi at that time is unknown. But more importantly, here we get a glimpse of an Africanized Baha'i prophecy. It is a prophecy that is useful in valorizing the Baha'i Guardian as a seer, validating Awo's claim to be the first believer, and encouraging Banyangi ethnicity.

### *The Banyangi as Religious Specialists*

The Banyangi[32] homeland lies well north of the coast of Cameroon, in the central area of the basin of the upper Cross River, but still within the forest region. During the 1950s, under United Nations Mandate, this area formed part of Mamfe Division within the British Cameroons. In 1953, the population of Banyangi numbered some 18,000 people, with another 5,000 or so living away from their home area, mostly as workers in the coastal south. At that time, some 32% of the adult male population had left the Banyangi lands in search of jobs elsewhere.[33] Therefore, it was not unusual to find Banyangi men working in Victoria.

The Banyangi have a reputation as religious specialists in Cameroon, especially with regard to protection against witchcraft.[34] During the 1920s, for example, the anti-witch movement Afam (Nfam) was carried to the coast by the Banyangi.[35] During the period of Baha'i expansion,

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[32] The people are also referred to in various sources as: Benyenge, Nyang, Bayangi, Bayang, Banyang, Banjangi, Manyang, Kenyang, etc.

[33] Malcolm Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People* (London: Tavistock Publication, 1969). This book is a full political ethnography of the Banyangi. However, it pays little attention to religious beliefs and manages to omit reference to Christianity or to the Basel Mission altogether. The Baha'i religion among the Banyangi also goes unmentioned.

[34] Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997) p. 276, n. 15.

[35] Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons* (London: International African Institute, 1956) p. 104.

between 1955 and 1957, the Bakweri villages of the Cameroon coastal region paid the Banyangi to bring Obasi Njom associations and rituals to their communities to eradicate the spread of witchcraft.[36]

In mid-1955, the Bakweri village of Lisoka became agitated by accusations of witchcraft. The village agreed to send a delegation to Banyangi country, 150 miles away, with £30, to import Obasi Njom and to establish new associations to use it. The Banyangi men agreed, but their price was £100. The money was quickly raised. The Banyangi specialists came in August, with their medicines and a masked dancer. Many villagers were accused of witchcraft and confessed. The village was cleansed. The Banyangi trained some thirty doctors to practice Obasi Njom. It was a great weight off the village mind.[37]

By 1956, word of Obasi Njom had spread from village to village in Bakweri country. Enthusiastic delegations were sent to the Banyangi from a large number of villages. The Banyangi established the new movement all over the area. It was rumored that about £2000 was paid to Banyangi specialists who instructed the Bakweri in the cult. The new association continued its work of witch cleansing through 1956 and 1957, eventually coming into conflict with the Christian churches and with the law.[38] We will discuss the significance of such periodic witchcraft eradication movements in African societies below.

### *The Political Climate*

The Baha'i religion was introduced into the British Cameroons during a time of tremendous political upheaval. In 1952, the area was officially a United Nations Trusteeship, and it was administered by the British as part of Nigeria. By 1962, British Cameroons had broken its Nigerian connections, had voted for independence, and had reunited with the French-speaking part of the country to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. This period witnessed the formation

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[36] Edwin Ardener, "Witchcraft, Economics, and the Continuity of Belief" in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970) pp. 151–53; Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, pp. 149–50. For a full discussion of the Obasi Njom association in the Banyangi homeland, see Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*, pp. 210–213.

[37] Ardener, "Witchcraft, Economics…," p. 152.

[38] Ibid. See also, Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, pp. 149–50. Geschiere notes that although Obasi Njom waxed and waned, it was still being actively practiced in the area in 1988.

of the first political parties, the administration of the area as a quasi-autonomous region, and later as a fully autonomous region, voting in a number of United Nations plebiscites, battles between parties and politicians, the coming of independence, and reunification with the former French Trusteeship.[39]

These events resulted in profound legal and political changes within a territory that had been, in effect, a British colony. Nonetheless, the growth of the Baha'i community in the British Cameroons during these same years reveals the shallowness of these changes—at least in terms of the social and religious life of the country. While some people were intensely occupied with an emerging political life and the rise of Cameroonian nationalism, others (and perhaps the majority of the people in the country) remained uninterested and unconcerned with these developments. In all of the records of the Baha'i community that I have located, in all of the correspondence of the Baha'is, in all of the interviews that have been conducted with early believers, I have been unable to locate even one mention of the nationalist struggle that was taking place in the British Cameroons in the 1950s and 1960s.

Partially, this can be seen as a consequence of the rapid and rather superficial politicization of the country. The struggle for independence in the British Cameroons had more to do with freeing the country from Nigerian domination and ridding the territory of Igbo merchants and businessmen than with anything else.[40] More importantly, however, this may be a result of the aggressively non-political stance that, by the 1950s, had developed within the Baha'i community itself.

In 1932, Shoghi Effendi wrote a long letter to the American Baha'i community in which he insisted that all Baha'is should withdraw from partisan political activity. This letter was written in the most emphatic language and reads in part:

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[39] The standard political history for this period is Victor T. LeVine, *The Cameroons, from Mandate to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964). I have also consulted Tazifor Tajoche, *Cameroon History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Buea, Cameroon: Education Book Centre, 2003); Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon, 1884–1985: A Hundred Years of History* (Yaounde: Navi-Group Publications, 1987); Tambi Eyongetah and Robert Brain, *A History of Cameroon* (London: Longman, 1974); Martin Njeuma, *Introduction to the History of Cameroon in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1989); and Victor Bong Amaazee, *The Eastern Nigerian Crisis and the Destiny of the British Southern Cameroons, 1953–1954* (University of Yaounde Press, 2000).

[40] See LeVine, *The Cameroons*, Chapter 8, pp. 193–214.

> I feel it, therefore, incumbent upon me to stress, now that the time is ripe, the importance of an instruction which, at the present stage of the evolution of our Faith, should be increasingly emphasized, irrespective of its application to the East or to the West. And this principle is no other than that which involves the non-participation by the adherents of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, whether in their individual capacities or collectively as local or national Assemblies, in any form of activity that might be interpreted, either directly or indirectly, as an interference in the political affairs of any particular government. Whether it be in the publications which they initiate and supervise; or in their official and public deliberations; or in the posts they occupy and the services they render; or in the communications they address to their fellow-disciples; or in their dealings with men of eminence and authority; or in their affiliations with kindred societies and organizations, it is, I am firmly convinced, their first and sacred obligation to abstain from any word or deed that might be construed as a violation of this vital principle. Theirs is the duty to demonstrate, on one hand, the nonpolitical character of their Faith, and to assert, on the other, their unqualified loyalty and obedience to whatever is the considered judgment of their respective governments.
>
> Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen.[41]

The letter goes on for more pages in this vein. By the 1950s, participation in politics of any kind had become a kind of taboo among Baha'is in the United States.[42]

The principle of non-participation in politics was applied to Africa from the beginning of Baha'i expansion there. It was, in fact, one of the few prohibitions that was enforced vigorously upon the emerging

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[41] Shoghi Effendi, "The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh," a letter addressed to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, March 21, 1932, published in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 63–64.

[42] See Sen McGlinn, *Church and State: A Postmodern Political Theology* (Leiden: published by the author, 2006) pp. 214–15 and 221, n. 1, for the development of Baha'i policy in this area. *Church and State* is McGlinn's Master's Thesis from the University of Leiden, distributed as Vol. 19 of the series *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* by Kalimát Press. See also my own assessment, *Circle of Unity*, pp. viii–xviii.

African Baha'i communities.[43] As a result, the Baha'i religion spread only among apolitical segments of the population. Whatever limitation this may have placed on Baha'i expansion in other parts of West Africa, it appears that it did not create a barrier to growth in British Cameroons. It is not clear why this is so. Perhaps the Baha'is in this area were shielded from enforcement of this apolitical demand by the all-African nature of the community. More likely, however, the Baha'is simply had no problem locating large, apolitical communities that became a fertile field for converts.

In any case, political events in British Cameroons had no direct effect on the development of the Baha'i religion there. This is not to say that they did not indirectly contribute to Baha'i success, however. It seems certain that the general political turmoil in the country, and in Africa generally, contributed to a sense of social crisis. As has been discussed earlier, this modern crisis was felt most keenly in the area of religion, and particularly within collapsing missionary Christian communities. It is to this crisis that the Baha'i religion presented its 'productive' alternative.

### *The Baha'i Movement*

A list of Baha'i statistics dated 1956 counts the number of Baha'is in British Cameroons at 241, with 227 adults and 14 youth.[44] A report compiled from information that was current in September 1956, also places the number of Baha'is in British Cameroons at 241. However, a list of the names of all Baha'is in the country contained in that same report suggests that the count was probably somewhere above 260, although a full listing was not available.[45] In this report, Valerie Wilson, the American pioneer, complains that the Cameroonian Baha'is are not well informed of the fundamentals of Baha'i Administration, such as: "The National Spiritual Assembly; the National 4th Regional Teaching Committee; its responsibilities; and how elected, especially the National committees and…the application of administrative

[43] Valerie Wilson recalled that this was the one Baha'i law on which there could be no compromise. Any African Baha'i who was found to be involved with any political activity was quickly expelled from the community.

[44] "Membership. British Cameroons [1956?]." Valerie Wilson papers. Children were never included in Baha'i statistics during this period.

[45] "Report of Board Member for Jan. 31st, 1957." Valerie Wilson papers.

procedures: on L.S.A. [Local Spiritual Assembly]; Group; Committees, and election of officers and the duties and functions of each, and Consultation with community at 19 day Feasts."[46]

The same report suggests that the wider Baha'i organization had lost control of the procedures by which new converts were to be accepted as Baha'is in British Cameroons. Wilson complains:

> …I do not know how accurate this listing is—I don't know how they were accepted or when—several have transferred into Centres and out of Centres, but such information was not passed on to me. Some uniform acceptance of declarations, (RTC [Regional Teaching Committee]) must be developed, also transferees, and traveling certificates, etc. How can the B.M. [Auxiliary Board Member, i.e., herself] give accurate statistical data when not informed through LSA, and group Sec'y. what is happening.[47]

Again, we see here the divergence of African notions of Baha'i community from what were considered the norms of proper Baha'i functioning, as understood by an American. It seems fairly clear that the Cameroonian Baha'is did not regard the intricacies of Baha'i administrative procedure as very important—at least, not as important as the American thought they should be. The Africans must have found other aspects of the Baha'i religion more appealing. Beyond that, by 1956, we can discern here that conversions to the Baha'i faith were out of control. The religion was beginning to take on some of the characteristics of a movement. This tendency quickly became more pronounced.

A list of the names of all (known) Baha'is in British Cameroons that appears to have been compiled in the fall of 1958, provides the names of some 900 men and women. The list also gives the ethnic affiliation of each believer, date of registration as a Baha'i, country of citizenship, age, and "Mother Tongue."[48] A full statistical analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this study, but it seems that the Baha'i community continued to grow rapidly. Of those whose ethnic identity is identified, 673 are listed as Banyangi—well over two thirds of the community. Virtually all of the converts are listed with Christian names, and we

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[46] Ibid., p. 25. Valerie Wilson papers.
[47] Ibid., p. 26.
[48] Untitled list of Baha'is in British Cameroons. Valerie Wilson papers. It includes mostly adult members of the community, and it may have been intended as a draft for a voting list. Since children are not represented on the list, we can assume that the Baha'i community was actually larger than 900 by 1958.

might assume that they were Christians—almost certainly from the Basel Mission.

Something else becomes clear from examining this record, which is reproduced in full as an appendix to this book. The list for the village of Ntenmbang, for example, records the names of 70 Baha'is. All of these are Banyangi, and all show a "Date of Registration" as January 29, 1958.[49] By this time, becoming a Baha'i was no longer just an individual matter. Ntenmbang had experienced a mass conversion of Christians into the Baha'i religion. Other villages show similar patterns, with conversions often coming on the same day. The Baha'i faith had become a movement.

In fact, he Baha'is in the Cameroons had tended to convert in small bunches very early on. The first believers found their new faith as individuals. But as early as 1954, we can see that five people became Baha'is on the same day in Victoria.[50] On December 16, of that year, four men converted together in Tiko.[51] Three other men (who were living in Ekona by 1958), may have converted with them.[52] In Eyang, on December 22, 1954, seven men and one woman became Baha'is on the same day. Two of these were members of the Tanyi family, and the woman, Serah Tanyi, was probably the wife of Sam Tanyi, one of the male converts.[53] On August 5, four other members of the Tanyi family had converted together.[54]

Through such instances of small group conversion, we can trace the spread of the Baha'i religion through networks of friends and relatives. We can suppose that a small group of friends could encountered Enoch Olinga on one of his teaching trips, and through conversations with him and discussions among themselves could decide to embrace a new religion. Or perhaps through conversations with their relatives, members of the Tanyi family became Baha'is in groups of four or five.

The numbers involved in group conversions become larger from 1955 to 1957, however. By 1958 conversion is no longer a small group phenomenon. Besides the case of Ntenmbang mentioned above, there were 42 conversions in Bakebe on January 20, 1958.[55] The 13 Baha'is

[49] See Appendix, pp. 235–36.
[50] On September 9, 1954. Appendix, p. 226.
[51] Appendix, p. 231.
[52] Appendix, p. 232.
[53] Appendix, p. 236.
[54] Probably in Mbehetok. Appendix, pp. 240–241.
[55] All of them were Banyangi. Appendix, p. 252.

listed for the Faitok Baha'i Group—3 men and 10 women, all Banyangi—converted on June 20, 1958. It appears that something similar happened in Sumbe the same year, where 19 Banyangi Baha'is are listed.[56] The Mbinjong Group, with 48 Baha'is, probably reflects the same trend with dates of conversion listed as September 22, 1958.[57]

At this point, we can no longer imagine conversions as a private matter involving just an individual or a few friends and family members who might discuss the matter and decide to become Baha'is together. It seems likely that people were hearing the Baha'i message in large meetings and deciding to join the religion on the spot. It is not possible for dozens of people to deliberate on such a matter and make a unanimous decision on the same day. The Baha'i message had taken on the characteristics of a religious movement that could capture the imaginations of groups of hearers and sweep them into its wake. People were becoming Baha'is in expressions of group solidarity, with little exposure to and minimum knowledge of the religion. The movement began to attract local political leaders, as well. After a mass conversion of 88 new Baha'is in January 1958, which included Chief A. Agbor in its first wave, Chief P. A. Fongang and Chief D. A. Tataw also joined the new religion.[58]

By September 1959, a comprehensive list of Baha'is in British Cameroons sent to Valerie Wilson from the (African) Regional Teaching Committee in Victoria counted 1,716 Baha'is.[59] Besides demonstrating continued growth, this list also gives an indication of how thoroughly Baha'is had infused themselves into the Basel Mission. This provides further evidence of the Baha'i faith as a religious movement at this point in its development. Providing mailing addresses for all 53 local Spiritual Assemblies, the list shows four of those in Mamfe District receiving mail "c/o Basel Mission School" in each village. So, for example, the address for the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of

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[56] Appendix, pp. 233–34. No dates for the Sumbe conversions are given. But as Sumbe was still a group (that is, it had not yet elected a local Spiritual Assembly, as was done every year in April), they must have taken place in 1958. I am guessing on the same day, as in other instances.

[57] Appendix, pp. 249–50. The "Date of Registration" column is incomplete here. But 28 of the Baha'is registered on September 22. Since Mbinjong is listed as a "group" on the 1958 list, the other 20 converts were recent. (See footnote 55.)

[58] Appendix, p. 229.

[59] Again, not counting youth and children. Another statistical record for 1959–1960, indicates that there were 1,802 Baha'is in British Cameroons. ("Southern Cameroons. Statistics. April 1959–60." Valerie Wilson papers.)

Ossing is given as: "Secretary Baha'i LSA, OSSING, c/o Basel Mission School, Ossing—Mamfe, Br. Cameroons." Similar addresses were given for Eyang, Faitok, and Takpa. Apparently, the compiler of the list was confident that letters sent to those addresses would reach the Baha'i Assemblies for whom they were intended.

Since we would ordinarily assume there to be a high level of hostility between any Basel Mission facility and the local Baha'i community that was converting its parishioners, now in large numbers, we might take note of this matter-of-fact listing of addresses. It would seem that Baha'is were such a familiar part of the environment in some villages (perhaps, simply, 'there'?) that delivery of mail in care of the local Basel Mission school would not have raised an eyebrow. The local mission teacher may have become a Baha'i in such areas, or most of the congregation. As we will see below, in at least one case, the Baha'is succeeded in taking over a Basel Mission school and appropriating it to their own use.[60] In any case, the compiler of the list did not realize how shocking such Basel Mission addresses would seem to Wilson, living in Monrovia, Liberia, and unfamiliar with the situation in Cameroons. She immediately wrote to the committee to question whether such addresses were valid.[61] There is no record of a reply.

In fact, the Cameroonian Baha'is on their own initiative actually organized five schools for literacy and adult education under Baha'i auspices. These were in the villages of Bakebe, Tinto, Fotabe, Eyang, and Ntenmbang.[62] The National Assembly for Northwest Africa approved of these plans and agreed to fund the schools.[63] Unfortunately, there is no information in the Baha'i records available to me concerning what relationship, if any, these schools originally may have had to the Basel Mission. But all of these communities had Basel congregations. We might wonder if the takeover of Basel Mission schools was widespread, if perhaps still covert.

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[60] In Besongabang, Mamfe District.

[61] Valerie Wilson to Regional Teaching Committee No. 10, September 19, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers.

[62] National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Northwest Africa to the Education Committee for the Cameroons (William Enoanyi, Hanzel Ndando, Moses Akwensioge, Moses Akombi, and Jacob Elad), November 1, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers.

[63] National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Northwest Africa to Regional Teaching Committee #10, August 16, 1959. Valerie Wilson papers.

## *The Missionary Response*

The conversion of Basel Mission Christians to the Baha'i faith in British Cameroons in the decade after Enoch Olinga's arrival did not go unnoticed by the missionaries there, of course. However, for the most part, they did not respond with much concern. Perhaps they did not realize the extent of conversions because the 'underground movement' allowed Baha'is to remain observant church Christians, even as they secretly practiced their new religion. In any case, I was unable to locate any mention of the Baha'i religion in missionary reports sent to the mission headquarters in Basel from Cameroon during this period.[64]

However, in 1962 an important article was published in Switzerland by an outraged missionary in the official journal of the Basel Mission.[65] It provides important information on how the Baha'i religion was viewed by some missionaries, the extent of its growth within the mission, and the church response. The article, written in German, is entitled "On the Problem of the Baha'i Movement in South Cameroon." It reveals that by around 1960, the Baha'i faith had become a major movement within some of the congregations of the Basel Mission, especially in Mamfe District, with whole Christian communities converting to the new faith. In some cases, it appears that the new Baha'is were successful in expropriating church property and institutions, such as land and schools. In addition, the article provides some insights into the methods used by Enoch Olinga to secure and maintain these conversions.

Beyond that, the author of the article, Georg Tröster, a strict Basel missionary, inadvertently suggests some of the motivations the Baha'i

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[64] I visited the Basel Mission Archives in Switzerland for a few days in 1992. I am grateful for the assistance of Paul Jenkins, and of the research assistants there, for their invaluable assistance. They informed me, after days of searching, that no mention of the Baha'i religion could be found in the German reports sent to Basel from the Cameroons. At that point, I had almost concluded that the Basel authorities must have been unaware of the Baha'i incursions into their Cameroonian congregations. But several weeks after my visit, Mr. Jenkins kindly brought to my attention the *Evangelisches Missions Magazin* article that I discuss below. I assume that local mission archives in Cameroon would provide a wealth of information on the growth of the Baha'i community. But I have not been able to consult them.

[65] Georg Tröster, "Zum Problem der Baha'i-Bewegung in Sudkamerun" in *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (1962) pp. 71–77. All quotations in the following pages of this chapter are from the translation of this article made for this book by Robert Lightner, unless otherwise noted.

converts may have had for changing religion. To me, his description of the message that Baha'is were spreading within the mission seems similar to the characteristics of a witchcraft eradication movement—a type of traditional African religious movement common in most parts of Africa. In any case, Tröster attests to the attractiveness of the Baha'i message. He accidentally suggests that new converts were partially motivated by a desire to reject the air of colonial dominance displayed by Basel missionaries. He also offers hints that the Baha'i faith spread through family networks, and that it was well thought of even by those who chose not to convert. In Middleton's terms, it appears that even by 1960, the Baha'i movement within the Basel Mission had established itself as a part of the religious landscape in Cameroon (at least in Mamfe) that was simply 'there.' If so, it had become an aspect of spiritual life that African Christians could accept, would certainly tolerate, and might even participate in. This is a remarkable achievement, considering that the faith was introduced to the area only in 1953. But perhaps the new religion was understood in the context of traditional religious patterns.

### *A Missionary Article Sounds the Alarm*

Tröster's article in *Evangelisches Missions Magazin* is introduced by a preface, which was clearly written in Europe by an editor identified as "A.F."[66] The preface provides some background information on the Baha'i religion, its origins and teachings. The information provided is remarkably accurate and positive, and it is certainly taken from Baha'i sources. Indeed, the preface itself—as well as the afterword[67]—seems to work at cross-purposes to Tröster's arguments.

While Tröster dismisses the purpose of the Baha'i faith in one line, as a religion that wants to replace all others, the preface provides an idealized and sympathetic view of what Baha'is believe. It reads, in

[66] This is probably Andreas Fankhauser, a theologian and one-time missionary in Nigeria. Later, he became a pastor in Switzerland and member of staff of the Basel Mission in Basel. I am grateful to Guy Thomas for this information.

[67] The article ends with a quotation from G. F. Vicedom, from a book entitled *Die Mission der Weltreligionen* (Munich: Kaiser, 1959). The quotation appears to have been added to the article by the European editors, since it is rather critical of church practice. It begins: "The people expect real brotherhood. Thus the Christians are lacking here too. They have not pitted themselves against racial arrogance…" etc.

part: "…Moses and Jesus, Zoroaster, Mohammad and Buddha: They all were prophets of the One God and announced eternal truths. The Baha'i religion is now said to be the sum and concentration of these truths. It does not seek to establish a church; it has neither priests nor ritual. Its only institution is the universal 'House of Justice,' which is intended to guarantee world peace. It is formed by an optimistic world-view, whose highest ideas are freedom, justice, and brotherhood. Since it has certainly many pluses and no minuses there—and therefore no conflict either—it is attracting many. It is religion without offense!"

While all of these statements are only partial understandings of full Baha'i teachings, they clearly represent the way that European Baha'is might have introduced and explained their religion to inquirers. It is not surprising that the editor of the article, A.F., would have access to such a view of the Baha'i faith in German, since the religion had been established in Germany since 1907, and had presented itself to the public in this fashion since that time.[68] What does surprise is that such a positive view of Baha'i teachings should precede an article that so strongly attacks the religion as predatory and anti-Christian.

The purpose of Tröster's article is to raise an alarm within the mission concerning the serious inroads that the Baha'i faith has made into Basel congregations in Cameroon.[69] Beyond this, the missionary intends to analyze the reasons for Baha'i success. He notes that, by 1960, Baha'is had been able to win over very large numbers of Basel Mission Christians to their cause in some remote areas of the country. By then, there appear to have been several congregations in Mamfe District which "as a rule, had lost 60 to 90 percent of their members to the Baha'is." These conversions were made, Tröster tells us, not among new Christians, but in "very old communities" that cut their ties with

[68] Moojan Momen, "Esslemont's Survey of the Bahá'í World, 1919–1920" in Peter Smith, *Bahá'ís in the West: Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Vol. 14 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004) pp. 88–92.

[69] Another Christian polemical attack on the Baha'i religion written by a Cameroonian Presbyterian minister is worth mentioning: Mbu Walters, *Beware of Religious Cults and Secret Societies* (Chicago?: Midnight Image, 1995). The book appears to be self-published and devotes two or three pages to the Baha'i teachings. As in the Basel Mission article above, Walters expresses an odd ambivalence. For example: "These…are lofty and praise-worthy ideas, but a careful examination reveals the Bahai faith as a secular and political organization with nothing new to offer to the world" (pp. 17–18; note that the index is consistently incorrect in page listings). He notes in passing that most Baha'is in Africa are polygamists.

the Basel Mission in order to follow the "new church." He found it "extremely difficult" to reverse this trend.

The first reason for the growth of the Baha'i religion, the missionary tells us, is the availability of money coming from the United States. He notes of the Baha'is that "their leader" sat in Victoria: this is certainly a reference to Enoch Olinga. He suggests that Olinga had a large amount of American cash that he could hand out to an African Baha'i pioneer who would agree to move to some remote village to live "an independent life" there. The money could be used to entertain village leaders and ply them with palm wine.[70] After this, whole congregations would convert "enthusiastically."

### *Traditional African Religious Movements*

However, it was not only food, palm wine, and cash that attracted people to the Baha'i Faith. Tröster admits that the message brought by the Baha'i teachers was also attractive. He says that Baha'i teachers

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[70] The reference to the use of "palm wine" in Baha'i teaching activities is surprising here. Baha'i religious law forbids the drinking of alcoholic beverages. Enoch Olinga had given up alcohol upon his conversion to the Baha'i faith in Uganda. There is good evidence that he continued to abstain from alcohol—even beer—during his stay in Cameroon, not the least of which is that he had no relapse into his former alcoholism. (Interview of Bakare with Don Addison, December 6, 1982, Afrikpo, Nigeria. Bakare notes that Olinga refused beer when he offered it to him.)

However, it would be a mistake to dismiss this detail as missionary propaganda. In 1959, Valerie Wilson reported widespread consumption of alcohol among Baha'is in her report of her tour of the Baha'i communities in the Cameroons. ("Board Member [Teaching] Tour of Allocated Territories, Feb. Mar. Apr. 1959." Wilson papers.) She was unhappy about this but suggested that this might be a 'secondary' matter.

I should note that the definition of what constitutes an alcoholic beverage within the Baha'i community can sometimes be flexible. When I traveled to Panama in 1968, I had occasion to visit some fairly remote villages in mountain areas where large numbers of indigenous Indians had become Baha'is. Whole communities were converted. These new converts had universally given up manufactured hard liquor and regarded it as forbidden by Baha'i law. However, there was a variety of locally made, fermented fruit drinks that the new Baha'is, and even their American teachers, regarded as 'sweet' (*dulce*), rather than alcoholic. These they would drink without compunction, though I admit that I never saw any Baha'i become intoxicated. The local brews were used quite openly, and the Baha'is offered them to me as well. Regretfully, I was rather more orthodox in my thinking than I am now, and I consistently refused them.

Closer to home, there was one Baha'i woman in my local community in California in the early 1990s who regularly drank a glass of red wine with dinner, claiming that it was a 'food' rather than an alcoholic drink and citing health benefits. Since her drinking was private, it never became an issue within the Baha'i community.

carried a message to remote areas that convinced villagers that the "new church" would bring "fabulous advantages for the village." He goes on to outline the initial Baha'i message as he understands it. Although Tröster is obviously a hostile witness, and he is reporting this information second-hand, his description can still be taken seriously. He finds the Baha'i message bad enough on its face and appears to have no interest in fabricating false teachings. He reports that Baha'i teachers promise that the Baha'i faith:

> . . . makes possible a completely new village community! The distinction between Christians and Heathens is overcome! Yes, and also the distinction between villagers and tribal outsiders [i.e., people of other tribes living in the village]! This means that secret societies may safely continue to exist (for the time being). And the main point: no dues whatsoever, no exploitation whatsoever, of the kind the folks from Basel and the Catholics do! Of course, he also speaks of schools and hospitals, etc., which the future will bring. No wonder then that the whole gathering enthusiastically decides: Of course we want to take part in this blessing. So they decide to establish a parish [i.e., a Baha'i community].

Even from this hostile description, it is easy enough to discern that the central message of the Baha'i teachers in village areas was the "pivotal" Baha'i principle of the unity of humanity and need for the elimination of prejudices of all kinds. There is tolerance and respect for local customs and traditional African institutions, such as secret societies, as we would expect from a knowledge of Baha'i policies. There is no demand for money, nor any obligation to pay dues to the 'new church.' There appears to be a hint of some hostility toward Christian missions, and also a suggestion that some help from outside may be forthcoming, and that it might take the form of schools and/or hospitals.

This is certainly an attractive message, as Tröster admits. But there is something else. The consultation with village leaders, the communal and public acceptance (as opposed to individual and private acceptance) of the new movement, its rapid spread, the theme of cleansing of social antagonisms, the idea of "a completely new village community," and the enthusiasm with which the message was received all suggest descriptions of traditional witchcraft eradication movements in Africa. Such movements are long-standing, possibly ancient, cultural features within African societies that periodically attempt to renew social life at the village level.

Certain movements arise from time to time, and in fairly regular cycles, that claim to strike at the root of social strife by banishing

witchcraft (and therefore social discord) from village life. According to Willis, these cults share certain basic characteristics across Africa. These include: the arrival of the movement's representatives, invariably from outside; negotiations with local village headmen who are under pressure to accept the new message; acceptance of the new cult and its cleansing rituals; the conspicuous lack of any formal organizational structure; and, an ability to cross ethnic boundaries and adapt to local cultures. Once the movement has been adopted, "a new and morally regenerated life then begins for everyone."[71] These movements have been identified in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa in areas that are relatively remote from urban centers and relatively far from European influences.[72]

Scholars have, perhaps, been too quick to define these movements as merely concerned with witchcraft.[73] Certainly, the eradication of witches is the discourse which they most often employ—claiming the power to neutralize all evil and protect the innocent. But witchcraft and accusations of witchcraft in African societies are broad metaphors by which social tension and community disharmony can be expressed and exposed. It may be more useful to regard such movements as a

[71] R. G. Willis, "Instant Millennium: The Sociology of African Witch-cleansing Cults" in Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions*, pp. 128–131. Quote from p. 131. Willis also identifies other general characteristics of such movements that are more specifically concerned with witchcraft and witch cleansing. But such characteristics are not universal.

[72] Willis, "Instant Millennium," p. 133.

[73] Witchcraft and witchcraft eradication movements in Africa are much discussed in the anthropological literature and, to a lesser extent, by African historians. See, for example, S. F. Nadel, "Witchcraft in Four African Societies: An Essay in Comparison," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 64 (Jan.–Mar. 1952) no. 1, pp. 18–29; Mary Douglas, "Techniques of Sorcery Control in Central Africa" in J. Middleton and E. H. Winter, eds., *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963 [2004]); R. G. Willis, "Kamcape: An Anti-sorcery Movement among the Fipa" in *Africa*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (1968); idem., ed., *Witchcraft and Healing* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1969); idem., "Instant Millennium"; L. E. Larson, "Problems in the Study of Witchcraft Eradication Movements in Southern Tanzania" in *Ufahamu*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (1976); Jan Vansina, "Les mouvements religieux Kuba (Kasai) à l'époque coloniale" in *Etudes d'histoire africaine II* (Kinshasa: Université Lovanium, 1971); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders, *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: Routledge, 2001), with two essays on Cameroon; and so forth. Also with particular reference to Cameroon, see Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft.*

traditional means of religious revival and renewal in rural African societies.

David Parkin has argued that such movements are long-standing cultural features of African societies that invariably signal a redefinition of social roles in the places where they occur. Emphasizing the political, rather than the religious, significance of these events, Parkin sees them as the means by which potentially new and younger elites within village societies can attack the symbols of established authority and announce that they have assumed key roles, or that others of their generation are about to do so. The movements advertise rising trends in society that have made new sources of opportunity and influence available. They open the door to intense internal, political negotiations within a village from which new and reordered configurations of prestige and power may emerge.[74]

I have argued against Parkin's explanation of the significance of these movements as it relates to Ngoja, a series of anti-witchcraft movements which took place throughout the 1920s in Central and Southern Tanganyika.[75] Parkin's approach is simply too narrow to account for the various aspects of Ngoja. However, while Parkin's theories are not a universal explanation of witchcraft eradication and its significance (as he originally suggested), they are certainly useful in understanding the rapid spread of the Baha'is in Cameroon. The last few years of the colonial era in Africa were also the last few years of the missionary era. Europeans were soon to lose power within both church and state, opening new opportunities for autonomy and dignity for Africans within both spheres. A young generation of Basel Christians in rural Cameroon seems to have made use of this opening to spread the Baha'i faith and overturn missionary ascendancy.[76]

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[74] David J. Parkin, "Medicine and Men of Influence," *MAN*, Vol. 3 (1968) pp. 424–39.

[75] Anthony A. Lee, "Ngoja and Six Theories of Witchcraft Eradication," *Ufahamu*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (1976) pp. 108–109.

[76] It is also possible to suggest that the earlier spread of the Basel Mission in those same areas may have made use of the same cultural and religious advantage. This is particularly suggested by the rapid growth of converts to the Mission in the years from 1918 to 1925, during the period of no European supervision. (See Chapter Five, and especially Table 5.1.) However, the role that traditional healing and witch-cleansing practices may have played in the success of Christianity in Cameroon is beyond the scope of this study. For Malawi and Zambia, however, see Rijk van Dijk, "Witchcraft and Skepticism by Proxy: Pentecostalism and Laughter in Urban Malawi" in Moore and Sanders, *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities*, pp. 100–102; and A. C. Ross,

Therefore, it is possible to suppose that the Baha'i message of unity and harmony among religions and tribal ethnicities was heard by rural Cameroonian Christians in the context of their ancient African traditions of spiritual revival and the eradication of evil. Respect for traditional African institutions (that is, secret societies) and denunciation of church taxes may easily have been understood as signaling a coming era of African power and control. Young Baha'i teachers could be seen as challenging older elites. Suggestions of future schools and hospitals would certainly have raised visions of an idealized society and would have complemented nationalist political demands, as well. These would fulfill all of Parkin's requirements for a traditional religious movement to emerge.

Tröster complains about the availability of American Baha'i money to build Baha'i Centers (*hazíratu'l-quds*, meeting places) in villages where new communities emerged. He resents the fact that invariably these were buildings made of concrete blocks with corrugated tin roofs—"the building style of the wealthy in the countryside." Apparently, the Basel Mission's "humble little churches" were made of wood and thatch. He also complains rather forcefully that some Baha'is who were ill had been transported from Eyang by car to a hospital some one hundred kilometers away. Concrete and tin, however, may also have been seen locally as symbols of modernity and change. In Parkin's terms, perhaps Baha'i teachers were attacking old symbols of religious authority and signaling forthcoming opportunities in a soon-to-be post-colonial world by raising a building using new materials. Access to hospitals and to medical care is also an aspect of modern opportunity.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Basel Mission Christians in the Cameroons were consciously reverting to African traditional religious practice when they became Baha'is. Nor do they appear to have been rejecting Christianity. Certainly, they would have denied both suggestions most vigorously. But, established cultural patterns and traditional forms of religious revival, such as familiar witchcraft eradication movements, may have played a role in the rapid spread of the Baha'i religion at the end of the colonial era.

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"The Political Role of the Witchfinder in Southern Malawi during the Crisis of October 1964 to May 1965" in Willis, *Witchcraft and Healing*, pp. 55–70.

*Local Christian Response*

Tröster's second reason for Baha'i success provides more evidence that Baha'i conversions were understood in the mode of traditional, cyclical revival movements. He complains at length in his article about the passive response of his African Basel Mission pastors and elders to the coming of the Baha'i teaching:

> *But how do our members behave in this situation?* Far from being alarmed, they always looked for new ways to trivialize [the threat posed by] the movement. Even our pastors did not believe it was worth the trouble to become more involved with it. They thought it sufficient to disregard these "passing matters" with a shrug, and they refused to let their displeasure be noticed by those who have left us. "Just wait two or three years, then you'll see that the whole ghost was made of smoke," the best among them said. As if in such a situation one could simply wait. As if it were not the first task of a shepherd to look after his flock!

It seems that the African leaders of the mission church regarded the Baha'i faith as merely a passing matter. They had seen movements like this before; they come and go, lasting a few years, then dissipating like 'smoke.' No need for alarm.

Willis recognizes that most cleansing cults are cyclical, occurring at roughly ten-year intervals in the Congo and in other parts of Central Africa, for example. Witchcraft eradication promises a new and morally regenerated village, free of evil, protected from unexplained illness and premature death. Eventually it must fail to deliver on this impossible promise of utopia. Therefore, according to Willis, faith in the efficacy of the cult will decline, and in due course the community will be ready to try again.[77]

However, Willis also recognizes that under certain circumstances movements of this kind may become transformed into effective agents of social action and generate new institutions. He cites the 1905–1906 Maji-Maji rebellion against German colonial rule in Tanganyika, the Lukusu cult in Congo in the early 1930s, and Kamcape among the Fipa and neighboring peoples of southwest Tanzania in 1963–1964, as examples.[78] It appears that the Baha'is in Cameroon were also able to transform early enthusiasms into an institutionalized movement,

[77] Willis, "Instant Millennium," p. 131.
[78] Ibid., p. 132.

since Baha'i families there today are producing their third and fourth generations. A count of Baha'is in the Cameroon Republic made in 1992 showed a membership of 28,062.[79] However, direct continuities with early village conversions in the 1960s have yet to be investigated or understood.

Tröster tells us that he was determined to preach against the Baha'i faith in Mamfe District in the early 1960s. However, he received little cooperation from African Christians. His position of authority nevertheless allowed him to demand some compliance. One hapless pastor, identified only as B— by the missionary, was pressed into service, apparently as a translator, to accompany Tröster "to the marshlands" to preach against the Baha'is. Although he was "a really faithful worker and a fine person," he was clearly loath to speak against the religion. His reluctance bewildered Tröster. The African pastor did not see the Baha'i movement as the wicked, alien, intrusive, and destructive new religion that Tröster made it out to be.

We can only guess why this should be. It is possible that the pastor had Baha'is within his own family or among his friends. Perhaps, the movement was just so widespread and popular that he did not want to risk his own reputation by opposing it. He himself may have been a participant in 'the underground movement.' Whatever the specific reasons, it appears that the Baha'i faith was just 'there' (in Middleton's sense of the word)—that is, it had found a place in Mamfe social life, and so the pastor felt that it should be accommodated, not opposed. Tröster tells us that B— was very happy to see the missionary leave his area and go home.

### *Missionary Paternalism and African Indignation*

Tröster relates a story about one encounter with a Baha'i that is more revealing of his attitudes than he intended it to be. This was a rather unfriendly conversation that he had with a man in Besongabang, Mamfe, whom he met "on the street." The conversation turned into an angry argument during which the man revealed that he was a Baha'i. Tröster decided that this Baha'i had given him a "sort of key" to "the

[79] "Cameroon Republic Basic Statistics. Department of Statistics (Bahá'í World Center). 19 April 1992." I am grateful to Vahid Rafati for providing me with a copy of this report in 1992.

secret of this 'new (false) church'" that explained its enormous success. I rather agree with him, but for different reasons.

Tröster needed no translator to talk to this man, since he spoke Duala fluently. From this fact he realized that the man must have attended Basel Mission schools and was probably a member of the church. The man was happy to admit to both facts.[80] At this point, Tröster's missionary instincts kicked in, and he went on to ask the stranger if he might be "a full member of the church today, which is to say, if he receives the Holy Communion."[81]

At this point, the missionary tells us that the stranger took offense and responded angrily:

> "Whatever gives you the right to ask me that?" he screamed at me. "Of course I haven't received communion for a long time. I really don't need it! What artificial chains you have forged from the communion, just to take what little money the poor Christians have in their pockets." (And he is a businessman!) After he had blown off some steam, I sought to answer matter-of-factly by referring to our Lord Christ and the meaning of his cross for us all. This, however, made him even more angry. "What are you always up to with this Jesus Christ? It's always Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! And then comes this Cross! I'm telling you to stop it. I can't listen to it anymore. You know as well as we do that this Jesus was also a human being, just like all the others. We should receive forgiveness? I'm telling you, we Baha'is need none of it; we have seen through you."

Tröster took the Baha'i's statement that Jesus was human, "just like all the others,"[82] as an indication of a "devilish hate of Christ." In fact, he found the man's statement so blasphemous that he decided he had found the secret teaching of the Baha'i religion, which revealed its anti-Christian and destructive nature. Curiously, he seems to write

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[80] Note here that the Baha'i man was happy to affirm "with pleasure" that he was a member of the Basel Mission. Perhaps he too was in the 'underground movement,' or perhaps just maintained a dual identity. Middleton might suggest that he was simply participating, as most Africans do, in the traditional complexities of his social milieu.

[81] Only fully paid up members of the church could receive Holy Communion.

[82] This is not a correct statement of strict Baha'i doctrine, however. Baha'is do not regard Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the Godhead. However, he is not merely human either. He is recognized as a 'Manifestation of God' (a sort of intermediate category), as are Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Buddha, and other founders of world religions. See Shoghi Effendi, "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 99–119; Juan R. I. Cole, "The Concept of Manifestation in the Bahá'í Writings" in *Bahá'í Studies*, Monograph 9 (1982) pp. 1–38, published online at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bhmanif.htm>.

this almost with a sense of relief—as though all of the other, more public teachings of the 'new church' were unobjectionable. Here he seems to have finally found something about the Baha'i religion that he can attack with enthusiasm.

However, it appears to me that Tröster has provided us with a near perfect example of missionary paternalism confronting African indignation and resistance at the end of the colonial era. As he reports the conversation, he pressed all the buttons of colonial power and religious control at his disposal, which he apparently expected to be met with compliance and gestures of subordination. He first refers to mission schools and church membership thinking that should bind the stranger to the Basel Mission. He goes on to talk about full and current membership (requiring payment of dues) and Holy Communion (which can be withheld by the clergy for bad behavior). When that is not effective, he invokes the name of Jesus Christ as an instrument of his power, reminding the stranger of the "meaning of his cross" and the need for forgiveness. Forgiveness that can only be had through the church. What he intended to get out of all this is fairly clear—the docile return of his new African acquaintance to full compliance with church law, under missionary control.

Instead, the man he spoke to reacted with indignation, anger, and full rejection of the mission.[83] He simply refused to be patronized or brought under church authority. He revealed himself as a Baha'i, and therefore in no need of forgiveness through Christ.[84] It seems clear that his Baha'i identity had given him a way to opt out of the system. This is a more radical rejection of the Basel Mission and its influence than even the formation of an independent (Christian) African

[83] I must admit that I also reacted with some indignation when I first read the missionary's remarks.

[84] This, at least, is an accurate statement of Baha'i beliefs. The Baha'i religion rejects the notion of original sin that plays such an important part in Christian formulae for salvation. Of course, Baha'is do ask God's forgiveness for misdeeds and shortcomings, but this is accomplished through individual prayer. Formal confession of sins is forbidden in Baha'i law. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978] pp. 24–25; *Bahá'í Prayers*, 1991 Edition [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991] pp. 74–83; Helen Bassett Hornby, comp., *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, Fourth Revised Edition [New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983 (1996)] #589, p. 179.) Salvation is achieved through recognition (*irfan*) of the Manifestation of God and obedience to his commands. (Baha'u'llah, The Kitáb-i Aqdas, K1; Terry Culhane, *I Beheld a Maiden…: The Bahá'í Faith and the Life of the Spirit* [Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2001] pp. 16–18 and 81–91.)

church—something that missions had been familiar with since the early years of the century. The Baha'i insisted that even the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ (as the only path to salvation), a Jesus Christ identified with Europe and Christian missionaries, had been rejected.

It seems to me that the 'key' which may have become one of the elements of Baha'i success in rural Cameroon was not the "hate of Christ" that Tröster suggests. Rather, it was that the Baha'i teachings provided converts with a developed theology which they could use to reject mission control at the end of the colonial era. By converting to the Baha'i religion, a village could simply rid itself of the Basel Mission and fill the void created with a new and idealized religious identity attached to another world faith. This new identity could sustain and reinforce itself with Baha'i religious institutions and American financial support. Apparently, this was a successful combination.

### *Baha'is in Mamfe*

Tröster's article provides still more information and insight into the history of the spread of the Baha'i faith in Mamfe. He maintains that the movement was brought to the area by Mose Tanyi, who had from childhood been a faithful member of the Basel Mission. Tanyi belonged to an important family and "a notable Christian house." Tröster explains that Tanyi had become a Baha'i while away from his home village of Mfaitok. When he returned home, he brought the Baha'i teachings with him. After that, "the surrounding villages very rapidly flocked to these 'new churches.'"[85]

Mose Tanyi was certainly a relative of David Tanyi, one of Olinga's first converts in Victoria and his landlord. It is clear that the Baha'i movement spread through kinship networks. Tröster does not explain why villages in Mamfe should flock to a new religion. But he explains Mose Tanyi's conversion as an act of revenge—the result of a grudge that he held against the mission after failing his Standard VI exams. Here again, the theme of African resentment of mission control

[85] As mentioned above, Jacob Tabot Awo claims that he was the first person to bring the Baha'i faith to Mamfe District. (Interview of Addison with Awo, 1/2/83. Don Addison papers.) This is probably correct, but he may not have been responsible for the kind of mass conversions to the religion that the missionary describes here. These may have been the result of Tanyi's work.

appears to be important. Rebellion against European authority seems to have played an important role in the mass conversions of Christians to Baha'i.

Mose Tanyi, it appears, succeeded in having the villagers build a Baha'i Center on land that had formerly belonged to the mission. They also took over "the large English school" that had been under Basel Mission control in Besongabang. The school was only returned to the mission with the aid and intervention of the colonial government, "the English civil servants" as Tröster puts it. He expresses apprehension about what will happen to the school when the colonial administration comes to an end.

Moreover, the missionary seems to have had difficulty distinguishing his evangelical Christian message from the new Baha'i message in the minds of African Christians. Mose Tanyi had told him, after being questioned about his commitment to Christianity: "Yes, I am certainly conscious of that. But I see no great difference between the Baha'is and those within the Church such as you." Continuing: "I am convinced that we [Baha'is] will be the victors in this struggle." And it is clear that the missionary could not convince him otherwise. For Tröster the choice to be a Christian or a Baha'i represented a crucial distinction, the distinction between truth and falsehood, between being saved and being lost. For Tanyi, this was a 'new church' involved in the same struggle as the old one. The exact nature of the 'struggle' is not defined. But in a Christian context we may suppose this to be the struggle between good and evil, or perhaps the struggle for salvation itself. If this attitude was widespread, there was as much continuity in the Baha'i conversions as there was change. Rural communities, perhaps, took the opportunity to convert to the Baha'i faith in an effort to continue their religious lives without European supervision, declaring their independence from missionaries a few years before the official break took place.

## *Conclusions*

In any case, by 1962, the Baha'i religion had succeeded in planting itself firmly in the British Cameroons and had established a permanent presence there. This was accomplished under the direction of Enoch Olinga, and far from the observation and influence of foreign Baha'is. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Olinga had managed to

reformulate Baha'i teachings in Uganda, shortly after his own conversion, into an attractive and convincing message. He was able to accomplish large-scale conversions in his Teso homeland and to repeat his success in West Africa after he moved to Victoria in the British Cameroons.

While further research is needed to determine the precise nature of Olinga's message, we must acknowledge that there were other social forces at work that made the conversion of large numbers of Christians in the Cameroons a possibility. There is the 'productive' option that the Baha'i faith presented, which does not reject former religious identities—but rather remolds them with the tool of 'End-Time' prophecies. There is the collapse of the missionary dream within the Basel Mission, a crisis felt most keenly by those of low social status within the church. Middleton suggests the stagnation of the original revolutionary dynamic of the Basel Mission, making it by the 1950s a symbol of wealth and status in African communities—thus alienating its poor and rural constituencies. Official Basel Mission accounts suggest a history of fractiousness and breakaway movements within their Cameroonian communities, as well as a tradition of African autonomy.

In addition, as we assess the causes for Baha'i growth, we should not ignore the willingness of Baha'i official policy to accommodate itself to local customs and to make few demands on new converts. Just as important, we must acknowledge the widespread African traditions of religious renewal which, though they often took the form of witchcraft eradication movements, could also be acted out as conversion to a new religion. In this sense, the Banyangi converts to the Baha'i religion may have facilitated its growth, acting as religious innovators and specialists. All this, at the close of the colonial period, which was a time of political upheaval and rapid social change.

CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE BAHA'I CHURCH OF CALABAR[1]

Inevitably, the history of the first years of the Baha'i presence in West Africa will be written and understood, especially within the Baha'i community, as the story of how the religion spread and grew from the time of its introduction in the early 1950s by American, Iranian, and African pioneers. Missionary histories of the spread of any religion are usually written in terms of the growth of the faith, the expansion of the number of believers, and the ultimate triumph of the church—either presently or in the distant future. Groves's classic four-volume work, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*,[2] certainly takes this approach. Even Hastings,[3] while paying more attention to political and sociological factors, finds his central concern in the growth of the church. Etherington and Spear have complained about the narrowness of this kind of church history.[4] Nonetheless, issues of growth—and its converse, decline—always seem to make their way to the center of the histories of missionary enterprises.

## *Beyond Growth*

Such an approach is to be expected. The growth of the Baha'i community was, after all, impressive during its first several years of development in West Africa. But, I maintain that this approach to its history will obscure more than it illumines. The history of the arrival of Baha'is, Baha'i ideas, and Baha'i religious identity on the West African scene is—as with all human history—extremely complex. The events and

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was published online at H-Bahai, Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi, and Baha'i Studies, Vol. 1, no. 6 (November 1997) <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/bhpapers/ vol1/africa1.htm>

[2] Charles Pelham Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948–58).

[3] Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950–1975* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[4] N. Etherington. "Missionaries and the Intellectual History of Africa," *Itinerario*. Vol. 2 (1983) pp. 27–45. Spear, "Toward the History," passim.

activities associated with it were highly varied, and even contradictory. Certainly, growth and expansion were a part of that history. The various Baha'i pioneers who traveled to West Africa came there with the idea of the expansion of the religion in mind. And, in some cases, this expansion was achieved. But that is not all that happened, nor is it necessarily the most important thing that happened. The whole of this history simply cannot be encompassed or explained by notions of growth and decline, success and failure. A conceptualization of Baha'i history in West Africa primarily in terms of growth will, in fact, obscure most of the historical events associated with the religion in its early years. It will obscure all of the interesting ones.

Philosophically speaking, the number of historical 'events' associated with any time period is infinite, and so the vast majority of them deserve to be obscured and forgotten, anyway. No one really wants to know the details of every conversation that Valerie Wilson had with her neighbors or exactly what Enoch Olinga had for breakfast each morning, seven days a week, year after year. Nonetheless, it might be well to remind ourselves that most of the daily activities of these Baha'i pioneers did not result in conversions and had no relationship to 'growth' in any form.

Beyond that banal and obvious fact, a history written in terms of the success of various Baha'i teaching plans and the conversion of Africans to the message of the Baha'i pioneers will overlook the importance of the initiatives and ideas of those very converts—which, of course, is the other half of the story. The religion was actively offered; it was also actively received. In fact, it is clear that where the Baha'is were able to find large numbers of converts rapidly, this was always as a result of African initiative. It is only where the converts themselves were able (usually only for short periods) to seize control of the message, the teaching work, and the organizational structure of the Baha'i religion—and shape it to the needs of an African society—that expansion was achieved. This was true, for example, in the British Cameroons, where the religion was most successful. In such cases, it is my view that it is this reshaping of the message that is the really important part of the history we want to study, not the numbers of converts.

Finally, a focus on growth and expansion also ignores, and implicitly denies, changes in the content of the Baha'i message as it spread through West Africa and the uniqueness of the communities that were constructed as a result of that growth. Such a focus undermines the very question of the meaning of the new religion to the people who

adopted it, the nature of the new identity they accepted, and their own contributions to this identity. Of course, these are precisely the questions that I have been most interested in answering—questions that cannot be approached at all with reference only to issues of growth and expansion.

### *Levels and Discontinuities*

Thomas C. Holt, in a fascinating article, has raised what he has called "the levels problem" of history.[5] For Holt, this is the inevitable dilemma of the historian who wants to make sense out of events of the past. He regards this as "the problem of establishing the continuity between behavioral explanations sited at the individual level of human experience and those at the level of society and social forces."[6] That is, it is the problem of connecting, in some meaningful way, the everyday acts of individual human beings (that actually make up the material of history) with the larger historical patterns and trends, which are seen by historians as having been produced and reproduced by these acts (and which constitute history, as it is usually written).

Of course, Holt is primarily concerned with how race and racism came to be reproduced in American society, and through American history. But his admonition that the historian must remain aware of the "subtle interaction between various levels and terrains of human experience" is a universal one.[7] He proposes an approach that will bridge the (usually neglected) gap between the global and the local views, the societal explanation and the individual's behavior. While it might be said, for example, that 'the Baha'i community grew in West Africa,' what exactly does this mean at the level of everyday experience? for the pioneers? for the converts?

I will take Holt's point one step further and suggest that the historian must also face the problem of exploring the *discontinuities* which exist in the "terrains of human experience." Not, I might add, for the purpose of integrating all the contradictory bits into one grand scheme of things—but precisely to remind us that our grand schemes do not

[5] Thomas C. Holt, "Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, no. 1 (February 1995) pp. 1–20.
[6] Ibid., p. 7.
[7] Ibid., p. 6.

explain everything. It is the job of every historian to make sense of the everyday events of the past, and equally his task to acknowledge the contradictory events and behaviors that might otherwise be lost or obscured by his analysis, his master narrative.

This concern with the discontinuities of history, as it is written, has been brought most forcefully to the attention of scholars by Michel Foucault in a number of important volumes.[8] Foucault's profound critique of the conventional understanding of Western history has thoroughly undermined a self-assured reliance on any master narrative for a field or topic of history. His interrogation of Western history reveals 'two great discontinuities' in the assumptions that lie at the base of Western culture.[9] Though Foucault himself forcefully denied that he was concerned with discontinuity *per se* and claimed to be bewildered by this interpretation of his work,[10] nonetheless his insight into the deep breaks in European history represents at least the necessary starting point for his larger work. By noticing those events made discontinuous by a master narrative, Foucault was able to focus his attention on the assumptions which make an ordered understanding of history even possible.

This chapter is devoted to just such a discontinuous event, or chain of events: the establishment of the Baha'i Church of Calabar in 1955–1956. Here was an independent church based on Baha'i teachings which was established wholly without connection to any Baha'i pioneer, and which existed without communication with any Baha'i in

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[8] For this discussion I am relying most heavily on Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses*, translated as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970). See also, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Random House, 1965) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977).

[9] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xxii. It is characteristic of Foucault that he never spells out precisely what those discontinuities were. He says, for example: "…on the archeological level, we see that the system of positivities was transformed in a wholesale fashion at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Not that reason made any progress: it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered." (Ibid.) In other words, these were discontinuities in modes of thought, rather than anything else—roughly from 'correspondences' and 'similitudes,' to systems of classification, and then to abstractions that underlay the classification of discrete objects. Europe changed the assumptions it held when looking at the world; it changed the way that it organized knowledge, the way it organized reality.

[10] See the introduction in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) pp. 3–27.

the world outside of its own congregation, for the duration of its short existence. Nonetheless, for a short time, it succeeded in capturing the interest, the participation, and the allegiance of virtually all of the Cameroonian men on one large palm plantation in eastern Nigeria.

The church was established, flourished, and then collapsed (as the result of a dispute between its founders) after several months of regular services, utterly unrecognized and unknown to the Baha'i pioneers and to the international Baha'i community. It left no converts to count as a part of the Baha'i 'expansion.' However, as we will see, an examination of the history of this short movement will provide important insights into the religious needs and attitudes of some African converts, their understanding and reworking of the Baha'i message, and their approach to Baha'i identity. These insights can be usefully applied to other Baha'i conversions in the region, and indeed provide a much-needed contrast to the usual historical paradigm of Baha'i expansion.

This instance provides us with a rare and remarkable phenomenon: We are provided with virtually a laboratory model of a purely African Baha'i faith, developed without any influences whatsoever from the larger Baha'i community. The church was established purely out of African need and African initiative, without the direction or guidance of foreign believers. The result was, however briefly, a successful independent church.

## *A New Church is Founded*[11]

The Baha'i Church of Calabar was organized in June of 1955 by Oscar Njang and Peter Oben-Etchi, neither of whom was a Baha'i. Nor were they in contact with any Baha'is at the time that they founded the church. We do not have a full description of the activities of the church, but its services and teachings were based upon the text of only one Baha'i book, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris*

[11] All the factual information concerning the Baha'i Church of Calabar that is presented in this chapter is taken from two taped interviews with Oscar Njang: one recorded on June 27, 1981 by Don Addison in Ikot Uba Village, Cross River State, Nigeria; the other recorded in January 1992, by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Nigeria (and apparently with an audience, at a Baha'i meeting) in Lagos.

*in 1911–1912*.[12] It was clearly conceived of as an independent Christian church, but it maintained a distinct Baha'i identity.

The church was founded on the initiative and oratorical skills of Oscar Njang, a Cameroonian and a Presbyterian of the Basel Mission, who had left his home country to escape the demands of his extended family and community and had come, quite by accident, to Calabar to look for work. There he happened upon Peter Oben-Etchi, a friend (perhaps a distant relative) of his from the Cameroons.[13] Oben-Etchi offered him a job as a supervisor on a palm plantation, the Kalaru Estates, and Njang accepted.

About a week later, Oben-Etchi went off for a weekend trip to another plantation to visit a Cameroonian friend, Michael Nkamato. When he returned, he mentioned to Njang that he had seen a religious book there and had read something in it that "resembled your [Njang's] character." Njang was surprised, and (it appears) a bit disturbed. He replied that the Bible was the only religious book that he recognized and that he had never read of anyone in the Bible who resembled him in character. He asked that Oben-Etchi bring the book to him the next week.

When Njang saw the book, *Paris Talks*, he says that he was immediately impressed by two things. One was a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha that is reproduced as the frontispiece of the book. This was the first thing that he saw when he opened the book, and it apparently affected him deeply. He says that he stared at the photograph for about ten minutes. The image seems to have reminded him of the face of one of the respected elders in Njang's home village, a man who would settle land disputes among his people.

The other thing that impressed him was the text of the book itself. He read a little and was drawn to the teachings he found there because he felt that they justified the way he had led his life—always helping people and giving away his things. He says that his family had often chided him for his generosity, saying that one day he would be a poor man "if I scatter all my things—giving, giving." Now he felt that he had been doing God's will all along and that his generous ways were a matter of religious duty. His willingness to help people and his trust

[12] London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1912 (Ninth British Edition, 1951).
[13] They were both Banyangi.


Illustration 7.1. 'Abdu'l-Baha (taken circa 1912)

This photo was published as the frontispiece of the Baha'i book *Paris Talks*, British Edition 1951 (a translation from the French).

of strangers had not been in vain. He looked up from the book and said to Oben-Etchi, "I will teach this faith."

There is little doubt that the passages in *Paris Talks* that Oben-Etchi had noticed and that impressed Njang so much were read from the first address of ʻAbdu'l-Baha which is reproduced in the book, entitled "The Duty of Kindness and Sympathy Towards Strangers and Foreigners."[14] The talk begins:

> When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries. Do not look at them as though you suspected them of being evil-doers, thieves and boors. You think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourselves to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly, undesirable people.
>
> I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether come they from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country in the world.
>
> Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier.
>
> In this way, even if, sometimes, what you at first suspected should be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them—this kindness will help them to become better.
>
> After all, why should any foreign people be treated as strangers?
>
> Let those who meet you know, without your proclaiming the fact, that you are indeed a Bahá'í.
>
> Put into practice the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, that of kindness to all nations. Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.... When you meet...a stranger, speak to him as to a friend; if he seems to be lonely try to help him, give him of your willing service; if he be sad console him, if poor succor him, if oppressed rescue him, if in misery comfort him. In so doing you will manifest that not in words only, but in deed and in truth, you think of all men as your brothers.

Njang and Oben-Etchi decided to organize a new church on the Kalaru Estates. There were already two Christian services being offered in the community hall on the plantation. From 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. on Sundays there was a service in the Efik language, and from 10:00 to 12:00 p.m. there was a Catholic service in Igbo. There was no service available in English to minister to the religious needs of the many English-

[14] Notes of talks given October 16th and 17th, 1912. *Paris Talks*, pp. 15–17.

speaking Cameroonians who lived on the plantation. They, at least the Christians among them, would have been Presbyterians from the Basel Mission. So, Njang and Oben-Etchi decided to offer a Baha'i service in English (probably from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.) to be based on *Paris Talks.* To announce their decision, they used the plantation drum to call all of the workers living there to a general meeting.

These events raise a number of issues, all of which have important implications for the study of the Baha'i religion in West Africa. Foremost among these is the vantage point which we have, as a result of the independent nature of this Baha'i church, to examine the specific points of contact which allowed Oscar Njang and Peter Oben-Etchi to adopt a Baha'i identity without being taught by a Baha'i pioneer.

The bridge to the new religion, according to Njang's narrative, consisted of three specific points of fascination that attracted him to the Baha'i teachings—the photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the passage on hospitality from *Paris Talks*, and the (unstated) fact that the Baha'i teachings were presented in English. It is remarkable how widely these issues diverge from the standard presentation of the Baha'i teachings which was used by (American) Baha'i pioneers at the time.

Njang was initially attracted to the photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha which he saw when he opened the book *Paris Talks.* The photo is a portrait which shows only the head and shoulders of 'Abdu'l-Baha, an elderly man with a full white beard wearing a white turban and a traditional Middle Eastern cloak. (See Illustration 7.1.) He looks directly into the camera and is smiling slightly. The photo is a poor reproduction in the 1951 British Edition of the book, which is undoubtedly the edition which Njang saw. The reproduction is dark with high contrast, and it might appear (especially in an African context) that 'Abdu'l-Baha's skin is extremely dark.

Njang says that he was fascinated by the photograph because it reminded him of an elder in his village who would hear land disputes. He was a respected figure of Njang's childhood who would hear such cases and then "speak the truth." This raises the question of whether Njang was, at first, under the impression that 'Abdu'l-Baha was a black man. This may have been the first point of correspondence between Njang and the Baha'i Faith. It is possible that Njang was willing to accept the Baha'i teachings because he saw them as part of an African religion, or at least an independent African church.

Beyond this, of course, Njang felt that his own character was justified by the passages in the book that extol hospitality and kindness to

strangers. Oben-Etchi had first suggested that such a religion might be suited to Njang, because of his generosity. He was right, since it was this aspect of the Baha'i religion which initially convinced Njang to set up the Baha'i Church of Calabar.

Finally, the presentation of the Baha'i religion in an English book suited Njang's needs at the time. There were no Christian services in English for the many Cameroonian workers on the Kalaru plantation. The Efik and Igbo services obviously appealed to specific ethnic allegiances on the plantation. A church in English would appeal particularly to the Cameroonian Presbyterians, and in that sense it became an expression of ethnic identity also.

Peter Oben-Etchi apparently expected to become the leading figure in the new church, since his position on the plantation was superior to Njang's. He conducted the initial service, reading from *Paris Talks*, and talking about the Baha'i teachings. Then there were questions from the congregation: One man asked why it was that some people die as children, some die as young people, and some others do not die until they are old.

Apparently, Oben-Etchi did not have a satisfactory answer to this question, and Njang came to the rescue. He walked to the front of the room to address the congregation. He told a parable: Suppose that the overseer of the plantation would give a letter to three men. One letter is to be delivered to a nearby village, another to a place some miles away, and the third letter has to be taken to a far distant destination. Which one of these messengers will return to the plantation first, Njang asked. The worker who carried the letter to the village nearby would return after a few minutes; the other messenger would take a few hours; and the third messenger would not return until nightfall. But, they are all carrying out the instructions of the overseer, and he is equally pleased with each of them. Njang went on to explain that God is like the overseer and that each person dies after the mission that God has given to him is complete.

This short sermon drew an immediate response from the congregation; there were applause and handshakes all around. Njang's answer and his rhetorical abilities seem to have carried the day, winning the approval of those who were present. Oben-Etchi, at that point, asked Njang to lead the congregation, since his parable had been so satisfying. But later, Oben-Etchi became suspicious that his friend may have prepared this sermon beforehand and planted the question with someone in the congregation in order to capture the leadership of the church.

Baha'i services on the Kalaru Estates continued to be held every Sunday for several months. They were attended regularly by about 50 or 60 men. There are no detailed descriptions of the order of the service, though each Sunday was devoted to a different chapter of *Paris Talks.* It appears that the meetings consisted of readings from that book and a sermon or lecture delivered by Njang. His recollections of the services make no mention of any ritual, music, singing, or even prayer—though these may all have been involved.

In any case, it appears from Njang's descriptions that the services were Christian in character. The congregation clearly understood itself to be a new Christian denomination based on the Baha'i teachings—an independent church. At one point, Njang and Oben-Etchi discussed what form of baptism their church should administer.

### *The Collapse of the Church*

Eventually, Oscar Njang and Peter Oben-Etchi, the two church leaders, quarelled. Njang received a promotion and was to be trained as a canteen clerk on the plantation. Oben-Etchi complained to the European owner of the plantation about this, and his complaint was the source of the dispute. Soon, the two men could not be in the same room together without arguing. So, Njang was transferred to the palm oil mill in Akpabeyo. He left the Kalaru Estates in February of 1956.

Since Njang had been the leader of the services in Calabar, his transfer disrupted the church. Oben-Etchi seems to have tried to continue the services, but he was not a popular speaker. The church soon collapsed when attendance at the Sunday meetings fell off.

Njang left his copy of *Paris Talks* in Calabar when he departed for Akpabeyo. The book actually belonged to Enoch Olinga. It had only been borrowed by Michael Nkamato and was being used by the new church without Olinga's knowledge. However, Olinga's address was written in the book, and now Oben-Etchi wrote to him, telling him about the Baha'i activities in Calabar and the success and collapse of the church. He informed Olinga of Njang's success as a Baha'i leader and of his transfer to Akpabeyo.

Njang seems to have had no intention of continuing his Baha'i activities in Akpabeyo. He says that he began attending the services of the Church of Christ during the first few weeks after his arrival there. Much to his astonishment, he then received a letter from Olinga expounding the Baha'i religion. The letter urged him to continue his

Baha'i teaching. "If you are a Baha'i," the letter said, "wherever you go you have to teach the Baha'i Faith."

Njang showed this letter to the evangelist of the church he was attending, but he was accused of following a false prophet. Now dependent on Olinga for all information about the Baha'i faith, with no Baha'i book to fall back on, and apparently no longer willing to rely on ad-hoc interpretations, Njang wrote to Olinga in the Cameroons. He received in return a four-page letter which defended the Baha'i faith from the charge of false prophethood. He took this letter to his church in Akpabeyo and attempted to repeat his success in Calabar by forming a Baha'i congregation from its members, making a determined effort to split the church. Only five churchmen followed him.

When he wrote to Olinga to inform him of these five new followers, Olinga sent him the standard declaration forms used for Baha'i enrollment. He recalls that his instructions were: "Oscar, first declare yourself. Then declare these people." Njang recalls that he laughed when he read the letter. He remarked to one of the new Baha'is how funny it was that, all the time he had been doing these many things for his new religion, he himself had not been a member!

## *Njang's Parable*

Oscar Njang was unable to repeat his first teaching success by establishing a Baha'i church in Akpabeyo. This raises the question of what allowed him to be so successful on the Kalaru Estates, in the first instance. While personal fascination with the photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha and appreciation of the Baha'i teachings on hospitality might explain Njang's own attraction to the Baha'i teachings, the interest and allegiance to the Baha'i Church of the other Cameroonian men on the Kalaru plantation is another matter. The initial popularity of the Baha'i services seems to have been sparked by the parable that Njang told at the first meeting of the church in response to a question about death. Therefore, it might be useful to look at the implications of this parable more closely. What would have caused this story to resonate so effectively with large numbers of foreign laborers that it could insure (at least the beginnings of) a new church on the Kalaru Estates?

Primary factors in the success of Njang's short sermon were, of course, that it was delivered in English and that it was decidedly Christian in character. Njang's parable closely resembles in structure the

gospel parable of Jesus concerning the laborers in the vineyard.[15] In the New Testament version, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a householder who hires men to work his fields—some in the morning, some during the day, and some near sunset, but they are all paid the same wage for their labor.[16] The identical moral—of the justice of God's judgment despite apparent disparities—is being drawn out in both parables. It is not hard to imagine why the Christian men on the plantation would have found Njang's sermon familiar and appealing.

However, distinctly African concerns are also at play in Njang's parable. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Njang has recast Jesus's parable of the laborers in the vineyard in an African mold. The original parable has nothing to do with death.[17] The question of the explanation of premature death is a central one in most African philosophy and occupies a great deal of thought and speculation in African cosmologies. I would suggest that it corresponds to similar European concerns with the problem of evil or the Christian preoccupation with salvation.

African views of the world, at least in most societies, have no difficulty accounting for death *per se*. It is the nature of things that one should be born into the world, should grow up, have children, and eventually die at an old age to join one's ancestors in the spirit world. That is all good. But African philosophy generally finds premature death to be a problem that requires explanation. The death of a child or a young mother, for instance, indicates that the natural order of the universe has been disturbed. Something has gone wrong, and it must be set right.[18]

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[15] Matt. 20:1–19. Njang would have been intimately familiar with this parable from his mission education. The resonance of his speech is largely drawn from the familiarity of the parable which is now turned to suit African theological concerns. See below.

[16] Presumably meaning that late-comer converts to Christianity will have the same status as early believers—both in this world and in the next.

[17] Here I am not maintaining that the parable was necessarily original to Njang. He may easily have heard this explanation of death during his years of mission education and simply repeated it here. The parable does appear to have been new to the other men on the plantation who may have heard it for the first time at the Baha'i service, but possibly it was just familiar. There is no question that it was satisfying as a response to the question of premature death.

[18] See, for example, Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954) pp. 58–63; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1970) pp. 31–34, 48 and *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1975) pp. 110–25.

Classic African explanations for premature death include belief in witchcraft. This explanation for early death postulates that one has been harmed by the anger, the evil thoughts, or the envy of a living person. Witchcraft is universally regarded as evil in all African societies. The anger of ancestors or the displeasure of lesser gods and spirits are also explanations that can account for premature death, which is always regarded as an affront to the natural order of things.[19]

Recent research has demonstrated that witchcraft beliefs, far from disappearing in the upheavals in Africa in the twentieth century, are resilient and highly flexible discourses by which people can negotiate ideas about morality and modernity.[20] They can be used as an important conceptual tool in preserving traditional values and battling anxieties about the disruptions of powerful, outside, global forces that are beyond local control. Ideas about witchcraft can be enlisted to critique capitalist inequalities in the economy, to control the impact of new goods and technologies, and more generally as a moral commentary on modern life.

Therefore, it is significant that one of the questions that arose during Njang's and Oben-Etchi's original meeting would concern the disquiet that African societies so often feel about premature death. Njang's response to this question avoids the traditional African explanations for this issue and directly rejects the notion that premature death represents an evil and disordered intervention in God's plan for things. Njang's parable focuses on the command of God, eschews

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[19] On witchcraft, in addition to works cited in Chapter Six, see E. E. Evans-Pritchard's classic study of the Azande, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937). See also, Lucy Mair, *Witchcraft* (New York: World University Library, 1969); John Middleton, ed., *Magic Witchcraft and Curing* (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1967); Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).

[20] Recent academic explorations of witchcraft and modernity include: Misty Bastian, "Bloodhounds Who Have No Friends: Witchcraft and Locality in the Nigerian Popular Press" in Comaroff, ed., *Modernity and its Malcontents*, pp. 129–66; Mark Auslander, "Open the Wombs! The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witchfinding" in Comaroff, ed., in *Modernity and its Malcontents*, pp. 167–92; Peter Geschiere, "Globalization and the Power of Indeterminate Meaning: Witchcraft and Spirit Cults in Africa and East Asia," *Development and Change*, Vol. 29 (1998) pp. 811–37; Dominique Malaquais, "Anatomie d'une arnaque: feymen et feymania au Cameroun," *Les Etudes du CERI*, Vol. 77 (2001) pp. 1–46; Birgit Meyer, "Commodities and the Power of Prayer: Pentecostalist Attitudes Towards Consumption in Contemporary Ghana," *Development and Change*, Vol. 29 (1998); Todd Sanders, "Reconsidering Witchcraft: Postcolonial Africa and Analytical (Un)Certainties," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 105 (2003) no. 2, pp. 338–52.

reference to any lesser being, and specifically makes no reference to witchcraft as a cause of death. All death results from the will of God himself and is part of his plan.

Robin Horton, in a celebrated exchange with Humphrey Fisher, argued that the large-scale conversion of Africans to Christianity and Islam in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries can be partially explained by the transfer of significance (and life experience) from the microcosm to the macrocosm.[21] Horton proposed a two-tiered model of African traditional cosmology, which is admittedly an oversimplification, but nonetheless useful for purposes of analysis. In this model, the lesser spirits and beings of African religions are associated with family, village, clan, and the local landscape—the microcosm of daily life. Yet these same religions recognize a supreme being, God, who is concerned with the larger world, the macrocosm.

Horton suggests that, especially in the nineteenth century, as the importance of the macrocosm to African life expanded—through state formation, the movement of people, long-distance trade, foreign conquest, colonial rule, and so forth—the adaptive potential of the largely underdeveloped African concept of a supreme God was actualized. The minor spirits came to be regarded as less important, in retreat, or even positively evil; while the supreme God was now seen to play a more active role in African life. As people were forced by circumstance to leave their local areas and live outside the traditional microcosm, the lesser spirits became irrelevant.

Using this model, Horton suggests that "acceptance of Islam and Christianity [in Africa] is due as much to development of the traditional cosmology in response to *other* features of the modern situation as it is to the activities of the missionaries."[22] In this sense, Horton's theory rejects the notion that even large-scale conversions to monotheistic religions represent the rejection of a traditional African religious cosmology. Rather, Christianity and Islam are regarded as 'catalysts,' that is, stimulators and accelerators of religious change—of a religious conversion which was 'in the air' anyway, for purely indigenous

[21] Robin Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa*, Vol. 41, no. 2 (1971) pp. 85–108; and "On the Rationality of Conversion," *Africa*, Vol. 45, nos. 3 and 4 (1975) pp. 219–35, 373–99. See also, Humphrey Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa," *Africa*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (1973).

[22] Horton, "African Conversion," p. 103.

reasons.[23] The traditional local spirits that are of such immediate and constant concern in village life no longer provide the explanations that are needed when the wider world (the macrocosm) intrudes. But African religions, according this theory, can always call upon the (traditionally distant and otiose) High God as a means of explaining these new events. Horton maintains that they did.[24]

Njang's parable, with its uncompromising focus on God as the cause of all death, insists on the overwhelming significance of the macrocosmic forces of the universe. The microcosm of lesser gods and spirits, witches, and even ancestors is ignored altogether. According to Horton's schema, this approach would represent a statement that the lower tier of African cosmology is of no importance, and perhaps has even disappeared as a religious category.

Of course, as Horton suggests, the impositions of the modern world and conversion to Christianity and Islam in Africa had already helped this process along considerably by the 1950s. Surely, God was a known concept and was already important in African thought before Njang told his parable. But for those men working far from home on the Kalaru Estates, cut off from local networks and even local churches, the insignificance of the micro-spirit world must have seemed especially obvious. The appeal of Njang's sermon may have been precisely its willingness to discard the microcosm completely—even more completely than most African Christians would have done while living under normal circumstances with family and relations within their home communities—in favor of a conversion to rigid monotheism.

If this is true, then the Baha'i Church that Njang and Oben-Etchi founded would have represented a real conversion even for the Christians among the congregation. Certainly, the two founders of the church regarded it as such, feeling that they had truly changed religions. That significant numbers of other men were willing to follow them indicates that the change met a commonly felt need. The migrant laborers who attended the Baha'i services were, in Nigeria, utterly

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[23] Ibid., p. 104. Compare this to Peter Berger's model of the need for change within Christianity itself in the face of the challenge of modernity, discussed in Chapter Three.

[24] For a critique of Horton's model (beyond Fisher's reply, which was effectively dismissed by Horton's second *Africa* article in 1975), see André Droogers, "From waste-making to recycling: A plea for an eclectic use of models in the study of religious change," in *Theoretical Explorations in African Religions*, ed. by Wim van Binsbergen and Matthew Schoffeleers (London: KPI, 1985) pp. 116–19.

dependent on the world beyond their kinship and ethnic networks for work, money, and survival. Their conversion to the Baha'i Church may have been, among other things, a conversion to the exclusive significance of the macrocosm in their spiritual lives, as well.

## *From Church to Sect*

So it seems that the success of Njang's efforts in Calabar may be attributed in large measure to the power of Baha'i teachings and Baha'i identity to capture the imagination of Africans who were newly experiencing the importance of the macrocosm in their lives. If this is true, then the question must immediately arise of why Njang was unable to repeat his conversion success in Akpabeyo. Why didn't he go on to organize a successful Baha'i church there and attract a congregation of believers, as he had before?

Both Njang and Oben-Etchi remained Baha'is after the collapse of their church. They went on to form the first local Spiritual Assembly of Nigeria in Calabar in April 1957. Njang remains a Baha'i today, having served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Nigeria and later as an Auxiliary Board member in that country. Oben-Etchi also remained a Baha'i for the rest of his life. However, neither of them ever again was able to form a Baha'i church or accomplish the significant number of conversions to the Baha'i faith that they had initially.

Certainly, Njang in Akpabeyo no longer had access to the book *Paris Talks*, which had become the basis of church services on the Kalaru Estates. But, undoubtedly, he could have reclaimed the book or obtained other Baha'i literature, especially after beginning a correspondence with Enoch Olinga.

There is also the fact that Njang tells us that he had no intention of continuing his Baha'i activities once he moved to Akpabeyo. Finding the need for religious observance, he joined the Church of Christ there.[25] But, after receiving his first letter from Olinga, Njang reaffirmed his commitment to a Baha'i identity. His lapse of faith lasted

[25] It should be observed that this was not the Presbyterian Church in which he had been educated and baptized in Cameroon. This Church of Christ affiliation underscores, perhaps, the flexibility of Christian observance among the working men on the palm plantations in Nigeria.

only a few weeks at most, and he was soon determined to establish a Baha'i group in his new location.

The practical situation that Njang faced in Akpabeyo was certainly different. The services of the Church of Christ were in English, and so the need for Christian services in English on this plantation would not have been as keenly felt as on the Kalaru Estates, where there had been none. He faced a rival evangelist who would soon preach against him. He did not enjoy the same friendship with a company headman that his acquaintance with Oben-Etchi had afforded him.

However, the explanation for the now few number of converts which Njang could find, it seems to me, lies more in understanding the nature of the international Baha'i community to which he was now attached than with any differences in the local conditions that he faced. It seems that, in coming into contact with Olinga and the Baha'i community of West Africa, Njang and Oben-Etchi were themselves converted from their own Baha'i Church to a more primitive and demanding Baha'i 'circle' of disciples, more or less focused on a single leader. This new conception of the Baha'i religion as a closed 'circle,' rather than an open 'ecclesiastical body,' is what rendered the repetition of the success of the Baha'i Church of Calabar impossible in Akpabeyo, and even in Calabar itself.

Joachim Wach, in his classic *Sociology of Religion*, suggests a three-phase model for the historical development of the great religions.[26] He illustrates his model with evidence drawn from various religious traditions, including Baha'i. Wach proposes that the founded religions begin with an initial phase during which their teachings are established by an individual through the force of his own charisma. This individual becomes the center of a 'circle' of disciples who are personally attached to him. This 'circle' represents the entire body of believers.

After the death of the founder, a new phase in the development of the religion begins during which the 'circle' is transformed into a new kind of organization which Wach termed the 'brotherhood.' Whereas during the life of the founder the doctrine and truth of the new religion centered on him alone, after his departure the teachings must be carried on by his close disciples. Typically, only believers who have known the founder personally and were members of the original

[26] Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944 [1971]) pp. 130–45.

'circle' will achieve positions of leadership in the 'brotherhood' phase of the religion's growth. But these new leaders will reorganize and reinterpret the prophet's work—seniority and direct contact with the prophet's charisma becoming the sources of their authority.

This 'brotherhood' must, of course, gradually disintegrate; and the third phase of the religion's development is marked by its slow transformation into an 'ecclesiastical body,' or a church. This last stage represents the full routinization of the founder's charisma, during which the teachings, the rituals, and the authority of the church and its functionaries become formalized.

Margit Warburg, using the example of the establishment of the Baha'i faith in Denmark, has demonstrated the value of Wach's model to the understanding of the spread of an existing religion into a new country.[27] Warburg maintains that the same three phases of 'circle,' 'brotherhood,' and 'ecclesiastical body' can be seen, over a much shorter period of time, to have characterized the history of the Baha'is of Denmark. Introduced in 1947, by two women—American pioneers who played the role of 'founders'—the Baha'i community was initially established as a 'circle' of believers centered around them. The community experienced a painful reorganization into a 'brotherhood' after the pioneers left the country in 1951, and then later began its development toward routinized organization and formal hierarchy—developments which are still in process today.

Warburg finds major structural similarities between the founding of a new religion by a prophet, as described by Wach, and its subsequent introduction into a new area of the world by the first missionaries. At least three characteristics are nearly identical:

1. The religion was previously unknown in a particular area to the public at large;
2. The founder and/or the first missionaries hold a monopoly on information about the new religion;
3. To the new converts, the founder and/or first missionaries are undisputed religious authorities.[28]

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[27] Margit Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body: Bahá'í in Denmark, 1925–1987" in *Religion, Tradition, and Renewal*, ed. by Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus University Press, 1991) pp. 201–221.

[28] Ibid., p. 203.

Warburg is careful to clarify that this comparison of founder and first missionaries is valid only from an academic, sociological perspective. It does not represent the point of view of the missionaries themselves, who would regard the two situations as fundamentally different. Such a comparison would also be rejected by the adherents of the religion, since naturally they would regard their prophet as beyond comparison to later missionaries, and might even be offended by such an idea.

Nonetheless, Warburg usefully suggests that:

> This structural similarity between the two situations means that the missionary's position in the religious community is similar to that of the founder, both enjoying a special status among the believers. Both are sole mediators of religious knowledge directly from superior authority. The relation between the missionary(ies) and the first converts will be a structural parallel to the founder's relation to his first disciples, because both the founder and the missionary act as a centre of undisputed authority communicating with each convert directly. In Wach's terminology, this type of organization is called a 'circle.' This concept, therefore, will also be applicable to a situation where a missionizing religion is first introduced into a new area.[29]

I would propose that these structural conditions apply to the introduction of the Baha'i faith into the Cameroons and Eastern Nigeria, with Enoch Olinga playing the role of the first missionary who attracted a circle of believers around himself. The Baha'i Church of Calabar, on the other hand, exhibited no such characteristics. It was initiated by Njang and Oben-Etchi as an ecclesiastical body in the tradition of Protestant Christianity, and it saw itself not as a founding 'circle' but as a new church. As such, this church was free to attract an immediate attendance to its services of a large number of worshippers who were familiar with that tradition.

After Njang's move to Akpabeyo and Oben-Etchi's failure to maintain the church in Calabar, both men eventually turned to Olinga as the authority on the Baha'i faith and attached themselves to him. He was already established as the center of a new 'circle,' and they—in effect—became his 'disciples' (in a structural sense). This created a situation that was entirely distinct from their previous presentation of the Baha'i faith as a church. As a 'circle' the Baha'i religion would have

[29] Ibid., pp. 203–204.

much less appeal to large numbers of Christian men in West Africa than would a church.

Although Warburg is not concerned with this aspect of his analysis, Wach—in proposing his model for the development of founded religions—has noted the different levels of demand and commitment required of believers at the different stages of 'circle,' 'brotherhood,' and 'church.' Membership in the original 'circle' requires "a complete break with the ordinary pursuits of life and a radical change in social and religious relationships. Ties of family and kinship and loyalties of various kinds are at least temporarily relaxed or severed."[30] The 'circle' demands intense bonds of solidarity among the believers, who are expected to be few. They are asked to leave everything behind to follow the new religion and adopt "a revised attitude toward the nature of ultimate truth as well as toward the world and its inhabitants." They adopt a new identity and should expect to experience hardships, suffering, persecution, and even martyrdom.[31]

This approach to religion very much characterized the demands and expectations of the Baha'i pioneers in West Africa toward their converts during the first years of its growth there, and this was also true in Uganda. The very first converts in Cameroon were almost immediately asked to leave friends, family, and fellow believers behind, and to scatter as pioneers to various parts of the region. As we have seen, many of them did just that.[32]

By the time the religion develops into a church, Wach observes, these expectations are relaxed—at least for the majority of believers. A 'double standard of perfection' distinguishes the 'clergy' from the 'laity.' The latter, who are most members of the church, pursue their lives in an ordinary way within a stable, if sacred, organization.[33]

I would suggest that, after coming into contact with Olinga, Njang and Oben-Etchi found their conception of the Baha'i religion changed from the assumption that it was a church among other Christian churches to the realization that it was—at least at this point in its

[30] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 135.
[31] Ibid., p. 136. These kinds of demands and expectations certainly characterized the Baha'i community in the United States during the 1950s and, to a much lesser extent, continue to characterize it today.
[32] See Chapter Five.
[33] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 144.

development in the British Cameroons—conceived as a 'circle.'[34] Olinga's first letters to Njang do not instruct him to form a Baha'i church in Akpabeyo that might duplicate the success he had achieved in Calabar, it should be noted. Olinga's first instructions were to have all of the Baha'is in Akpabeyo 'declare' their faith and register their names as members of a new religion. This declaration procedure, however normal in the Baha'i world, was unfamiliar to Njang, as it would have been to his new converts. Certainly, this was an act that implied a radical change in religious identity. It was this new concept that effectively brought a halt to Njang's Baha'i church project and connected him to the wider international Baha'i community, which conceived of itself quite differently.

## *Conclusions*

So, what are the results of the laboratory experiment that offered us, in West Africa during the 1950s, in effect, a Baha'i faith without the Baha'is? What can we learn from the brief life of the Baha'i Church of Calabar?

The first thing that is obvious is the enormous role which the initiative of African converts played in the establishment of the Baha'i religion in West Africa. In the Calabar case, the Baha'i teachings alone were extremely effective in establishing a substantial following of converts without any effort whatsoever being made by foreign Baha'is. Conceived, of course, as a Christian teaching, the Baha'i message alone had enormous appeal to West Africans—quite independent of its missionaries. Such appeal implies not only the persuasiveness of the message itself, but more importantly the readiness of Africans to adopt it on their own initiative. As an independent Christian church, which is how it was conceived and reworked in Calabar, the Baha'i faith was an extremely successful (if ephemeral) movement.

Second, we may note that the points of attraction to the Baha'i message from an African perspective were quite different than the Baha'i

[34] Although more research is needed to establish the point clearly, it appears that in later years the Baha'i faith in British Cameroons eventually moved away from the structure of a brotherhood centered on Enoch Olinga and became a movement, at least in some parts of the country. Large numbers of people became Baha'is very quickly. (See Chapter Six.) However, the history of the Baha'is in Nigeria indicates that a similar advance did not take place there. (See Chapter Four.)

pioneers may have imagined. The photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Baha'i teachings on hospitality, the English translation of Baha'i texts, and an unorthodox[35] explanation of the cause of premature death were the elements which allowed a bridge to large-scale conversion in Calabar. The usual elements of Baha'i teaching—the concept of progressive revelation, the modern and progressive Baha'i principles, claims of a new prophet come from God, the call to a new religious age—were absent.

One point of convergence between the conventional Baha'i message and the Calabar doctrine, however, may have been agreement on the overwhelming significance of the macrocosm to the life of its converts. This may have been expressed in the form of a strict monotheism within the new Baha'i church: it would have marked the arrival of the world of high modernism to West Africa and the end of the traditional, village order. For the larger Baha'i world, this idea would be understood as the fundamental Baha'i belief in the unity of humanity, the oneness and wholeness of the human race, as the central fact of contemporary history.

And again, the Baha'is of Calabar and the Baha'is in the larger international Baha'i community may have shared a common experience of conversion to a new faith, even though a faith with deep roots in their old traditions. Insofar as the Calabar Baha'is experienced their Baha'i services as a move beyond the Basel Mission to a post-Christian religion—in some sense, a post-colonial religion—they shared this experience of conversion and renewal with every other Baha'i in the world.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our laboratory experiment indicates clearly that the conception of the Baha'i faith as a closed 'circle' of believers—believers who are expected to break with the past and pursue the promulgation of the religion at any cost to themselves—failed to attract large numbers of converts in West Africa.

On the other hand, the presentation of the Baha'i religion as a new Christian church with a fresh message for its followers was enormously effective. The initial success of Njang and Oben-Etchi in organizing a Baha'i Church stands as an important counter-example to their more limited success in finding converts to the Baha'i faith once they were

[35] Unorthodox from a Baha'i point of view, that is. And only in the sense that Njang's parable cannot be found in official Baha'i texts. There is nothing in Njang's parable that contemporary Baha'is would find objectionable or offensive.

part of Enoch Olinga's circle. It stands in similar contrast to the efforts of foreign pioneers in establishing the Baha'i community in other parts of Africa, in Ghana or Nigeria, for instance.

But, at the same time, their success may provide hints to explain how the Baha'is were able to achieve such explosive growth in converting whole congregations from within the Basel Mission in the British Cameroons some time later. The Basel Mission converts may have seen themselves as joining a 'new church,'[36] rather than a life-consuming 'circle' of disciples of a new religion. The Baha'i Church of Calabar demonstrates how easily Africans might agree to join such a new church and how such conversions might involve whole communities of Christians.

[36] The term 'new church' was actually used at the time, in popular speech, to refer to the new Baha'i communities of the British Cameroons, as Tröster mentions in his article.

AFTERWORD

# IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

This is the first academic book that has been published on the history of the Baha'i religion in Africa. It is certainly premature to sum up this research with any definite statements that can be called 'conclusions.' Furthermore, the sources of this book, and the dissertation on which it is based, were limited to archives in the United States and Switzerland, and a few oral interviews. Therefore, the reach of this study is necessarily limited. The establishment of the Baha'i faith in Africa, and in West Africa in particular, involved a number of disparate threads and complex processes that cannot be neatly tied together. There were at some times clear trends and patterns that can be discerned in hindsight. However, such patterns were often short-lived and contradictory.

At the end of this study, the reader is left with more questions than answers. That is as it should be. Academic publications should, after all, pave the way for further research, not pretend to shut the door on it. My hope is that future scholars, and especially scholars inside Africa, will follow this work with more detailed and more informed studies that will raise still more questions.

The process of establishing the Baha'i religion in West Africa, in the first ten years, was a complex one, involving pioneers from three different continents bringing (as is now clear) different messages and different religious practices with them. Americans, both white and black, were followed by Iranians, and Indian with Iranian roots, several recently converted Africans, and one Ugandan transplant, all living in widely dispersed communities. They carried with them different assumptions, different beliefs, different emphases, different approaches, different languages, and different strategies of teaching. The Baha'i message was, therefore, not a monolithic one.

The clearest distinction that can be discerned at this point is the contrast between the American organizational model, which was mostly concerned with the proper functioning of Baha'i Administration, as exemplified by Valerie Wilson; the Indo-Iranian healing model, which we can barely make out as a movement among Muslim converts in

the Gambia, centered around the efforts of Fariborz Roozbehyan; and a revival-type movement, which spread successfully among Christians within the Basel Mission in the British Cameroons under the direction of Enoch Olinga.[1] Certainly, the latter was the most successful and the most long-lasting of the three. Nonetheless, a wide divergence of Baha'i practice is one theme that merits further study. What exactly were the various elements of each approach? How were they understood by new converts? Why did some fail and some succeed so well?

Questions surrounding conversion and religious identity are notoriously difficult, but must be answered. However, the answers very much depend on point of view. In Uganda, Olinga invited people in his homeland of Teso to become Baha'is in such a way that did not require them to abandon their church membership. While the Baha'i world celebrated their conversions in near-ecstatic language, the Ugandan Baha'is—while enthusiastic about their new faith and their new identity—continued to regard themselves as Christians. This may also have been true of the Basel Mission Baha'is in the British Cameroons.

I doubt that the concept of 'dual identity' will be very helpful in allowing us to understand the experiences of these African Baha'is. It seems to me that such a concept would be foreign to their experience and incomprehensible to them. It does not appear to me that they subjectively experienced any duality at all. To demand that they should have done so, I would argue, is only an attempt to force them into categories that they did not recognize, or even understand—but to which we feel they must conform. More likely, Middleton's suggestion that these new Baha'is were simply happy to partake of what was 'there' will be more useful for research.[2]

Categories were certainly forced upon the new Baha'is, in any case. Of course, these categories depended very much on who was doing the categorizing. In the British Cameroons, for example, the new Baha'is were immediately accepted by Shoghi Effendi as full and mature members of the Baha'i religion, equal to all others and competent to under-

[1] To these, we might possibly add the 'utopian model' of some of the African American pioneers in Liberia. However, we have so little evidence concerning their ideas and plans that I hesitate to include it. I am deliberately passing over the short-lived 'independent church' model found in Calabar, since it was not connected to the wider Baha'i community.

[2] See Chapter Five for a discussion of Middleton's concepts.

take missionary assignments in other parts of Africa. They represented to him, and to the distant Baha'is of Iran and of America, the spiritual conquest of the continent. To Georg Tröster, on the other hand, these converts were lamentable apostates who should be urgently gathered back into the Christian fold. Other evidence suggests that to their fellow African Christians—those who did not become Baha'is, such as Minister B— in Tröster's narrative—they remained members of the church, and members of the community, whose adherence to Baha'i teachings had given rise, perhaps, to the unfortunate consequence of making them the target of missionary meddling. For B— and for certain Christian elders it appears that their neighbors' new beliefs and new allegiances were of little consequence.

But what of the Basel Baha'is and their self-perception? What categories did they make for themselves? How did they define their own identities? The answers to these questions remain elusive. Mose Tanyi claimed that he could see "no great difference" between Christianity and the Baha'i faith. He had opted for the latter, perhaps, to escape from missionary control and oppression. But he remained convinced that he was involved in the same struggle that the Christian missions were engaged in. Just how he understood that to be true is unclear.

Certainly future studies will answer this question better than this first study can. Future researchers would do well to interview the early converts who are still alive, to seek out their memoirs, letters, and written testimonies.[3] Not only the converts who remain Baha'is today, but also those who may have returned to their original churches or moved on to other beliefs, should be sought out. Nor should Tröster be allowed to remain the only voice of the Basel Mission. The testimonies of other missionaries and of African pastors are badly needed. It is only by exploring these multiple points of view that it will be possible to get a multifaceted understanding of Baha'i conversion during the period.

Questions of conversion and identity will also be prominent in any consideration of the Baha'i Church of Calabar. Should this short-lived congregation of believers be regarded as Baha'i at all? Did the formation of this church mark any real conversion on the part of its

[3] For those who have died, the personal reminiscence of their children and the oral histories of their families will yield important information.

members?[4] My answer would be: yes, indeed it did. But again, the event stubbornly refuses to fit neatly into familiar categories.

I have suggested in Chapter Seven that the Baha'i congregation at Calabar was a deliberate and self-conscious attempt to create a new church based on Baha'i teachings as found in *Paris Talks*, a volume of speeches delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Nonetheless, I doubt that the new Baha'is perceived any sharp break with their Christian origins (though some of them later would). They were Baha'is in the sense that they had founded a new and independent church committed to Baha'i principles.[5] They had converted to a new thing—something novel and refreshing, but still domestic and recognizable. Questions of identity and conversion are paramount here, but answers are not easy to come by. Nor are they liable to fit into categories we are comfortable with.

Another pattern that emerges from this study of the early years of the Baha'i faith in West Africa is the highly uneven effectiveness of Baha'i teaching efforts. For Olinga, success followed success—first in Uganda and then in the British Cameroons. In Gambia, on the other hand, Baha'i Assemblies and converts were repeatedly erased by circumstances. In Sierra Leone, the Baha'i community had a tentative beginning and then stagnated. In Nigeria, growth remained weak and unimpressive. In French-speaking West Africa, there was virtually no growth at all.

Finally, there is the even more elusive question of the Baha'i message. As we have seen, the teachings of the Baha'i religion were selectively transmitted to Africans by Iranian and American pioneers, who carefully distinguished between the essentials of faith and 'secondary' matters. These teachings were also selectively received by converts in ways that are difficult to discern from the written record.

Certainly the messages differed. I have suggested that the message that Enoch Olinga offered, the one that was most successful, was a

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[4] One scholar has suggested to me that since the founders of the church apparently intended to baptize its members, this indicates that they considered themselves Christians, and not Baha'is at all. I cannot follow the logic of this argument.

[5] The anecdote which relates that the founders of the Calabar Baha'i Church puzzled over which kind of baptism they should administer is instructive—even emblematic. The new Baha'is here assumed that they remained Christians and that potential converts would have to be baptized. But, what kind of Christians were they? Which form of baptism should be appropriate? Here is the intersection of an identity that is self-consciously new and innovative, clearly a conversion (the Baha'i element), within an assumed matrix of an older tradition.

Christian chiliastic call for renewal. Further research is certainly needed to confirm this hypothesis. Even if this initial assessment turns out to be true, and Olinga's message was such, how was it understood and received—first by Teso converts in Uganda, then by Banyangi in the British Cameroons? What message, in turn, did these new converts transmit to their own converts, and how was that received?

The Baha'i faith was introduced into an African context, in a milieu of African beliefs and assumptions. Where it was accepted, it was interpreted within that context and appropriated to the needs of the African experience. As with all conversions, conversion to the Baha'i faith was a classical, dialectic process that included an exchange of ideas between specific individual converts and specific individual pioneers—each with their differing cultures, beliefs, assumptions, and practices. Sorting through all of those individual threads is perhaps the most difficult task, a task well beyond the scope of this study.

Thomas Spear has noted that, although there is a vast literature on the spread of Christianity throughout Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there are still large areas of Christian history that have not been adequately explored in academic study. He points out that much has been written on the growth of missions, mission churches, and the subsequent explosion of independent African churches, but little is known about the personal religious experiences of African Christians. He goes on to say:

> Social histories of mission and national churches are rare, ethnographies of African Christian religious practice virtually non-existent, biographies of early Christian converts and catechists exceptional, and analyses of African Christian beliefs scarce.... It is thus critical that we probe deeply into the experiences of African Christians themselves as they explored the new faith in all its complexity, interpreted it in their own cultural and historical contexts, and appropriated it as their own...[6]

Of course, if this is true of the scholarship on Christianity in Africa, it is true many times over for the study of the Baha'i religion there. At this point, we can only begin to ask questions and hope that future researchers will find ways to answer them.

[6] Spear, "Toward the History," pp. 3–4.

APPENDIX

# A LIST OF BAHA'IS IN BRITISH CAMEROONS, 1958

This is a copy of a list found in Valerie Wilson's papers. Though undated and untitled, it appears to be a report that she received in 1958 from the Baha'is in the British Cameroons. The report is remarkable for the detail that it contains concerning the individual Baha'is in the area. Every effort was made to show the names, tribal affiliation, country of origin, native language, and age of each Baha'i. In addition, records had been kept, in most cases, of the date on which each person had registered as a member of the religion.

Since there were no European or American Baha'is in the British Cameroons at this time (and no Iranians), the report was generated by recent African converts. It demonstrates the level of sophistication and literacy of (at least the leaders of) the Cameroonian Baha'i community at this time. The report resembles a list that might have been made by the colonial administration or by the Basel Mission.

The compiler of this list is unknown. However, the report sent the following year (received September 3, 1959) to Ms. Wilson from the British Cameroons was put together by the Baha'i Regional Teaching Committee No. 10, based in Victoria. In that letter, the secretary of the committee seems mildly annoyed by Wilson's urgent demands for statistics. He writes: "Please I regret whatever embarrassment the shortage of the enclosed information had caused you. However, a little patience in this time of development could be tolerated if not overlooked." (Valerie Wilson papers.) The 1959 report included the names of all Baha'is, but not their personal information.

There are handwritten additions to the typed list that were probably made by Wilson herself to update the list, as more people became Baha'is. Her notes also indicate deaths, corrections of spelling, moves, and so forth. In addition, she adds checks and symbols that are not immediately clear. In most cases, I have not reproduced these notes below. Where I have done so, the notes appear in brackets. (My additions also appear in brackets.) Since the pages of my photocopies have become shuffled, it is not clear that the various localities were listed in the order they are presented below. However, the information is accurately reproduced for each locality. Inconsistencies in punctuation and spelling, duplication of names, etc., are reproduced as found in the original list.

Locality: Victoria

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thompson Akondip | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Kanyang | 24 |
| Andrease Ndip | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 30.4.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Samuel Bakare | Ibo | Nigeria | 14.6.54 | Ibo | 35 |
| Oscar Wotumba | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 10.6.54 | Bakweri | Adult |
| John Mbok | Bassa | B/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Bassa | Adult |
| Thomas Njumbe | Bakossi | B/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Bakossi | 32 |
| Jeremiah Ngu | Bametah | B/Cameroons | 28.10.54 | Meta(h) | Adult |
| Solomon Tambai | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 11.11.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| William Egbe Tuku | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 11.11.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Richmond Teta | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 30.9.54 | Bakweri | Adult |
| Robinson Ekpew | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Banyang | Adult |
| Alfred Takow | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 16.4.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Jo'anah Ngompek (Miss) | Bassa | B/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Bassa | 28 |
| Belta Oru (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Benjamin Akparies | Ekoi | Nigeria | 24.2.55 | Ekoi | 27 |
| Alfred Jack | Ibo | Nigeria | 12.7.55 | Ibo | 27 |
| John Upa | Doula [sic] | B/Cameroons | 18.2.56 | Doula [sic] | 28 |
| Samuel Atanga | Bameta(h) | B/Cameroons | 14.2.56 | Meta(h) | 22 |
| Ben Ndumbe | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 4.3.56 | Bakweri | 24 |
| Jackson Nso | Ibibio | Nigeria | 10.4.56 | Ibibio | 25 |
| John Chuku Ogu | Ibo | Nigeria | 20.4.57 | Ibo | 26 |
| Joshua Orung | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 20.4.57 | Keaka | 27 |
| Dickson Nfaw Ako | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 1.5.57 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Eleazar Mojekwu | Ibo | Nigeria | 12.7.55 | Ibo | Adult |
| Mathias Nwaha | Bassa | B/Cameroons | 24.6.54 | Bassa | 19 |
| Agnes Tambi (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Enoch Olinga | Teso | Uganda | 15.10.53 | Ateso | Adult |
| Eunice Olinga (Mrs) | Teso | Uganda | — | Ateso | Adult |
| Nancy A. Ekedo (Mrs) | Ibo | Nigeria | 12.5.57 | Ibo | 25½ |
| Frida Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 13.7.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sophie Ayauk (Miss) | Obang | B/Cameroons | 29.6.57 | Obang | Adult |
| Rose A. Takow (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 6.7.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Rose Bakere (Mrs) | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Lucy Okoro (Mrs) | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Grace Okoro (Mrs) | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Daniel Ekoma Ebai | Bafor | B/Cameroons | 10.1.56 | Bafor | 39 |
| Robert Sass | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 15.6.57 | Bakweri | 27 |
| Martin Besong [Olaf] | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 24.4.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Oscar B. Orung | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 25.6.57 | Keaka | 22 |
| Mathias A. Ekedo | Ibo | Nigeria | 12.5.57 | Ibo | 28 |
| Daniel Njah | Bamenda | B/Cameroons | 4.7.57 | Bikom | 28 |
| Adolphus Njang | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 4.7.57 | Kenyang | 24 |

Locality: Victoria (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theophilus Umunalsive | Ibo | Nigeria | 4.7.57 | Ibo | 29 |
| Wilfred Agbor Ashu | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 1.11.57 | Keaka | 24 |
| John A. Agbor | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 31.10.57 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Daniel E. Takow | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 31.10.57 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Daniel Eyisab | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 1.11.57 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Silas Nwaka | Ibo | Nigeria | 1.11.57 | Ibo | 36 |
| Francisca E. Arung (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 8.8.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Fernie Ewane (Mrs) | Nkongsamba | F/Cameroons | 30.10.57 | Douala | Adult |
| Nkah George | Bassa | B/Cameroons | 31.10.57 | Bassa | 30 |
| Thimothy Onyebuagu | Ibo | Nigeria | 1.4.58 | Ibo | 34 |
| Isaac Okoro | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | 36 |
| George E. Ndukwe | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | 28 |
| Iro Ike | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | 27 |
| Hansel Ndando Akume | Bakossi | B/Cameroons | — | Bakossi | 29 |
| Joseph O. Irem | Ibo | Nigeria | 6.11.56 | Ibo | 26 |
| Alice Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Jacob N. Elad | Mbo | F/Cameroons | 30.12.57 | Mbo | Adult |
| Bassey Udofia | Ibibio | Nigeria | 10.9.58 | Ibibio | 26 |
| George E. J. Aderinola | Yoruba | Nigeria | 14.9.58 | Yoruba | 39 |

[The following names have been added by hand, each followed by an X. Many of the names appear to list the last name first. But there are no commas.]

Ashu Daniel
Okoko Ndukaihe
Oru James
Ayuk Stephen
Ifeyinwa Albert
Besong Moses
Franscisca Agbor [no X, preceded by Θ]
Adolophonse Njang
Enow Joseph
Ekema Peter
Ogu Chuku John[1]
Monono M. Gustav
Mbal Ceicilia (Mrs)
Elta Mercy (Mrs)
Hannah Monono (Mrs)

[1] Also listed above for Victoria.

Locality: Tinto

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Edward Manga | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Moses Eyong Tabi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| James T. Ebai | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Be(r)nard T. Ayuk(agbor) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Johnathan Akombi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Joseph Atem Njock | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.10.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| J. N. Ajongi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Thomas Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| M. N. E. Akombi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Tabe Essim | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| G. N. Maccornea Tongabiang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Ceicilia Paul Ndip (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Bessem Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Agnes Enobika (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Agnes Ayongi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Belta Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Janny Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Frida Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| [Su]ssana Asik Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Adolf Njock Ebai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Cather Beyang Essong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 43 |
| Samuel Besong Ebanga | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 75 |
| Samuel E. Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 56 |
| Sampson Tatta | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Sophie Anyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Manyang Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Samuel Ngah | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 14 |
| Lucy Tambe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Polina Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Jacob Manga | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Agatha A. Akombi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Johanes Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 60 |
| Abanda Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Sophie Abanda (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Robertson Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| W. A. Ebot | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Lucy Oyongi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| [F]rancisca Orok (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Clara Williams (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Sophie Atem Nyok (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| D. A. Atem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 50 |

Locality: Tinto (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Robert Tange | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 57 |
| Fanny Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| James T. Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| William Nkeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| J. A. Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Chief A. Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 68 |
| Oscar Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Regina Tambe Etem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Mufani Tabe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Emelia Tanyi Ndip (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Emannuel Agbor Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Emelia Enow Obi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Andrease Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 41 |
| James Enobika | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Elline Enobika (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Agnes Enobika (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Regina Enombi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Margaret Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Peter Ashu Ngwa | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Sam Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 44 |
| Sophie Adami (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 54 |
| Money Takang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 53 |
| Grace Martin (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Jacob Bangeb | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Nkwa Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Jacob Nkwa Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Elisa Ayuk Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Sophie Eyong Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Mathias Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Regina Mufanny (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 35 |

[The following names have been added by hand.]

Chief P. A. Fongang
Chief D. A. Tataw

Locality: Tinto (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lucy For Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Emelia Ndip Emannuel (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Ester Affue Agbo (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Cather Egbe (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| A. E. Manga | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Besong Ngu (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 60 |
| Tambe Mbock | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Belta Bayee (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Mary Beju Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Sussana Esakenong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Margaret Bechem (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Jackson Agbor Enow | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Mary X Ebika (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Belta Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Lydia Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Manfred Bayee | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Clarah Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| [Lu]cy Ashu Apai (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Aggie Zacharias (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Lucy Bessem Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Fridah Mongerng (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elizabeth Taku (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Moses Essem | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Francis Ebang Ebai | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 41 |
| Emelia Ayuk (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Paulinah Tartah (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sussana Enaka (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Abraham A. Ntatang | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |

Locality: Tiko

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emannuel Akoharrey | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 30.4.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Zaacs Ngaaje | Bakossi | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Bakossi | Adult |
| Augustine Ebott | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Mallory Wuvalla | Bali | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Bali | Adult |
| Martin Agbor [Secy] | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Johnson Etumbe | | B/Cameroons | 16.4.55 | | Adult |
| James Mbu | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Alice Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 24.2.54 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Philip Atem | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 24.3.54 | Kenyang | 17 |
| Michael Ndip | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Joseph Akama | Bakossi | B/Cameroons | — | Bakossi | Adult |
| Daniel Besong Arrey | Keaka | B/Cameroons | — | Keaka | Adult |
| Alfred Bayee | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Samuel Agbor | Keaka | B/Cameroons | — | Keaka | Adult |
| James Nwachi | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Sussana Agbor (Mrs) | Keaka | B/Cameroons | — | Keaka | Adult |
| Ceicilia Ebai (Mrs) | Keaka | B/Cameroons | — | Keaka | Adult |

Locality: Tali

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paul Takem Mfotow | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 22.1.58 | Kenyang | 58 |
| Margaret Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 22.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Daniel Tataw | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 22.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| George Nda Abanda | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Paul Ndip | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Gabriel N. Bechem | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Rose Takem (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Christiana Ebanga (Miss) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Oscar Tambe | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 70 |
| Dickson Oben | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Rebecca Takem (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 35 |
| John Ako | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Arrah Eno Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 55 |
| Sussana Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 23.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |

Locality: Buea

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Namange Johnson | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 23.3.55 | Bakweri | 21 |
| Simon Tabe | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 8.3.55 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Michael Ebott Tanyi | Keaka | B/Cameroons | 4.9.56 | Keaka | 21 |
| Peter Lima | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 11.9.56 | Bakweri | 24 |
| Simon Mbwange | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 26.4.56 | Bakweri | 34 |
| Alexander Ashutatang | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 25.11.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Nwanja | Barombi | B/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Barombi | Adult |
| Lucas Binda | Babetah | B/Cameroons | 27.10.54 | Metah | Adult |
| S. E. Enow [Roberts Myoko] | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 27.10.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Wilson Egbe | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 16.4.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Hans Ekema Ndumbe | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | — | Bakweri | Adult |
| Godfrey Ekombe Wose | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 30.3.58 | Bakweri | 35 |

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Enow, Robert
Enow, Sussanah (Mrs)
Eyong Tabot Simon
Simon Wana Mbua-
(Takang, John)
Mpacku Marcus

Locality: Ekona

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pius Ngatta | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| O. F. Musi | Bali | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Bali | Adult |
| Christopher Siki | Bali | B/Cameroons | 16.12.54 | Bali | Adult |
| Peter Woloko | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 8.4.56 | Bakweri | 30 |
| Joseph Molongo | Bakweri | B/Cameroons | 12.2.56 | Bakweri | 30 |
| Martin Ebai | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 26.1.56 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Alexander Abanda | — | B/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |

[Note:] Two left this Centre.

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Wourou Brown
Akonjang Samuel
Ako, Joseph
Ekongwe Manfred

Locality: Likomba

Record bearing the manes of believers in this centre is not found at present, hope to forward in due course.

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Nkongho Peter
Mfontem Gregory
Enow Christopher
Ka Tayason Theresa (Mrs)
Ashu Daniel
C. Y. Tayason
Abia Stephen
Oben Mfontem Victor
Takang, John[2]

Locality: Sapele [Nigeria]

As stated above.

Locality: Sumbe. Group

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thomas Bakia | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Oscar E. Bakia | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Samuel T. Mbeng | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |
| Belta Ebanga (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 39 |
| Mather Banyi (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 18 |
| Isaac Bakia | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Simon Egbe | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |

[2] Also listed above. Added by hand in parenthesis to Buea.

Locality: Sumbe. Group (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| David Mbu | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| Adolf Mbu | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 41 |
| Aaron Besong | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 41 |
| Daniel Tanyi | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 60 |
| Ceicilia Ndip (Mrs)[3] | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Belta Etta (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Dyna Arrah (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 22 |
| Moses Ebai | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Sussana Mbi Aya (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 38 |
| Peter Enow | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 50 |
| Belta Nkem (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Paul Ayauk | Banyang | B/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |

Locality: Faitok. Group

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elias Tabi | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Fredah Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Dickson Achour | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Fredah Agbor (Mrs)[4] | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 60 |
| Belta Eta (Mrs)[5] | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Elisa Ayuk (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Mather Betchem (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Ester Eta (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Sussana Tabi (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Jacob Ebai | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Annah Achour (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Regina Nyenty (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Ceicilia Ofonde (Mrs) | Banyang | B/Cameroons | 20.6.58 | Kenyang | 40 |

[3] Same name listed above in Tinto, as age 32.

[4] Same name as above in Faitok, with a different age. Possibly a mother and daughter?

[5] Same name listed above in Sumbe, with a different age.

Locality: Ntenmbang

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| William Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Ferdson Tong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Grace Thomas | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Lydia Tabe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Margret Abange (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 17 |
| Aaron Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| John Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 62 |
| Daniel Tanyi Bitika | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| A. Abange | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Robert Nkwa | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Thomas A. Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Emannuel Eyang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 33 |
| Frida Mbing David (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Hanah Njinge (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Francisca Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Paul Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Elina Moses (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Rose Stephen (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Thompson Ebi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Joseph Bateh | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Belta Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Joseph N. Afie | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Elinah Besong John (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Christiana Paul (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Besem Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 46 |
| Elias N. Tarh | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Stephen N. Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Mary Tawo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Nakungu (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 56 |
| Jonas Nkem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| David Nyack | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Bakia Esong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 80 |
| Aaron Mbu Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 54 |
| Michael Member | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sofi Member (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Jonas Nkem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Joanah Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Marther Eyere (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 35 |
| [Al]ice Nkem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Daniel Nyack | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Manfred Abang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Polina Besm Abang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 35 |

Locality: Ntenmbang (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rose E. Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| George E. Nyack | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 16 |
| Alexander Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Samuel Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Sofi Epe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Helinah Ndip (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 35 |
| Julianah Epe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| James Nkeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Sofi Nkem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Francisca Epe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Elias Epe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 54 |
| Christiana Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Polina Abang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |
| Polina Njong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Sussana Njong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |
| Margret Affeah (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Lydia Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Benard Ayuk Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.1.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Thimothy Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| James Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Emelia Ayi Tambe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Johanes Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Thomas Abe Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Sussana Eyongi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| Fridah Ebot (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Sofi Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| Mary Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 24 |
| Jacob Etong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |

Locality: Eyang

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sam Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Serah Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Joseph Ebini | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Shadrack Baye Atem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Samuel Tambi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Elias Tabi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Vincent Takom | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | 39 |
| James Epe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | 22 |

Locality: Eyang (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paul Oben | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Lydia Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Thimothy Nkongho | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Noah Batake | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Andrew Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Ebelle Efange | Bakweri | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Bakweri | 28 |
| Thomas Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Thomas Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Jacob Ketchen | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 35 |
| Joseph Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 35 |
| Helin Tambi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Johanah Manyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 33 |
| Bell Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Anna Ketchen (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 50 |
| William Enow Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Annah William Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Paulina Andrew | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Hannah Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Benjamin Ependip | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Belta Bakume Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 58 |
| Janny Dan Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Emelia Bell Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Rebecca Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 62 |
| Andrew Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Fridah Joseph Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Elina Tambe Aku (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Chief James Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Dorah Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Ceicilia Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 56 |
| Johanah Zacheus [Agbor] (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Regina John Deba (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Michael Ebai | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Hannah Sam Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Bonabelly Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 12.1.58 | Kenyang | 68 |
| Tom Apkwame | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 38 |
| Elisa Betek (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 26 |
| John Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 58 |
| Rudolph Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 58 |
| Mathias Babi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Soffe Besem Thymothy (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 34 |
| Margret Tom (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 24 |

Locality: Eyang (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alice Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 14.3.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Eline Acili (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 14.3.58 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Belta Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 14.3.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Sarah Abe Mathias (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 16.3.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Regina Mbey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 9.3.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Ceicilia Taku (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 14.3.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| George Bayee | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 9.3.58 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Benjamin Deb | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 9.3.58 | Kenyang | 46 |
| Mary Manyi Ako (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Lucas Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Daniel Epe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.4.58 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Lucy Besem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.6.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Emelia Deba (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Christiana Epe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 19 |
| Eyaong Ayauk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Tabi Nguta | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Mary Deba (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Aggie N. Epe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 7.5.58 | Kenyang | 35 |
| Dinah Ebott Abey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Sussana Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Fredah Arrey Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Amina Ako (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Agnes Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Emelia Nakumba (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Eline Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.6.58 | Kenyang | 15 |
| Paulina Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.6.58 | Kenyang | 13 |
| Atoni Ntah | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.6.58 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Paulina Ketchen (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.6.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| David Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.6.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Thomas Nkongho | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.6.58 | Kenyang | 16 |

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Okon Epeh Jonas
Bayi Johanah (Mrs)
Arrah Ayuk (Miss)

Locality: Mutengene

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emannuel Njang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 30.4.54 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Augustine Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 27.10.54 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Joseph A. Ayuk | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 18.11.56 | Keaka | 38 |
| Moris Ojong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 18.11.56 | Keaka | 40 |
| Aaron Asick | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 18.11.56 | Keaka | 29 |
| Napoleon Etta | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 18.11.56 | Keaka | 34 |
| Otto A. Equor | Balong | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.57 | Balong | 28 |
| Joseph Chukwu | Ibo | Nigeria | 9.12.57 | Ibo | 24 |
| Martin Manga | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Augustine Esage | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Sylvester Njum | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |

[The following name was added by hand. The comma between the last name and first name appears to be missing.]

Irem Okpara Joseph

Locality: Mamfe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emannuel Tataw Nkeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Kenyang | 21 |
| David I. Bassey | Ibibio | Nigeria | 28.10.54 | Ibibio | 25 |
| Sampson Fochak | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Daniel (Obi) Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.2.56 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Napoleon Ojong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 20.12.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| William Tabe | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 9.2.54 | Keaka | 22 |
| Jacob Awo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 27.1.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Daniel Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 14.4.56 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Zacharias Nkongho | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Ceicilia Tabe (Miss) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 18.4.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| [Ef]fe Otun Ayamba | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 18.4.57 | Keaka | 30 |
| William I. F. Ajogbor | — | Nigeria | 18.4.57 | — | 31 |
| Samuel Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Kenyang | 19 |
| E. A. Atu | — | Nigeria | — | — | Adult |
| Karo Jacob Awo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mary Agbor (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Madgalene Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| S. A. Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Solomon Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

[The following names were added by hand. The comma between the last name and first name appear to be missing from the second name.]

Willie Enang
Odu Gabriel
Clara Eyong

Locality: Etoko

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Catherine Ayukmara (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Comfort Esim (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Isaac Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Catherine Tataw (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Stephen Tataw Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Alice Egbe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Robinson Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| George Bayee | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Mary Tataw (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Lydia Tataw (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Margret Lucas (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Lucy Lucas (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Simon Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mbi Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 3.2.58 | Kenyang | Adult |

Locality: Mbehetok

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sen Ebai Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sampson Atchuo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Aaron Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Thomas Tiku | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Moses Bawak | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Solomon Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| William Nate [Bate?] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| William Akwo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mathias Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elias Deba | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Thomas Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Becy Oyere (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

Locality: Mbehetok (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cecilia Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Bertha Nkwo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Lydia Nso (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Solomon Mfontem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Hans E. Kima [Agbo?] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elizabeth Tabong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mary Asek (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Isaac Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Esther Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Frida Oniki (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Lydia Tah (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 33 |
| Robert Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Joseph Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Clara Antem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Ceicilia Bekai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Sampson T. Tabot | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Aggie Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Grace Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Ceicilia N. Nso (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Grace Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Ester Beyu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Sophy Ebob (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.11.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Alice Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Regina Agbo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30M [sic] |
| Mary Nyang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| Thomas Betchem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Mary Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Sam Tabi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Dorah Taku (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 31 |
| George Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 31 |
| William Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Thomas Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.8.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Lucy Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.8.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sophie Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.8.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Janny Tanyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.8.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Catherine Ebanga (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Catherine Antem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 58 |
| Catherine Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 50 |
| Thomas T. Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Peter Nkongo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |
| Shadrack Nkwo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Sam Antem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 32 |

Locality: Mbehetok (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bessem Frida (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Ceicilia Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 32 |
| Mary Ako (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Matina Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Elizabeth Betchem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 51 |
| Lucy Betek (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 42 |
| John N. Apac | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Bertha Arikai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Noah Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 58 |
| William Etanda | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 75 |
| John Nsoh | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 68 |
| Adolph Tar Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Agnes Deba (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 28 |
| Ben Orok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Mather Eyang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Sussana Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 36 |

Locality: Ossing

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elias Tabe | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 35 |
| David Aku | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | Adult |
| Ajongi Eyong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 26 |
| Besong Tabe | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 65 |
| Sam Orok | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 9.11.57 | Keaka | 50 |
| Margret Affiong (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 9.11.57 | Keaka | 26 |
| Polinah Abanda (Mrs) [Paulina] | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 28 |
| Lucy Etang (Miss) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 9.11.57 | Keaka | 28 |
| Maria Agbor (Madam) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 60 |
| Alice Williams (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 24 |
| Ajo Atem | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 11.11.57 | Keaka | 54 |
| Abanda Aku | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 64 |
| Pius Orok | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 9.2.58 | Keaka | 35 |
| Petrol Enow | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 14.4.58 | Keaka | 54 |
| Robert Aku | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 14.4.58 | Keaka | 25 |
| Ewebe Aku (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 14.4.58 | Keaka | Adult |
| Hannah Orok (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.6.54 | Keaka | 35 |

[The following names have been added by hand.]

Paulina Sakie
Sabrina Mbo
Clara Akoh Arrey

Locality: Takpa (Takwa)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tom Tanyi | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 27 |
| Augustine Ayuk | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 32 |
| Daniel Tanyi [Mbu?] | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 22 |
| James Tanyi | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 62 |
| Jonas Ngongho | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 53 |
| Fridah Atem (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 30 |
| Alice Enow Tanyi (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 45 |
| Alice Martin (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 22 |
| Emelia Atem (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | 48 |
| Jam Besong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 4.1.58 | Keaka | 38 |
| John Taku | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 4.1.58 | Keaka | Adult |
| Emelia Tiku (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | Adult |
| Samuel Atem | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | Adult |
| Andreas Besson | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 10.11.57 | Keaka | Adult |

Locality: Tintombu

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [So]ffi Bessem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Martha Nchong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Sam Ayok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 39 |
| Nathanel Betchem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 39 |
| Polinah Arah (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 26 |
| Ajong Orok Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 32A [sic] |
| Aggie Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 33 |
| Rose Ebob (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 34 |
| Manise Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 45 |
| Manga Ayok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 27 |
| Madgalene Tabi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |
| Ceicilia Mpey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Joseph Tataw | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 50 |

Locality: Tintombu (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oscar Nchenge | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 52 |
| E. T. Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Mbeng Samuel | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Elisa Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Mathias Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Elias Obi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Dicson Ayok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 39 |
| Enow Abi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 85 |
| Tom Mbi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 60 |
| James Mbeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 50 |
| Sam Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 36 |
| Clara Ebanga (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 13 [sic] |
| Emelia Ange (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Hanna Arika (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 38 |
| Margret Asek (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 36 |
| John Antem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Tom Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 55 |

Locality: Tombel

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Andrew Enoh [Enock Andreas] | Mbo | Br/Cameroons | — | Mbo | Adult |
| Francis Tenko | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | Bakossi | Adult |
| Petrol Nyombe | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | Bakossi | Adult |
| Andrew Epieson [Epie?] | Mbo | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | Mbo | Adult |
| Paul Fordzen | — | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | — | Adult |
| Francisca Fordzen (Mrs) | — | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | — | Adult |
| Orlga Tenko (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Martin [No last name] | — | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | — | Adult |
| Mathias Sime | — | Br/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | — | Adult |
| Jacob Mwabe | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Gabriel Nombi | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | — | Bakossi | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Sadang Lucas
Ayuk Maxim
Bassey S. I.
Chunde Charles
Dohuji Elias
Tengue Jean
Samuel Enow
Njitone Joe Will
Tobusa Godfrey
Jacob Nkandem
Jimmy Micheal
Kameni Augustine
Tenko Fransisca (Mrs)

Locality: Edibnjock [Jeoville][6]

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lucas Sadang | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Maxim Ayuk | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | — | Keaka | Adult |
| S. I. Bassey | Ibibio | Nigeria | — | Ibibio | Adult |
| Chales Chunde | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| [El]ias Dohnji | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Joe W. Njitone | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Samuel Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Jean Zengne | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Nkandem Jaxob | — | Fr/Cameroons | 18.3.56 | — | Adult |
| Michael Jimy | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Augustine Kameni | — | — | — | — | Adult |

[3] All of these names were added by hand above, in Tombel.

Locality: Kumba

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peter Nfon Tanyi | Bali | Br/Cameroons | 1.7.55 | Bali | 22 |
| Benard Teku Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 27.12.54 | Kenyang | 20 |
| David Esoe | Bakundu | Br/Cameroons | 24.2.54 | Bakundu | Adult |
| Elizabeth Esoe (Mrs) | Bakundu | Br/Cameroons | 10.6.54 | Bakundu | 21 |
| Uche Agha | Igbo | Nigeria | 16.12.54 | Ibo | Adult |
| Ebanja Isaac | Balong | Br/Cameroons | 3.4.56 | Balong | 19 |
| David Tong | Mayemen | Br/Cameroons | 20.4.57 | Mayemen | 28 |
| Peter Sona | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | 30.12.54 | Bakossi | Adult |
| George Fonocho | Bametah | Br/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Metah | Adult |
| Paul Taku | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mary Mfon (Mrs) | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Annah Mayicha (Mrs) | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Jonas Fomukong Fumbug | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Alice Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Simon Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Chukwu Kalu [Kabe] | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Jonah Kalu | Ibo | Nigeria | — | Ibo | Adult |
| Amos Agbow | — | — | — | — | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Ebott Robert
Agbor Oscar
Ebott Sussana (Mrs)
Ulu Irem
Ebott Margaret (Mrs)

Locality: Muyuka

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Richard Ashu | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 7.2.54 | Keaka | Adult |
| Annah Ashu (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 16.4.55 | Keaka | Adult |
| Christopher Eno Orok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 31.3.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Johnson Kenu | Balong | Br/Cameroons | 31.3.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Ogbonnaya Ekuma | Ibo | Nigeria | 31.3.57 | Ibo | 35 |
| John Ebott | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.8.55 | Kenyang | 26 |
| John Takang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 12.8.56 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Joseph Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

Locality: Muyuka (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brown [H.] Wourou | Douala | Fr/Cameroons | 9.9.54 | Douala | 32 |
| Manfred Ekongwe | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Samuel Tanyi [Besong] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Orok [Tabot] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elias A. Tanyi [Agbo] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Samuel Eben | — | — | — | — | Adult |
| Isaac A. Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Gabriel Udo | Ibibio | Nigeria | — | Ibibio | Adult |
| Samuel Akonjang | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand.]

Daniel Obi
Ebai (Mrs)

Locality: Muea

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Obi Nzesiagwu | Ibo | Nigeria | 10.12.54 | Ibo | Adult |
| Charles Asibong | Itchikiri | Nigeria | 24.8.55 | Itchikiri | 29 |
| Ruben Uneke | Ibo | Nigeria | 10.4.56 | Ibo | 35 |
| Sarah Tabe (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 21.4.56 | Keaka | 22 |
| Joseph Etoti | Efik | Nigeria | 20.4.56 | Efik | 27 |
| Sylvester Nzalla | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | 21.4.56 | Bakossi | 31 |
| Edward Tabe | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 24.3.56 | Keaka | 28 |
| Elijah Tarh Euisab | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.56 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Thaddeus Awa | Weh-Wum | Br/Cameroons | 24.3.56 | Weh | 36 |
| Josephine Etoti (Mrs) | Efik | Nigeria | 11.11.56 | Efik | Adult |
| Dorah Tarkang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.10.56 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Hans Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 7.10.56 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Ida Mjoko Awa | Bakweri | Br/Cameroons | 7.10.56 | Bakweri | 30 |
| Elisabeth Fe Awa (Mrs) | Weh-Wum | Br/Cameroons | 22.8.56 | Weh | Adult |
| Josephine Obi (Mrs) | — | — | — | — | Adult |

Locality: Moliwe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Max Ikome | Bakweri | Br/Cameroons | — | Bakweri | Adult |
| [Da]vid Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.4.54 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Simon Abro | Bametah | Br/Cameroons | 29.4.54 | Metah | 24 |
| George Ebong | Bakossi | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Bakossi | 24 |
| Simon Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Samuel Ikome | Bakweri | Br/Cameroons | August 56 | Bakweri | Adult |
| Clement Lotton | Douala | Fr/Cameroons | 9.4.54 | Douala | Adult |
| Andrew Ojong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | August 55 | Keaka | Adult |
| Lucy Ojong (Mrs) | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 22.12.55 | Keaka | Adult |
| James Akoegbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 30.9.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Moses M. Moliki | Ngolobatanga | Br/Cameroons | 7.3.54 | Ngolobatanga | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Njuma Sylvester
Esage Augustine
Daniel Baiye
Thomas Okongor

Locality: Batchuakagbe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Margret Egbe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Simon T. Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Shadrack Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Martin Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Joseph T. Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Charles Ebai | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 24 |
| [Wi]lliam Joseph | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Mary Etchu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Thomas Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.3.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Elisabeth S. Ayuk (Mrs) [Shadrack] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.11.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Comfort Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.11.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Polinah Martin Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 9.11.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Joseph Ngwanja | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.11.57 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Solomon Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.11.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Abel Enow [Enoh] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.11.57 | Kenyang | 31 |

Locality: Batchuakagbe (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Adolph Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.11.57 | Kenyang | 56 |
| Solomon Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.11.57 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Agnes Joseph (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.11.57 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Ebai Nkeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sussana Charles Ebai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.2.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Moses Taku Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.2.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Andrew Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.11.57 | Kenyang | Adult |

Locality: Batchuntai

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| James Ebai Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.2.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Mather Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.2.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Timothy Agbor Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.2.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Mathias Agbor Takor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Joseph T. Mbi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 36 |
| Edward Besson Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Timothy Eyong Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Madam Belta Orok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Andrew D. Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Peter T. Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 26 |
| Nelson Harry Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Lucas A. Tabi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Hanna Andrew | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

Locality: Mbinjong. Group

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sussana Eyere (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 24 |
| Sarrah Ayomo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 22 |
| Dora Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 20 |
| Tom M. Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 27 |
| Mangola Eyere (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 54 |
| Peter Ketchen Takow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Stephen T. Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 32 |
| Alice Stephen Enpw (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 29 |

Locality: Mbinjong. Group (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Edward N. Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 32 |
| Margret John Obi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| David Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 20 |
| Alice Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 27 |
| Benard Defang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 27 |
| Mathias Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Hans Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| George Bessong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Hans Agbor[7] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| John Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Daniel Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 20 |
| [Ja]mes Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 20 |
| Francis Auguston | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Grace Atche (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Emannuel Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Emelia Eyong Eta (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Dickson Mbi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Margret Ndiep (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 33 |
| Catherine Etando (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Daniel Tabot | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| George Atem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Eliza Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Dorah Ketchen (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 33 |
| Grace Echi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Emelia Ebob (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Peter Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Trouble Aforne | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 43 |
| Rose Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 27 |
| Agnes Sam (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Mathaer Ebot (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 44 |
| Elias Agbo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Francis Mfor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Alice Bessem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Mather Ako (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Ceicilia Akombi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 24 |
| John Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Martin Njong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Grace Benard (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Jonas T. Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Dora Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.9.58 | Kenyang | Adult |

[7] **Please provide footnote text.**

Locality: Boa. (L.S.A.)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Martin Fete | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | 12.4.55 | Balondo | Adult |
| Hasting Nachi | Ibo | Nigeria | 20.8.55 | Ibo | 50 |
| Aso Sako Lucas | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | 25.8.55 | Balondo | 28 |
| Johnson Etongo | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | 25.8.55 | Balondo | 27 |
| Philip Diko | Ngolobatanga | Br/Cameroons | 5.10.55 | Ngolobatanga | 25 |
| Catherine Fete (Mrs) | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | 29.9.55 | Balondo | 25 |
| L. L. Yana | Yaunde [sic] | Fr/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Francis Bechong | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Ephraim Udo | Ibibio | Nigeria | — | Ibibio | Adult |
| Oscar Nawango | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Paulina Fete (Mrs) | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | — | Balondo | Adult |
| Victor Noromu | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| John Ban Fete | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | — | Balondo | Adult |
| Thomas Naseli | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | — | Balondo | Adult |
| Martin Manfor | Balondo | Br/Cameroons | — | Balondo | Adult |
| Vincent Masembe | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Isaac N. Ito | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| Dorah Ito (Mrs) | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |

[The following name has been added by hand.]

Johnson Ban Etongo

Locality: Bakebe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John Enoachu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elias Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Ebikang Abanda | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Ben Mfonjock | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| George Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Adolf Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Petro[l][5] Njang Nkeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Emanuel Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Zacharias Eno Njang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.4.57 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Zachius Enoachu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |

[5] Originally "Petrol" but the last letter has been struck out by hand.

Locality: Bakebe (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rudolf Epe[h] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Carl Jones Eno | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.4.57 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Tanyi Dickson | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 10.3.55 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Samuel Oru | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.4.57 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Paulina Eno (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 4.4.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| John Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 26.5.57 | Kenyang | 23 |
| [Dav]id Agbo Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 11.10.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Samuel Ofonde | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Emannuel A. Eno[w] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 23.11.57 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Johnson [John] Orok | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Elisa Jacob Ebai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 24.11.57 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Joannah Etchi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 24.11.57 | Kenyang | 52 |
| Marther Ebot (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.11.57 | Kenyang | 52 |
| Sussana Achack (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Fanny Besungu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Lydia Bechem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 29 |
| Ceicilia Bakai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Mary Arrah (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 60 |
| Elisa Eyong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 58 |
| Veronica Etop (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.11.57 | Kenyang | 54 |
| Christiana Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| John Agbo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Mbella Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Cather Nkep Ayang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Tom Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| [Su]ssana Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 46 |
| Peter Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Thomas Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Agather Atem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Sophie Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 26 |
| Joanah Ebai (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Ester Akuo (Miss) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Freda Egbe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Alice Banyi (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Sophie Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Ebella Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Grace Ebott (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Adolf E. Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Elias Bakia | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 49 |
| Lukas Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Julianah Mpeh (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Joanah Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Marther Mbeng (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22S |

Locality: Bakebe (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Simon Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Adolf Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Rose Nkwo (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Dickson Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sussanah Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Cather Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 42 |
| Ako Ntock (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Paulinah Nkeng (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Elias Kefie | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 47 |
| Njoha | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 52 |
| Jenny Besem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 34 |
| Joanah Ayuk (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 37 |
| Elisa Nkem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Paulinah Besem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Jolly E. Tabot (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 39 |
| Rebecca Ngwomen (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 54 |
| Christiana Eno Kima (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Matina Mpe Kima (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Martina Njoha (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 20.1.58 | Kenyang | 39 |

[The following names have been added by hand. Commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Tanyi Sakio
Njang Eno Zacharias

Locality: Ashum

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bechem Naphtaly (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.3.56 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Tanyi Mathias | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Adson Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 36 |
| Peter Nkongho[9] | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Mary Ayuk (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Peter Etta | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| William Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Peter Asu Nechem | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 26 |

[6] Also added by hand above, to Likomba.

Locality: Ashum (*cont.*)

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rebecca Michael (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| John Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Emannuel Ebai Tabi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| George Andreas Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| Mathias Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 24.3.56 | Kenyang | 17 |
| John Bate Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Sophie Martin Mbeng (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.57 | Kenyang | 18 |
| Daniel Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 7.7.55 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Martin Mbeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 28.5.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Daniel Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 28.5.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Agnes Mbu [George] (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 28.5.58 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Joanah Mbeng Manfred (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 24 |
| Abraham Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.6.57 | Kenyang | 17 |
| Elias Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.6.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Grace Adison Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Adison Aku | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Jacob Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Mathias Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 6.6.57 | Kenyang | 32 |
| Lucy Nkongho (Miss) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 26.11.57 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Daniel Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Lydia A. Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 25.11.57 | Kenyang | 22 |
| Emannuel Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Emelia Besong (dead) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 53 |
| Annah Peter (Madam) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 55 |
| Elinah Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 21 |
| Mather Jacob (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 38 |
| Thompson Mfomo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 48 |
| Robson Tatta | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Sophie Bechem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Paulina Thompson (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Elisa Martin (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.1.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Michael Nyenty | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 28.5.58 | Kenyang | 50 |
| Aaron Ashu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 29.5.58 | Kenyang | 20 |
| Michael Chukwu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 12.6.58 | Kenyang | 28 |
| Johnson Bakiya | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 12.6.58 | Kenyang | 59 |
| Suphy [sic] Ako Taku (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.6.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Emelia Sam Bechem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.6.58 | Kenyang | 40 |
| Elina Ashu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.7.58 | Kenyang | 80 |
| Mary Mbing (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.7.58 | Kenyang | 55 |
| Paulina Mbu (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 13.6.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Amenah Ayuk Matin (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.6.58 | Kenyang | 58 |
| Regina Johnson (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 19.6.58 | Kenyang | 30 |
| Dorah Agbor (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 15.6.58 | Kenyang | 25 |
| Clarah Tabot Ndip (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.6.58 | Kenyang | 22 |

Locality: Ngasang

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Robert Nkwa Arrey | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Sussana Ako (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 22 |
| Mather Bechem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Cather Arrey (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| B. T. Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 50 |
| Titi Ekwa Ayuk (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 55 |
| Jonas Takang Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Mbu Agbor | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 40 |
| Daniel Enow | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 35 |
| Hanah Esier (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Helina Akang (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 23 |
| Ceicilia Mpe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 30 |
| Margret Ngwikem (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 25 |
| Matina Arrah (Miss) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 21 |
| Sampson Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 36 |
| Ange Agboka | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | 80 |

Locality: Lobe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| David Ebong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sam Ako | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Johnson Ayuk | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.56 | Keaka | 31 |
| Tenyson Ayuk Ojong | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.56 | Keaka | 27 |
| William Orok Tabot | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 5.4.56 | Kenyang | 31 |
| Edward Ayuk | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.56 | Kenyang | 23 |
| Alfred Tachang | Bali | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.56 | Bali | 27 |
| William Ofuka Ijoma | Keaka | Br/Cameroons | 8.3.56 | Keaka | 28 |
| Alice Akpan (Mrs) | Ibibio | Nigeria | 8.3.56 | Ibibio | 25 |
| Akpan Michael | Ibibio | Nigeria | 8.3.56 | Ibibio | 30 |
| Aaron Tah | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| Abnaw Enow John | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 21.12.54 | Kenyang | Adult |
| William Nko | Barombi | Br/Cameroons | 8.12.56 | Barombi | 22 |
| Simon Auguo | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand. Commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

Tanyi Thomas
Tanyi Sophie (Mrs)
Tanyi Jenie (Mrs)
Tanyi Lucy (Mrs)

Locality: Fotabe

| Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| James Nkongho Eyong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| [Dan]iel Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Dickson Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sophie Enow (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elias Akpo | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Lyddia Essim (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Margret Fotabe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Dinnah Tambe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elinah Benjamin (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Elias Besong | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Sarrah Tiku (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Alice John Ngah (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Eyere Tambe (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Philip E. Tabe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Moses Amoh | Bali | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Fanny John Ngah (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Ngah | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| John Sua | Munshi | Nigeria | — | Tiv | Adult |
| Lydia Besong (Mrs) | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Hans E. Mbu | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Alice Tanyi | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Daniel A. Fonten | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Frida Egbe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Alice Philip | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |
| Samuel E. Tambe | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

| **Locality**/Names | Tribe | Country | Date of Registration | Mother Tongue | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bomboko** | | | | | |
| Hans Mbeng | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 12.12.57 | Kenyang | Adult |
| **Wedikum** [Wodikum] | | | | | |
| Thomas Tanchie | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 24.2.55 | Kenyang | Adult |
| **Powo** | | | | | |
| Alexander Abanda | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| **Missellele** | | | | | |
| Thomas Ngwa | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| **Malende** | | | | | |
| Henry Dacauly | — | Br/Cameroons | — | — | Adult |
| **Takwa** | | | | | |
| Chief P. A. Fongang | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 46 |
| **Edjigang** | | | | | |
| Chief D. A. Tataw | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | 22.11.57 | Kenyang | 45 |
| **Difang** | | | | | |
| Peter Acha Tanyie | Banyang | Br/Cameroons | — | Kenyang | Adult |

[The following names have been added by hand, certainly by Valerie Wilson. These appear to be new localities in some cases. But there is some overlap with the list above. Wilson includes three localities in the French Cameroons. Some commas between the last names and first names appear to be missing.]

**Br. Cameroons**

*Missellells*

Ngwa, Thomas

*Wodikum* ? [sic]

*Bamenda*

Tayang T. Johnson
Ndifot Rudolf

*Malenge [sic, "Malende" above]*

Dacauly Henry

*Mbonge*

Kamara Lucas
Itoe Mathias

Effimeneke George
Effimeneke Fernie (Mrs)

*Besongabang*

Tiku Thaddeus

*Powo*

Aban Alexander

*Moboko*

Hans Mbeng

**Fr. Cameroons**

*Douala*

Peter Price
Samuel Ekounka
Okon Edueka
Hijano Romiro
Daniel Mbu Fay
Moses Enow Tanyi
U. S. Equoho
Paul Ofendi Tabot
Lucas Ekong
M. Munsiff [Iranian Pioneer]
Samuel Njiki [Pioneer from Br. Cameroons]
Isidor Mtilong
Ben Enow Ayak
Philimon Braide
James Akoegbe
Okoto [sic]
Augustin Mahenen
Alfred M. Defang
Ferdinand Tabi
Semon Tabi
M. T. S. Dahra
Joseph Tabot
James Agobo [sic]

*Yaounde*

Antoine Myogosh Claude

*Mpenja*

Fordzen Fransisca (Mrs)
Fordzen Paul
Onana Alexander

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## *Personal Papers*

Don Addison Papers. (About ½ foot of papers. Numerous cassette recordings.)
Don Addison, Ph.D. (Ethnomusicology, UCLA), conducted a series of interviews and made a number of recordings (mostly of music) in West Africa between 1981 and 1983. He interviewed a number of early Baha'is in the area. He graciously allowed me to copy his notes and tapes for this book.

Valerie Wilson Papers. (About 2 feet of papers.)
Wilson maintained meticulous and copious records during her tenure as a Baha'i pioneer in West Africa. She kept official records both as a member of the Auxiliary Board for the Hand of the Cause Musa Banani and as secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa. She explained that she, some years later, had returned the records to the National Assembly to the Baha'is in West Africa and that they had been misplaced, and perhaps lost.

However, she kindly allowed me full access to her Auxiliary Board papers, which she still had. I was able to make photocopies of the complete records for Nigeria, British Cameroons, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In addition, I copied a great deal of correspondence and statistical material. The originals of these papers were eventually donated by Wilson to the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL.

## *Interviews*

Samiheh Banani (Mama-Jan) interviews. March 15 and 19, 1991. At the home of Sheila and Amin Banani. Santa Monica, Calif.

Oscar Njang. January 1992. A taped interview by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Nigeria (and apparently with an audience, at a Baha'i meeting). Lagos, Nigeria.

Valerie Wilson. June 16 and 17, 1983. Interviews at her home. Menlo Park, Calif.

## *Archival Sources*

Africa Teaching Committee records. National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL.
I consulted these records briefly in 1984, and took some notes. However, I was later denied access to conduct further research on these same records by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Nonetheless, I have consulted van den Hoonaard's index to these files, which I have found to be extremely useful. (See reference below.)

Basel Mission Archives. Basel, Switzerland.
I visited these mission archives in 1992. I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Paul Jenkins, archivist, and his staff who searched tirelessly for references to Baha'is among the records of the Basel Mission for the British Cameroons—at least the reports sent to Basel. Unfortunately, they found no mention of the Baha'i faith in their German records. It was Jenkins, however, who brought my attention to Georg Tröster's article in the Basel missionary journal *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*. (See below.) That article has been extremely helpful.

Presbyterian Archives. Presbyterian Historical Society. Philadelphia, Penn.
I visited this archive in 1991, only to find that the American Presbyterian missionaries were active in French Cameroons, not in British Cameroons. There were few

Baha'is in the French sector, and no mention in the American Presbyterian records. However, the visit was useful in illumining the general mood of mission churches at the end of the colonial era.

*Unpublished Articles*

Jackson Armstrong-Ingram. "'Black Pearls': The African Household Slaves of a Nineteenth-Century Iranian Merchant Family." A paper presented at the *Conference on Slavery, Islam, and Diaspora*, Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora, Department of History, York University, Canada. October 24–26, 2003.

Loni Bramson-Lerche and Martha Garman. "Nigeria." 1st edited draft (2006), written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, IL.
The development of an *Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith* was adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States as a goal of their Six Year Plan in 1986. It is still an active project of that Assembly. Unfortunately, no article written for the encyclopedia has yet been published, and there is no projected date of publication. A few articles have appeared online at www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org. With the permission of the authors, I have used draft articles intended for the future encyclopedia listed below.

Susan Kouchekzadeh. "Sierra Leone." 1st edited draft (1990), written for the Baha'i Encyclopedia Project, Wilmette, IL.

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Will C. van den Hoonaard, comp. "Annotated Index of the United States Africa Teaching Committee Minutes and Correspondence, 1953–1964." March 26, 1991.
This index was compiled as an archival aid for the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL Indices were also compiled for the Inter-American Committee, the European Teaching Committee, and the Asian Teaching Committee for this same period. The author informed me, however, that the file system at the National Bahá'í Archives was reorganized after this index was made. Therefore, the file numbers provided are those for the old system, not the current one. (Personal conversation.)

*Periodicals*

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