

## **A STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH COMMUNION ON NUPELAND**

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### **Abstract**

The economic activities of the Anglican Mission in the major geo-political zones of Nigeria are well documented by the writings of many Church historians. However, it is observed that such writings have little or nothing to say about Christianity in Nupeland and the economic contributions of the Anglican Church Communion to the growth and development of Nupeland. A study of the economic activities of the Anglican Church in Nupeland is considered essential since the Church is noted to be the pioneer Christian mission in Nupeland. This study is also necessary to examine the little growth and expansion of the Anglican Mission in Nupeland. The research methods used in this study were historical and descriptive where the historical accounts of Nupeland and the activities of the Anglican Church were considered and analysed. Hence, this study examined the economic impacts which the Anglican Church has made in Nupeland since its inception. Such impacts include women empowerment through the acquisition of skills, increased production and processing of rice, beniseed and other crops, practice of animal husbandry, establishment of micro finance banks which promotes commercial activities through the granting of credit facilities. Acquisition of skills in building technology and the large turnout from mission schools has provided an adequate workforce within Nigeria and beyond. Therefore, the paper concluded on the note that the activities of the Anglican Communion is not obscure in Nupeland and the economic activities of that mission has contributed to the growth and development of that society despite the slow growth rate of Christianity in that region.

**Keywords:** Nupeland, Christianity, Anglican Communion, Economy.

**Introduction**

Nupeland lies between 9<sup>0</sup>30' and 8<sup>0</sup>30' N.L.<sup>1</sup>, in the heart of Nigeria in the low basins formed by Rivers Niger and Kaduna covering a distance of about 11, 200 sqkm<sup>2</sup>. It is a low-lying softly undulating country with the highest heights not more than 200 feet above sea level in most places. Nupeland is located in the tropical region thereby having both wet and dry seasons.

There are various myths about the origin of the Nupe people. The famous ones include the Yisa tradition, Abdul Al-Nafiu tradition, the Egyptian tradition, the Nubia tradition, the Bayajidda tradition, the Benin tradition, and the Tsoede tradition which is the most popular among the Nupe. Despite the common language, Nupe is a complex whole which is made up of several component parts. The Nupe sub-groups include Bini or Benin, Kyadya, Batachi, Chekpan, Ebangi, Kusopachi, Gbedegi, Ebe, Dibo or Zhitako, Gwagba, Benu and Kupa. Others who were not originally Nupe but got absorbed into the populace include Kakanda, Konu, Bassa-Nge, Gbiztsani, Sokun, Egba, Gupa and Rakapa. The Benin or Bini represents the oldest section of the Nupe sub-groups.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to the advent of Christianity in Nupeland, Islam had been well grounded in many places including the palaces. Islam had already had much influence before the coming of the Anglican Church. The origin of the Anglican Church in Nupeland is traced to the activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Prior to the arrival of the CMS in Nupeland, the ex-slaves who had returned to Nigeria felt they were missing Christian spiritual ministrations that they had enjoyed in Sierra Leone. As a result of that they requested for missionaries. The Methodist Church was the first to respond to this call by sending Thomas Birch Freeman in 1842.<sup>4</sup> Next to respond was the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who sent Henry Townsend who was received at Badagry by Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman on 24th December, 1842. However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been preached for the first time in Nupeland during the Niger Expedition of 1841<sup>5</sup>. before any of these missions could formally establish their preaching stations in Nigeria. The team dispatched by the CMS on expedition to the Niger could not go very far into the interior because of malaria scourge. Forty-eight out of a hundred and forty-five Europeans who were on board during the first expedition died.<sup>6</sup> However, Schon and Crowther got as far as Eggan where they found a slave market. They found fifteen people earmarked for sale. Rev. Schon was moved at this sight and he addressed the people around him on the sinfulness of slavery in the sight of God. They later trekked about seventeen miles north

to Kpada, in Kwara State where they found another slave centre and again preached the Gospel to them.<sup>7</sup> The missionaries were able to make contact with the *Etsu* Nupe, Usman Zaki, at Rabba where they presented him with an Arabic Bible.

During the third expedition of 1857, some members of the expedition went to Nupe country as far as Gbara near Jebba. However, their vessel hit a rock at Jebba and capsized but no life was lost. This incident forced the missionaries to remain at Rabba for a whole year. The missionaries took advantage of the ship wreck and preached at Rabba. Samuel Ajayi Crowther used that opportunity to visit the *Etsu* Nupe, Usman Zaki, at Bida. The *Etsu* gave the missionaries permission to preach at Bida Market. Also, Crowther succeeded in acquiring some land at Rabba where he built a missionary rest house. By the time Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Dr. Baikie left Rabba, they stationed a young Kanuri man, Abegga there as a teacher.

In 1908, the first CMS station was opened in Bida, the headquarters of the Nupe Kingdom. Since then, Anglican Church has been able to evangelize many Nupe towns and villages through the Evangelical Mission Boards, fellowships and groups. Anglican Church has been established in many of such stations. Some stations where Anglican Church has established churches in Nupeland include Bida, Doko, Esan, Fazhi, Kutigi, Mokwa, Lanle, Katanmba-Bologi, Kakpi, Somazhiko, etc.

This paper examines the economic contributions of Christianity on Nupe society by studying the activities of the Anglican Church Communion in the area. Some of the economic impacts of the Church in Nupeland include women empowerment programmes through the establishment of Women Skill Acquisition Centre in Bida, mass production of agricultural products like rice, beniseed, etc, animal production, provision of credit facilities through the establishment of the micro finance banks which constitute vital economic on the economic contributions of the Anglican Church to that region. The argument of this paper is that the slow growth rate of Christianity in Nupeland is not enough reason to overlook the fact that the Anglican Church has contributed to the socio-economic development of Nupeland.

### **Christianity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

It is pertinent to point out the relationship between Christianity and socio-economic development since the inception of Christianity in Africa. It was the desire of David Livingstone to open up the central part of the continent to the outside world for Christianity and commerce. The voyage

of Henry M. Stanley down to the Zaire River fulfilled the desire.<sup>8</sup>The involvement of many missionaries and the agencies they represented in commerce revealed their sincere intention to assist the Africans to live a better life. The desire was born out of the fact that Christian message is wholistic, meaning it deals with every aspect of human life, be it physical or spiritual. Falola and Babalola note that “European Christian missionaries, as precursors of British colonial administration in Nigeria, contributed significantly to the evolution and development of a monetarised economy in the country.”<sup>9</sup>This shows that the contributions of Christian missionaries to the growth of the economy of African countries are not in any small measure. A few examples will suffice.

In the struggle to end the heinous crime of slave trade in Africa, a trade which depopulated Africa and destroyed its economy, Thomas Fowell Buxton agitated for the return of the establishment of “the Bible and the plough.” It was a system which would combine mission work with the cultivation of large plantations.<sup>10</sup>As a result of this, the idea of the doctrine of the three Cs was formulated: Christianity, Commerce and Civilization. The belief was that if practised, Africans would be regenerated and their resources would be put to the best use for the benefit of the Africans.

The effect of this doctrines was seen when the CMS in alliance with the British government sent out a team of about one hundred and forty-five people on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1841 to sign treaties with traditional rulers, to guarantee trade, to establish an experimental farm and to bring technological innovations by setting up trading centres.<sup>11</sup>Even though the first expedition was not all that successful, another attempt was made in 1854 and 1857 respectively. The last two expeditions were more successful.

Despite the challenges associated with these expeditions, the CMS missionaries worked hand in hand with the commercial agents. At the onset there was a very good rapport between the missionaries and the commercial agents in the sense that both of them were interdependent on each other. The likes of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an African missionary were reputed as akin to African traders who they depended on for their passages and supplies.<sup>12</sup>More so, we have reasons to believe that many of these traders were Christians, some of whom also had interest in the propagation of the Christian Gospel. Furthermore, European based companies had close affinity with the CMS.

Henry Venn, the CMS secretary (1841-1872) requested that the missionaries in Niger Delta should send samples of the products of the

country to him which he later presented to brokers in order to facilitate trade with the countries.<sup>13</sup>Venn was the one who also invited the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to invest in the cultivation and processing of cotton in Abeokuta.<sup>14</sup>

Missionary Societies and Government of many African countries became interested in promoting agriculture in Africa. Hence, they became instrumental to the introduction of new crops, such as cocoa, cotton, coffee and citrus fruits. Many traders formed the nucleus of the congregation of the missionary Churches. For instance, Christian converts were the first to take initiative in the cultivation of cash crops like cocoa, cotton and rubber in Yorubaland. According to Ayandele:

In Ondo district, large numbers of people became Christians partly because missionaries were associated with the restoration of peace and national rehabilitation of Ondo. Christianity was also associated in this area with the wealth brought to the people by timber concessions and the growth of cocoa. As in many parts of the Yoruba country it was becoming fashionable to be described as a Christian.<sup>15</sup>

It is evident from Ayandele's work that commerce actually helped the propagation of Christian Gospel in some parts of Yorubaland in Nigeria. Some traders became agents of proselytization. This is akin to the initial stages of the introduction of Islam into northern Nigeria where traders became emissaries of Islamic religion and caliphates. Ayandele explains further that some Ekiti ex-slaves got converted into Christianity while in slavery because they had witnessed both the material wealth and the educational advantages which accompanied missionary enterprises in those places with the desire to see such material and social advantage in their own country.<sup>16</sup>

Contributions of Christianity to the growth of the economy was seen when the Yoruba Christian converts in Lagos took the initiative in the cultivation of cash crops like cocoa, cotton and rubber. They had a wider trading scope than just domestic trade. They advocated an international economic revolution by which these cash crops would be trading items between Europe and Nigeria.<sup>17</sup>This effort led to a higher standard of living for many people.

While commenting on Berry, Falola and Babalola state that Christianity and cocoa seem to have offered opportunities for a better life through changes in two activities such as religious worship and economic achievement.<sup>18</sup>It has been argued on several occasions that one of the

reasons for the coming of the Europeans is commerce. However, intra-ethnic wars were inimical to the realization of this aim since trade or any other activity could not thrive where there was no peace. Hence, Christian missionaries and British administrators got involved in the Yoruba wars of the nineteenth century and the demystification of the Arochukwu oracle.<sup>19</sup> It is reasonable to argue that the involvement of the missionaries in these wars was not only for them to have a peaceful atmosphere to evangelize but also to promote trade in southern Nigeria. This intervention actually ushered in a period of peace which was good enough to advance Christianity in that part of Africa.

This led to another opening of the economy. It resulted in the free flow of commodities among states and the European traders at the coast. For example, traders from Lagos, Ondo and Ekiti towns traded in imported goods which they took to the inland areas and also to exchanged them for palm produce in places like Ondo, Oke-Igbo and Ekiti, and also for the exchange of potash and leather goods in Ilorin.<sup>20</sup> It is pertinent to note here that the domestic markets of the parties involved were developed through the exchange of these commodities. Goods which could not be produced locally were enjoyed because of this interdependence on others. This gave comparative advantage to the economy of each state.

Another vital area where the contribution of Christianity in developing the economy of Africa was felt was in the area of training and teaching Africans certain skills. Africans were taught crafts and technical works such as carpentry, masonry, leather work, and printing. Industrial trainings were also offered by various mission agents. For example, Topo Industrial School, in the present day Kogi State was founded by the Catholic Church to teach the students skills in farming, shoe making, mason, printing and carpentry. Also, some Ijaye war survivors were taught carpentry at Abeokuta in 1867, members of Baptist mission in Lagos and Ogbomoso were trained in carpentry, brick-making, tailoring, book binding<sup>21</sup> etc.

### **Economic Impact of the Anglican Church on Nupeland**

The presence of Christianity in Nupeland has brought great positive economic transformation to the land. Economic fortunes which have a direct effect on the populace have been recorded. There is a Women Skill Acquisition Centre established in 2007 by the Anglican Diocese of Bida, in order to empower women economically.<sup>22</sup> Different works of art are learnt in this centre. Such works include tailoring, hair-

dressing, computer operation, knitting, etc. This programme has provided job opportunities to hundreds of people across Nupeland. This has reduced the rate of unemployment among women in the land. The training affords them the opportunity to provide the basic needs of life for their families. This is in turn reflected in increase in the amount of money which accrues to the purse of the Women Fellowship. Many Women Fellowships are able to buy vehicles to ease the work of evangelism in Nupeland.

In order to make processing of rice which is produced in large quantity easy for the populace, Bida Diocese of the Anglican Church acquired a five ton capacity Rice Mill to process local rice. According to the Bishop of Bida Diocese of the Anglican Church, Jonah Kolo, “we are working on meeting the initial challenge of making the rice stone-free and of obtaining access to enough capital for production to be profitable.”<sup>23</sup> This explains why there are large commodity markets in Nupeland e.g. Gbugbu, Tsaragi, Mokwa, Bida, etc. The contribution of the Anglican Church in this regard has increased the supply of rice in Nupeland. Therefore, because of the increase in production, it reduces the price at which rice is being sold; hence, it is easy for an average household to afford to buy rice to feed their families. Because the diocese is engaged in mass production, it reduces the cost-price thereby making it to maximize profit which has ultimately increased the revenue. Consequently, the diocese is able to pay the salaries of her workers and also execute some projects. The ability to pay the workers’ salaries has improved the diocesan staff’s family welfare. The *Bayetin* Micro-Finance Bank, Bida is jointly owned by the Anglican Diocese of Bida, Doko and Kutigi. The aim of the bank is to enable the general public to create wealth, overcome poverty and contribute positively towards the growth of the community.

### **Contribution in the Banking Sector**

In recent times, Anglican Church in Nupeland has widened the economic scope of the region by establishing micro-finance banks to boost the economic fortunes of the residents. Another popular micro-finance bank established in 1992 by the Anglican Church is the one called *Bayetin*, otherwise known as *Bejin* Micro-Finance Bank in Doko in Doko Local Government Area of Niger State. The bank has been approved by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the minimum share which could be purchased was #120,000.00. The Diocese had deposited the sum of #500,000.00 only as an advanced payment to the bank.<sup>24</sup> Christians and non-Christians have benefited tremendously from the establishment of the bank. The latter is giving different categories of loans to her customers

such as micro loans, investment loans and agricultural loans. Micro loans are given to support the small scale businesses where they encourage them to form themselves into the group of five so that it will be easy to access the loan as a group rather than as individuals. The customers do not need any collateral security as demanded by the conventional commercial banks before they can access the loan.

Many women have benefitted from this programme. Other categories of beneficiaries include artisans like vulcanizers, tailors and a host of others who want to expand the scope of their business activities. According to Rebekah Jiya, a staff of the Bejin Micro Finance Bank, Doko, she claimed that not less than one hundred and fifty people benefit from these facilities every month. Agricultural loans are given to farmers who are expected to pay back after seven months. Loans are also given to those who want to further their education, those who have building projects and need more funds, those who want to buy cars, among others. Between three hundred and three hundred and fifty beneficiaries of such loans are said to be recorded annually.<sup>25</sup>

The bank involves some insurance companies in order to protect farmers in case there is any challenge involving their farming activities. In order to encourage the farmers, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) pay back some of the loans collected by very serious farmers who repay their loans on time. The CBN organizes seminars and trainings periodically for the staff of the micro finance bank on the strategies of recovering loans. The micro finance bank in conjunction with a German International bank known as the GIZD organizes a programme every March to sensitize youths and children on how to develop the attitude of saving their money, hence, the programme is tagged the World Savings Day. In view of this, as at the moment of writing this paper, the customers of the bank are said to have risen to over five thousand.<sup>26</sup> Some other customers of the bank include the Local Government staff numbering about two hundred and eighty and teachers who receive their salaries from the bank are close to three hundred people.<sup>27</sup>

There is another Bayetin Micro-Finance Bank, Bida, established by the Bida Anglican Diocese. Many people have also enjoyed credit facilities to fund their businesses and projects. Different categories of people ranging from small scale farmers, traders and artisans benefit from the credit facility each year. The bank also provided textbooks and exercise books for the surrounding primary and secondary schools. St. Peters Primary and Secondary Schools have been beneficiaries over the years. According to Jonah Kolo in 2014, “The *Bayetin* Micro Finance



Bank has successfully and commendably operated for a year. Its board has applied and obtained Central Bank's approval to increase its initial share capital of twenty- million naira (#20m) to fifty-million naira (#50m)".<sup>28</sup> This statement is an indication of growth and expansion.

Another Micro Finance Bank is located in Busu by the Anglican Christians where they co-opted some non-Christians through sale of shares, for the economic development of that region. In all, the presence of these micro finance banks has made it easy for both the Church members and non-members to access funds for their businesses. Due to the presence of these banks, both micro and medium sized businesses have been thriving in several parts of Nupeland. This has greatly reduced the poverty level among the Church members and beneficiaries of these credit facilities. Consequently, there is a steady rise in the tithe and offerings given in many Anglican Churches in this area.

### **Contribution in the Agricultural Sector**

The Anglican Church in Nupeland makes herself relevant to her community in the area of agriculture. The church did this by forming herself into cooperatives such as *Zaworo* Cooperative and Investment. In consequence of this, the Federal Government, Niger State Government and Non-governmental organizations are partnering with the Church in the area of agriculture. For instance, when the Niger State Rice Consortium saw the impact which the Church was making on the society, they decided to partner with the Anglican Diocese of Bida by providing them with tractors. Bida Diocese currently has thirteen tractors. The Church is expected to refund the money for the purchase of the tractors at the agreed period. The aim is that the members may realize their full potential of knowing that though they may be few they can still control the economy and make life more meaningful.<sup>29</sup>

Another effort was the collaboration of Bida Diocese with the Niger River Basin Authority, to the tune of one million naira where the Authority leased out the Fadama land for rice production. The land contains 150 hectares.<sup>30</sup> The Diocese also has 130 hectares of beniseed farmland at Kudu, poultry farm at *Zaworo* Investment Centre, Bida.<sup>31</sup> Other crops cultivated in large quantity by the Diocese in Nupeland include cassava, corns, etc. The Diocese through these activities helps to reduce unemployment by absorbing the teeming youths to work in those establishments. They also train and teach the people either directly or indirectly the modern farming techniques.

Many crops planted in Nupeland were introduced by the early missionaries into Nupeland. Such crops include orange, grape, guava<sup>32</sup> etc. Kutigi Diocese has a cattle ranch and oil plantation at Gbangbagi.<sup>33</sup> Due to the effects of the Anglican Church in the area of agriculture, Nupeland has the privilege of enjoying the benefit of crops from other climes. It also helps the people of the area to supplement vital nutrients gotten from these crops. Protein, fat and oil which are also essential nutrients for day to day growth of the body and healthy living are derived from milk, egg and meat from the animals raised by the Anglican Church. This has particularly reduced the challenge of malnutrition in children.

The Dioceses of Bida and Kutigi have about 56 cattle under the care of fully engaged Fulani cattle herders who is under a close supervision of Venerable Isah Saleh Danfulani from Kwoi.<sup>34</sup>

The coming of the Anglican Church has influenced the architectural designs in buildings. The traditional Nupe society had its architectural designs but with the coming of the Anglican Missionaries, the style of building houses was changed. The Christian converts started building houses after the pattern of the Christian missionaries. Some went to live with the missionaries in order to acquire building skills. According to David Gana, the first house in Doko to be roofed with a corrugated iron sheet belonged to a Christian.<sup>35</sup> This seems to be the general impact upon a large section of northern Nigeria where Christianity thrived. Crampton refers to this in his book, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*:

In almost all the ‘pagan’ societies the buildings were all round huts of various sizes. The missionary homes and other buildings were usually rectangular as soon as they had settled down, whether they were in local materials or later on in cement and corrugated iron sheets.<sup>36</sup>

Crampton’s writing aptly describes the traditional Nupe architectural design. With the coming of the missionaries, the Nupe started building after the pattern of the missionaries. The Nupe started paying attention to the ventilation by inserting wider and more windows, making use of cement and corrugated iron sheets. Church buildings also started having new designs after the pattern of the Western world.

Today, there are Cathedrals built in many places in Nupeland. Such buildings are equipped with many modern facilities like fans, air-conditioners, tiles etc. More importantly, those who have learnt these skills have taken such activities as their daily jobs. Many people in

Nupeland are able to get their daily bread through these works associated with the new method of building houses. It has further contributed to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria.

Members of Anglican Church and most children trained by the Anglican Church have turned out a great manpower and have become prominent personalities in the services of Federal, State and Local Governments of Nigeria and beyond. For instance, Francis Z. Gana was a Director of Education in the Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos; David N. Nmadu was Secretary in several Ministries of Niger State Government; Professor Paul Tom Nmadu is a Professor of Surgery and a Fellow of the West African College of Surgeons at the Ahmadu University Teaching Hospital, Shika, Zaria, Kaduna State; Professor Jonathan Othman Ndaji, a professor of Geography with Mathematics at the Ahamdu Bello University Zaria and also became the first Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Minna and as the Nigeria's Ambassador to the continent of Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea;<sup>37</sup> Mr. Isaiah Z. Tsado, was the first Comptroller General of Immigration during Gowon's regime.<sup>38</sup> These people have become a powerful work-force contributing to the economy of Nupeland, Nigeria and beyond. More importantly, some non-Christians who had the opportunity to attend mission schools became Christians and this has further increased the number of Christians in Nupeland.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has considered the economic contributions of the Anglican Church to the Nupe Society. These contributions have in turn added value to both economic activities and human life in Nupeland. Through the economic activities of the Anglican Church in Nupeland, the mission has demonstrated its commitment to the wholistic Gospel which Jesus Christ Himself preached. Other denominations in Nupeland can improve on what the Anglican Church is doing in adding values to the lives of the people of that Society. This approach will make the Christian Gospel spread faster than what it is at present.

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