

The Early Days of the Catholic Mission in Bauchi 1946 – 1996

Raymond Hickey

Abstract

This article explores the early days of the catholic mission In Bauchi Mainly between 1946 – 1996. At Independence in 1960, Bauchi Province had eight local government units (then known as Native Authorities). There were both positive and factors that have affected this division. On the negative side, Indirect Rule prevented the introduction of democratic local government, Western education, and real freedom for the subject non-Fulani peoples in the emirates. For Bauchi was by no means a fully Fulani or Muslim Province. Igbo traders and civil servants from the south-east of the country were the first Catholics to live in Bauchi town. They brought their Catholic faith with them and, invariably, when they met one another, they prayed together, gradually they contacted the nearest missionary priest. With the help of books on civil and ecclesiastical interest, this article synthesizes informations on Bauchi Province and the Catholic Church there. The researcher has a first-hand experience of the territory under study here having worked in the territory for many years. Analytical and descriptive methods of research are used in this work. This is a contribution to the local Church history in Bauchi Vicariate/Diocese and the researcher recommends that further study should be made and published before the Silver Jubilee of the erection of Bauchi Vicariate which comes up in 2021.

1.0 Background

When Nigeria gained her independence on 1st October 1960, there were twelve Provinces in the then Northern Region. One of these was Bauchi, in the north-east of the country. It bordered Adamawa, Borno (then, and until 1972, spelt *Bornu*) and Kano provinces to the east and north; and Plateau and Zaria (a tiny border, at Saminaka) provinces to the west and south. It had an area of 66,500 sq km and a population of over a million and a half. The Province used to be much larger and it included Jos and Pankshin divisions until 1926, when Plateau Province was created. Thereafter it remained unchanged until 1976, when Bauchi, Borno and Gongola States were established out of the huge North-East State, and Bauchi ceded the Shere Hills to Plateau State. That reduced the area of

Bauchi Province to a little less than 65,000 sq km -- which corresponds with the area of the Vicariate of Bauchi, cut off from Jos Archdiocese on 5th July 1996. In the same year, in October 1996, Gombe State was cut off from Bauchi State, thereby giving the Vicariate two States to cover. That is unchanged to this day (2019) and any further division is unlikely.

2.0 The Religious Situation in Bauchi Province

As to the population of the present Diocese of Bauchi, only a rough estimate can be given. If we accept that the population of Nigeria reached 200 million in October 2018, then the combined population of Bauchi and Gombe States might now be as much as 8 million (*a figure I accept*). Only 95,000 of these are Catholics – a stark challenge to the Church! There are perhaps 380,000 other Christians, mainly Evangelical (ECWA, formerly SIM – Sudan Interior Mission) and Pentecostal, and the remainder – 94% of the population -- is Muslim. This is a big increase on the 66% Muslim population of Bauchi Province given in the 1931 census of population. However, the Christian minority is much stronger in Gombe State (in the south-east, Tangale Waja, it forms the majority) than in Bauchi, where it is concentrated in the south-west of that State.

I have made no allowance for those who follow the traditional rites and religions, not because their rites are not practised, but because few if any person would want to be identified as *arne*, a 'pagan' in Hausa. Traditional religion is indeed practised, but under the guise of belonging to a Christian (and to a much lesser extent, Muslim) sect or church. And so, there is much syncretism in the religious beliefs and practises of the people – and not only in Bauchi Diocese: it is widespread in Nigeria.

At Independence in 1960, Bauchi Province had eight local government units (then known as Native Authorities). Three of these were powerful Muslim emirates (Bauchi, Gombe, Katagum), based respectively in Bauchi, Gombe and Azare. There were two other minor emirates (Misau and Jama'are – both in the far north); and three chiefdoms (Tangale-Waja, Ningi and Dass) which were then mainly non-Muslim. All of the emirates were historically part of the Fulani-dominated Sokoto Caliphate, established by the reformer Othman 'Dan Fodiyo over a century earlier. When the emirates submitted to British 'protection' between 1900 and 1906, treaties were signed with the emirs (in Arabic) by which they were permitted to retain most of their apparatus of government, including the Shari'ah courts, through a system of Indirect Rule; and this worked reasonably well for the British during the c. 55 years of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria. It is interesting to note that the Battle of Burmi (where Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto was killed in July 1903) took place very close to 'Dadin Kowa in Gombe Emirate (but across the River Gongola in Borno State).

On the negative side, Indirect Rule prevented the introduction of democratic local government, Western education, and real freedom for the subject non-Fulani peoples in the emirates. For Bauchi was by no means a fully Fulani or Muslim Province. There were the Jerawa people along the border with northern Plateau State, the Koroma and Ningi to the north, and the Sayawa and many smaller tribes to the south of Bauchi. There were also the Muslim Bolewa to the north of Gombe (Nafada), the Terawa to the east (Zambuk), and the Tangale and the Waja to the south-east of Gombe. Even then, at Independence, there was strong resentment on the part of the non-Muslim population (mainly *Sayawa*) of southern Bauchi Emirate (Lere District, adjoining Pankshin LGA of Plateau State) at their non-recognition by the administration.

As a result of Indirect Rule, Northern Nigeria was ill-equipped for its self-government when it came in 1959, followed by Nigeria's full independence on 1st October 1960. Very few people knew or spoke English and the proceedings in the Northern House of Assembly in Kaduna were all conducted in Hausa, the lingua franca. There were few northern University graduates and I remember, when I was in Potiskum, being introduced to the first Northern medical doctor. What a paradox, therefore, that the first Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria, a former school teacher, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (often referred to as Golden Voice), hailed from a small minority tribe in the south of Bauchi Emirate!

When the Apostolic Prefecture of Jos was erected on 9th April 1934 and confided to the SMA missionaries, it included all the territory to the north and east of Jos – as far as the borders with Cameroon and Niger Republic – and to the south as far as the River Benue: i.e. Bauchi, Borno and northern Adamawa and Benue provinces. The SMA missionaries could not possibly evangelise and look after such a large territory. Accordingly, in consultation with Msgr. William Lumley SMA, the Prefect Apostolic of Jos, and urged on by the then Apostolic Delegates, Archbishops Antonio Riberi and David Matthew, the Irish Augustinian Province was confided with all of Adamawa Province (north and south of the River Benue) in 1940, and then Borno Province in 1953.

There remained the then Plateau Province (larger than it is today) and Bauchi Province. Had the SMA been asked to divest itself of Bauchi Province at that time, there is no doubt that the Church would have been able to form an indigenous Catholic community earlier than was possible in December 1963 -- when the Scottish Archdiocese of St. Andrew's and Edinburgh assumed responsibility for the Province. That, however, enters the area of hypothesis, of what might have been. We shall see, however, that for reasons beyond their control, the expectations aroused by that move in 1963 could not be met. By the early 1980s the Archdiocese of Edinburgh lacked the personnel to expand its

work in Bauchi and so it handed back the Province to Jos Diocese (of which it was still an integral part).

Most Rev. Gabriel Gonsum Ganaka was by then the Bishop of Jos, and the return of Bauchi Province to his pastoral care was not the required solution: especially at that time -- when vocations in Europe were in sharp decline and there were still very few Nigerian priests ordained. The return of Bauchi to Jos Diocese was problematic -- the priests to staff it were not there -- and the next sixteen years (1980 - 1990's) was more a holding operation than a new beginning. In fact it was only when the Vicariate of Bauchi was erected in 1996 that a planned Catholic evangelisation of the territory really began. The same could be said of the Augustinian administration of Borno Province from 1953 to 1962, before the first resident Prefect Apostolic was appointed to Maiduguri.

3.0 The First Catholics in Bauchi Province

This analysis of Church structures which affected Bauchi Province has jumped ahead of the origin of the Catholic community there, the subject of this essay, to which we shall now return. As in many other cities of the Far North of Nigeria, Igbo traders and civil servants from the south-east of the country were the first Catholics to live in Bauchi town. They brought their Catholic faith with them and, invariably, when they met one another, they arranged to meet and pray the rosary and read the Sunday Gospel together in someone's house. As numbers grew, they would elect a Chairman and Church Committee and try to contact the nearest Rev. Father and ask to be visited. In the case of Bauchi, it was the priest in St. Theresa's parish in Jos, Fr Frank Hughes, SMA. That would have been after the Second World War, in 1946. We do know, from the Baptism Registers in that parish, that he and Fr Martin Heraghty celebrated the first Masses in Bauchi (on their way to Maiduguri) in June 1947 (probably on the 21st). Unfortunately, we do not have the names of the brave Catholic laity who led and pastured the faithful in the absence of a priest in Bauchi. Is it too late to remedy this sad lacuna?

Thereafter, the SMA priests in Jos would spend a night in Bauchi on their annual visits to Maiduguri -- a much larger city. Travel was not so easy in those days. The road from Jos to Maiduguri was not paved and there were few filling stations. If one had the luxury of a kit-car, one also needed to travel with a drum of fuel, a good spare tyre and a fan belt. More often, the priests got a place in a mammy-wagon (lorry) or whatever vehicle plied the road and, since there was no mission station on the road between Jos and Maiduguri, they stayed with a Catholic family or in a government rest house on the way.

The Jos register shows that baptisms took place in Bauchi in April 1949. The room the Catholics used for Sunday worship was subsequently enlarged and,

according to Fr Jarlath Walsh SMA, this house-church “was handed over by the priests in Jos to the care of the priests in Billiri on 17th February 1955” (*The Growth of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Jos, to 1978, p. 130*). We must remember that Maiduguri had by then been handed over to the Augustinians, and the last SMA pastoral visit to Borno took place in May 1952. On that occasion we know (from the Baptism Register in Jos) that during an extensive tour Fr Oliver Smith SMA baptised four infants in Azare on 4th May 1952. That would have been the first pastoral visit by a priest to Azare, which would soon come under the mission in Bauchi Town. Fr Walsh also tells us that the present fine site of St. John's, Bauchi Town, had been acquired in March 1956. By then Jos had become a diocese, erected on 29th June 1953, with Most Rev. John Reddington SMA as its first bishop. He duly appointed Fr Michael Carolan SMA as the first resident priest in Bauchi in January 1957 (*Walsh, 1993*); and thereafter the Bauchi Baptism Register is a valuable source of information on future developments in western Bauchi Province.

4.0 The Missions in Billiri and Gombe

The mission in Bauchi Town was not the first in Bauchi Province. That distinction belongs to lowly Billiri in the far south-west of the Province (Tangale-Waja Division). Once again we turn to Fr Walsh's well-researched book on Jos Diocese (p. 129) for the details, as follows:

A dissident group of Protestants [SIM] invited Fr. Frank Hughes, parish priest of Jos, to visit them in 1952. They wanted him to establish the Church among them. These people were a group of Igbos, not indigenous people of the area, who had a dispute with their own authorities over rules of behaviour. They were willing to become Catholics if the priest helped. The opportunity was not let slip and by 1954 Bishop Reddington had appointed two priests, Frs Richard Tobin and Dennis O'Donovan, to open a mission there.

The two priests arrived in Biliri in March 1954. They began to build a church, which would serve as a mission house and church for the present . . . Work in the area was limited due to the exclusion of missionaries from what was regarded as an Islamic area, despite the Tangale and Waja people who were traditional religion worshippers in the hinterland. At first, the priests worked only with the migrant community who were there as traders in the town itself.

This is the rather un-ecumenical story of the opening of the first Catholic mission in Bauchi Province. Fr Walsh then tells that the priests in Billiri visited the few Catholics in the town of Gombe, and that “by October 1959 Fr. Edward Harrington SMA had opened a small church there” (p. 131). And so, when

Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1960, the Catholics of Bauchi Province – most of whom hailed from Southern Nigeria – were served from two mission stations: Billiri, with a Mass centre in Gombe; and Bauchi town, with a Mass centre in Azare (and possibly Darazo). There was, however, one ray of hope: an out-station of Pankshin mission in Plateau State, Gambar in southern Bauchi Province, had been handed over to the mission in Bauchi in 1957 (*Walsh, p. 132*). Much more will follow on Gambar as this story unfolds.

It was the coming of the railway to Gombe in 1963 that triggered off the rapid economic growth of that city. It was part of the 'Borno Extension' of the rail line from Port Harcourt to Enugu, Makurdi, Kafanchan and Jos. Gombe was already an important crossroad: to Yola, Mubi, and even through Darazo to Kano. And now the rail line to Maiduguri (1964) was added! Gombe's economic potential was evident and traders began to flock there. Bauchi town, on the other hand, was too near to Jos to have the same growth potential as Gombe, while Azare was somewhat off the beaten track. Fr Jim Carroll SMA, who had previously worked in Billiri, opened the mission in Gombe in 1963, in the present site of St James' Parish on the road leading to Dadin Kowa and Biu.

1962 was an important year for the Church in Bauchi Province. Bishop Reddington met the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh (Scotland), Most Rev. Gordon Gray, at the Second Vatican Council in Rome; and, in the light of the renewed emphasis on mission, they discussed the possibility that his Archdiocese would take on the challenge of Bauchi – which would remain part of Jos Diocese. After the Cardinal's visit to Jos and Bauchi later that year, the offer was accepted. And since Edinburgh already had two priests serving in Calabar Diocese, it was agreed that they would transfer to Bauchi Province. Thereafter things moved quickly, and Frs. Daniel Simpson and John McAllister duly arrived in Bauchi on 17th September 1963. For almost twenty years it would be Scottish diocesan priests rather than Irish SMA missionaries who would tend the Lord's flock in Bauchi Province.

5.0 The Edinburgh Mission to Bauchi

The vision and generous missionary spirit which inspired the Edinburgh Diocesan Mission to Bauchi led to a new sense of purpose and a flourish of activity in the Province. The two pioneering priests, with their experience in Calabar, adapted quickly to the situation and learned from the SMA missionaries on the ground. Frs. Simpson and McAllister were joined by Fr John McKinnon in 1964 (briefly) and by Frs. Tony McNally, John Gibbons and David McCann in 1965. Fr Danny Simpson opened the isolated but important mission of St Giles, Gambar, in March 1965, living in a former Tin miner's house which the Mission purchased. Gambar at that time was scarcely accessible from Bauchi during the rains, but the road to Pankshin was usually open. Contacts

were made with the Tangale people around Billiri (by now known as St. Andrew's – Scotland's patron saint), and this opened up a new vista for that mission. Another Scottish priest, John Agnew would arrive in March 1966.

Before that, however, there were some completely unforeseen political developments and tragic events, in 1965 and early 1966. The first concerned Fr John Gibbons, the Parish Priest in Bauchi in December 1965. I was stationed in Potiskum at the time and he was my nearest priest-neighbour. He had given me permission to take care of the small number of Igbo Catholic traders in Dambam and Lanzai, not far from Potiskum, and I had already celebrated the Mass for them before he visited me in Potiskum in early December 1965. You can imagine my shock, therefore, when I heard soon afterwards that he had been badly injured in a road accident while on his way to Azare for their Christmas Mass. It occurred outside the SIM/ECWA mission in Zalanga and the staff there gave whatever first-aid they could. His condition (skull injury), however, deteriorated in Bauchi and he was flown to Ibadan for specialist treatment in the Teaching Hospital there. It was not to be and the gentle and jovial Fr John died there on 11th January 1966.

At the same time, after a tense stand-off between the Federal Government and the opposition (Action Group) and a controversial election in the then Western Region, a group of young Army officers carried out a bloody coup-d'etat during the night of 14th-15th January 1966. The Federal Prime Minister (Tafawa Balewa), his Minister of Finance (Okotie-Eboh) and the Premiers of the Northern and Western Regions (Ahmadu Bello and S.L. Akintola) were callously killed, as were a number of top Army Officers, mainly from the North. Violence begets violence and 1966 will always be remembered in Nigeria for this act and its bloody consequences. In this unsettled situation, Fr Gibbons' body could not be moved to Bauchi and it was not until a semblance of peace was restored that he was laid to rest beside his beloved St. John's, Bauchi. I was present for the funeral Mass and I remember meeting a recently-ordained and shy Nigerian priest, Fr Gabriel Ganaka from Jos, after the Mass. His name will have a prominent place in this narrative.

Four months later, the violent consequences of that first coup visited Bauchi Province with a vengeance. On 24th May 1966, the new Military Head of State, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi, issued a decree which abolished the four Regions (including the Mid-West), sacked their Military Governors, and replaced the Federal Republic with a unitary government (Republic of Nigeria). There was an immediate outcry in the Northern Region, which had long-harboured suspicions that he, the most senior Igbo General in the Army, acted from tribal motivations and wished to push for Igbo domination of the country. Within a few days, mobs turned against their Igbo neighbours in parts of the North and a

callous ethnic slaughter of civilians ensued, especially in Kano and Bauchi Provinces. There was no uprising in Adamawa or Borno States, but Bauchi was the home of the assassinated Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, and the coup d'état in January had left a bitter wound among the people of Bauchi.

The slaughter was most ruthless in Gombe, where Fr John McAllister was the lone priest. Hundreds of Igbo civilians were set upon by their neighbours and, since nearly all the Catholics there were Igbo, the church and the new Father's House were attacked and set ablaze. Fr McAllister ran for his life, barely managing to escape and St James' remained an empty ruin for the next three years. St. John's in Bauchi was unscathed, thanks to the stronger Army and Police presence in the Provincial capital, and Fr. Danny Simpson was never in real danger. Some weeks later, on 29th July 1966 a second military coup d'etat, engineered by mainly Northern officers, took place and Iguiyi-Ironsi was himself killed. Another and more widespread pogrom of Igbos in the North followed in late September, in which thousands of civilians were killed, and it was clear that the country was heading in the direction of civil war. And so it did, with hostilities beginning nine months later, soon after the secession of 'Biafra' in May 1967.

This is the background to our story of the Catholic Church in Bauchi Province, and these violent events were a big setback for the high hopes entertained by the coming of the Scottish priests. At the end of 1967, in all of Northern Nigeria apart from Kabba Prefecture, there were only four Nigerian priests: Frs. Peter Jatau, Gabriel Ganaka, Christopher Abba, and Kevin Aje. The Catholic Church had a 'white face' and its members were predominantly Igbo - not a healthy situation. The tense ethnic situation was fraught with danger for the local Church, especially in the far north of the country, in which Bauchi Province is included. An Irish Kiltegan SPS missionary (Tom Ryan) did come to Gombe in late 1968 in order to 'occupy' the church compound and serve the handful of Catholics in the town, and he was followed by the Scottish priest, Leo Glancy, in August 1969. It was he who revived Gombe 'parish'. When I was posted to Biu (Borno Province) in January 1970, he was my nearest priest-neighbour and we met regularly. A road to connect these two towns (through Dadin Kowa on the Gongola River) had just been completed, and I well recall my first visit to Gombe. He had reroofed the old house and had plans for a small church: and that too was soon accomplished.

Phoenix-like, the Catholic Church in Bauchi Province was slowly rising from the ashes! The Scottish priests remained in their posts and were joined by others (the long-serving Fr John Callaghan arrived in June, 1970): new areas of evangelisation were investigated; catechists and adult pastoral leaders (*masu wa'azin Bishara*) were trained during dry-season courses and the 'senior' among

the priests, Fr. Danny Simpson, provided continuity and wise guidance. There was a new emphasis on the Hausa language in evangelisation: it was a unifying medium for the many small tribes of the area, each with its own language and customs. The Hausa Bible, the Hausa Liturgy, the Lectionary (*Littafin Karatu*) and the hymnal (*Yabo da Murna*), all provided the means for the grass-roots evangelisation which flourished from about this time; and groups such as the *Zumunta Mata Katolika* brought a new authenticity to the previous somewhat foreign image of the Catholic Church in the North.

Fr Jarlath Walsh describes the situation in his book as follows:

The Northerners who had been evangelized, but kept in the background in the major centres, quickly came to prominence. They took control of the running of the churches, became the church leaders, and developed the Church according to Northern lines. Hausa hymns and music were introduced and thus it became a much more Northern indigenous Church than before the crisis of 1966 . . . Bauchi Province was slower to recover than other parts of Jos Diocese, as it had suffered much. Areas where followers of traditional religion predominated to the west of Bauchi town were visited for the first time and churches were opened there (p. 135).

That, I think, is a good summary on those heady days during the 1970s. The last-named area he refers to includes the Jarawa in Toro LGA, where a church would be opened in Jimpi, near the boundary with Plateau State.

It was in the Gambar area of southern Bauchi emirate that the change of emphasis was most effective. This was made possible for the reasons noted above, but also by the improved infrastructure. Once the civil war was over (January 1970) and subsequent to a world-wide petroleum crisis in 1969, Nigeria's huge oil reserves began to be properly exploited. The military governments of General Yakubu Gowon (1966 – 1975), Murtala Muhammad (1975 – 1976) and Olusegun Obasanjo (1976 – 1979) had the means to develop the country and provide the necessary infrastructure. New roads were built, rivers were bridged, and even minor roads -- such as that from Bauchi to Boi and on to Pankshin -- were greatly improved. In addition, Bauchi Province, part of the old North-East State from 1967, was made a separate State (by Murtala, in 1976), and that led to the development of Bauchi town as a State capital. The same would happen to Gombe in 1996.

All of this helped to facilitate an effective Catholic evangelisation of southern Bauchi emirate. Gambar was the 'mother church' of the Catholic Mission there and a small clinic had been opened in 1967. Fr John Agnew saw the need for trained Rev. Sisters to take it over, and in 1972 he appealed to the Ursuline

Sisters of Jesus in Edinburgh to take on the challenge. They did so in true missionary spirit and the first three Sisters (Patricia Fogarty, Mary Teresa Ryan and Mary McCluskey) duly arrived in 1973. The last-named of this trio – Sr Mary of Gambar -- will be especially remembered for her many years of dedicated service to the people of Gambar, even after the Sisters left that mission in 1995. An experienced Irish OLA missionary, Sr Róisín Cox, also came to Gambar to help the neophytes get the project underway; and in March 1974 the expanded clinic was blessed and opened by the Auxiliary Bishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh, Most Rev. James Monaghan.

The coming of the Ursuline Sisters to Gambar was a catalyst for the Scottish Mission to Bauchi. They even opened a second similar project in Agwatashi in the present Diocese of Lafia. Their arrival in Gambar also galvanised support for 'the Bauchi Mission' far and wide among the Catholics in Scotland. The Archbishop of Edinburgh, Cardinal Gordon Gray, visited the Mission on a number of occasions, as did the above-mentioned Auxiliary Bishop. In 1977 a community of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus came to Bauchi town to take over the educational needs of the Mission and help in the parish. The first community there was formed by: Sr. Anne Schulte (Superior), Sr. Rosemary Atuegbu and Sr. Josephine Olagunju.

By the mid-1970s the post-Vatican II vocation crisis was beginning to make itself felt in the Archdiocese of Edinburgh. As far as I know, Fr Aidan Cannon, who arrived in Bauchi in 1976, was the last Scottish missionary to come to Bauchi and the last to leave. So, just as the mission in Bauchi was beginning to flourish, it was also being choked by the chronic lack of personnel. Its return to Jos Diocese about 1981 was no solution, as the latter did not have the manpower to cope with both Plateau and Bauchi States. What was needed at that time -- and even beforehand in 1963, was the creation of a Prefecture for Bauchi, confided to a missionary society. Yes, that is clear in retrospect; but 'If only . . .' is, as we know, wishful thinking!

6.0 Northern Bauchi Province

One seldom refers to Northern and Southern Bauchi in the way that we speak of Northern and Southern Kaduna or Northern and Southern Borno states today. The shape of the old Bauchi Province does not lend itself to such a dichotomy. However, if one takes the road from Jos to Bauchi and on to Gombe and Dadin Kowa, there is a clear distinction between the physical and socio-cultural human features of the areas north and south of that road. It is certainly not an exact division but, by and large, the area to the north of this road is flat savannah countryside and the population is mainly Fulani and predominantly Muslim, while the area to the south is undulating and well-forested (e.g. Yankari Game Reserve) and has a variegated human population.

This pattern is somewhat different along the north-western border of Bauchi Province, adjoining the old Plateau and Kano Provinces. This area includes Miya, the Koroma area of Bauchi emirate to the north, Ningi Chiefdom, and in the far-north the Karai-Karai (Kare-Kare) buffer zone between the old Fulani and Borno empires. The peoples of these areas still practised their traditional religion at independence in 1960 and this was therefore fertile land for the Gospel to take root in. There has, however, been no mention of this in our narrative and apart from the few Southern Catholics in Azare town no reference to the Catholic Church in this vast area (much larger than Southern Bauchi). It is to Northern Bauchi, therefore, that we now turn our attention.

It was not until 1982, that the first mission station was opened by Fr Pat Clarke in Northern Bauchi. This was, predictably, in the town of Azare, which – together with Darazo and Misau – had previously been served as out-stations from Bauchi. The first Nigerian priest (of Jos Diocese) to serve there was the late Fr. Benedict Maigari Shilong, and he was, I think, followed by Fr. Patrick Lasiri. The new parish also served Misau and Darazo and an out-station of Potiskum (Maiduguri Diocese), the Karai-Karai village of Garin Jambari. And thereby hangs a tale which I will now relate. When I was stationed in the Potiskum area, from January 1965 to January 1970, there were three traditionally non-Muslim peoples in that area, the Ngizim, the Ngamo and the Karai-Karai. The last-named were the largest of these ethnic groups and the most open to the Gospel. I lived in the Karai-Karai village of Degubi for two years (1968 – 1970) and, being close to the border with Bauchi Province (Misau Emirate), I received permission to evangelise the Karai-Karai villages in Bauchi Province. Among them, and close to Degubi, was Jalam – the spiritual seat of the Karai-Karai nation, which already had a small SIM/ECWA church.

During these years (1968 to 1970), simple catechesis was produced in the Kare-Kare language (it is a strong vernacular) and mature Catholic communities were formed in Gabur, Kwapkwap and – further north – in Garin Jambari. This work was carried on by my successor, Fr. Richard Fitzpatrick, and despite much local Muslim opposition the communities held firm. Many catechists were trained and the first Karai-Karai priest, the late Fr Isaac Gambo Manta, was ordained in Potiskum in May 1983. He hailed from Degubi while the first Karai-Karai priest for Bauchi Diocese, Fr Benjamin Usakule Garba, ordained in 2013, hails from Garin Jambari. So far, four Karai-Karai priests have been ordained for the two dioceses, of whom one died tragically in a road accident.

There are other examples of evangelisation carried out from other dioceses on the fringes of Bauchi Province. In addition to Gambar, evangelised from Pankshin, some Koroma villages on the Bauchi side of the border (Rahama-Bauchi) were evangelised from the mission in Saminaka (Kafanchan Diocese) – giving rise to the present parish in Sabon Kaura. And it was from the Cathedral

Parish in Jos that the Catholic communities in Jimpi and Shere (Toro LGA) were born. Later on, the first Bishop of Bauchi, Most Rev. John Moore SMA, would say: 'it is among these small pockets among the borders of Bauchi Province that growth will come'. Even today, in an otherwise bleak situation for the Catholic Church in Northern Bauchi – where there are only three parishes (Azare, Nafada and Sabon Kaura) -- the best prospects would seem to lie in Toro LGA and among the Koroma to the north.

This shows what can happen when there is no internal centre of Church authority within a territory and no overall pastoral plan or strategy. In our case Bauchi was a distinct entity of 65,000 sq km and with a population of about eight million today – larger than Libya, Namibia, Botswana, Guinea Bissau, and Gambia! For example, when Fr. Pat Clarke opened the mission in Azare in 1982, it came 23 years after the mission had been opened in neighbouring Potiskum (in 1959). The situation in Bauchi State would change only when a separate Apostolic Vicariate of Bauchi was erected in 1996.

7.0 The Vicariate of Bauchi

When I first arrived in Nigeria in October 1960, the missionaries in the field often spoke of three areas in the Northern Region which awaited development. These were: a) The Borgu area of the then Ilorin Province; b), Bauchi Province; and c), The Keffi-Akwanga-Lafia triangle north of Makurdi and south of Jos. The years passed but nothing was done until the time when Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano was Papal Nuncio. Then, in rapid succession the Apostolic Prefecture of Kontagora was erected (15 December 1995), followed by the Apostolic Vicariate of Bauchi (5 July 1996), and a tour of the then Nasarawa State in June 1996 – which led to the erection of Lafia Diocese on 5th December 2000 (after Vigano had been transferred).

In the case of the Vicariate of Bauchi, the project was initiated after the Papal Nuncio's pastoral visit to Bauchi Province in May 1995. He was accompanied by SMA Regional Superiors, Fr. John O'Keeffe and (for a time) Fr Séamus Nohilly, and had discussions with the recently-installed Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev. Gabriel G. Ganaka. During this tour the Nuncio visited the parishes in Billiri, Gombe, Bauchi, Tafawa Balewa, and the parish and clinic in Gambar. He did not get to Azare (in the north) or to Marti (southern Bauchi).

By then, the last of the Scottish missionaries had left Bauchi Province: the pioneering Danny Simpson returned to Scotland in late 1994 and Sr. Mary McCluskey of Gambar in early 1995. Over the past decade Bauchi Province had been staffed mainly by Nigerian diocesan priests and Irish SMA missionaries. I recall, in particular, Frs. Peter Bauna Tanko, Daniel Maichiki and John Dashe in Bauchi; Frs. Paul Ibe and Malachy John Goltok in Gombe, and Fr Andrew Dewan Danjuma, who spent many years with Fr Simpson in Bauchi. Fr Patrick

Lasiri, who was ordained priest on 4th June 1983, was as far as I know the first Bauchi-born priest to serve in that Province.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were years when militant Islam was on the rise in Northern Nigeria (following the *Maitatsine* uprising in Kano in 1981-1982 and its aftermath in Maiduguri, Jimeta (Yola) and Gombe). At least on one occasion, St. John's Parish in Bauchi was sacked and the priests had to flee for their lives. The democratic Federal Government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was overthrown on New Year's Eve, 1983, and military rule continued for 16 years, until 1999 – a year after the death of the corrupt and ruthless military ruler, General Sani Abacha, in May 1998. With the return of democracy in 1999, a new dawn was breathing new hope for Nigeria.

Meanwhile, in Bauchi State, the challenge of evangelisation was being met. Fr Benedict Maigari and an Irish SMA (Finbarr O'Cuileannáin) opened the station in Tafawa Balewa (St. Marys) in 1982, and Fr Dominic Kearns SMA opened that of Marti (St. Peter's) in 1991. Both of these stations were offshoots of Gambar, which again points to the importance of that mission. When I was stationed in the Augustinian Monastery in Jos, from late 1989 to mid-1992, I used to say Mass occasionally in Jimpi and Shere, at that time still under Fr Emmanuel Edeh, Administrator of Our Lady of Fatima Cathedral in Laranto, Jos. The Catholic Church in Bauchi Province was holding its own, yes; but something more was needed.

That came only when Most Rev. John Moore SMA was ordained bishop as Vicar Apostolic of Bauchi on 7th November 1996. At that time there were still only seven parishes in his Vicariate: Billiri and Gombe in the west, Azare in the north, Gambar, Tafawa Balewa and Marti in the south-west and St. John's in the State capital, Bauchi (*today, twenty-two years later, there are 24 parishes! -- the lesson is obvious*). There were also the Sisters' convents in Gambar (it may have moved to the more accessible Tafawa Balewa by then, handed over to the OLA) and Bauchi town, and a Day Secondary School, run by Fr Fergus Tuohig SMA in Bauchi. As for priests, the new Vicariate had 17 diocesan priests (mainly of Jos Archdiocese), three SMA missionaries, and six Rev. Sisters. This was the balance sheet which the new Vicar Apostolic inherited.

That brings us to the end of this essay on *The Early Days of the Catholic Mission in Bauchi: 1946 – 1996*. It could be called '50 Years of Grace', or in my opinion even '50 Years of Grace and Missed Opportunities'. It is for someone else, obviously a Nigerian, to take on the painstaking task of recording the ups and downs of local Church history in Bauchi Vicariate/Diocese since then. I pray that it will be completed before the Silver Jubilee of the erection of Bauchi Vicariate comes up in 2021.

Laus Deo semper

APPENDIX

Salient dates in the story of the Catholic Church in Bauchi Province, up to 1966

Bauchi Province: Part of the Northern Region, 1914 – 1967; of North-East State, 1967 – 1976; Separate State, 1976 – 1996; Gombe State created, 1 Oct. 1996.

Church Jurisdictions: Prefecture of Jos, 1934 – 1953. Diocese of Jos, 1953 – 1994. Jos Archdiocese, 1994 – 2006. Apostolic Vicariate of Bauchi, 1996 – 2002. Diocese, 12 December 2003.

Ordinaries: Msgr. William Lumley SMA, 1934 – 1953; Bishop John Reddington SMA, 1953 – 1974. Bishop Gabriel Gonsum Ganaka, 1974 – 1998. Msgr. Emmanuel Edeh (Apostolic Administrator), 1998 – 2000. Archbishop Ignatius A. Kaigama, 2000 – 1966 (and from 2010 to 2011 as Apostolic Administrator). Bishop John Moore, SMA, 1966 -- 2010. *N.B. Bishop Ganaka was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Jos in Sept. 1973, appointed Bishop of Jos in October 1974, and Archbishop in March 1994.*

Scottish Archbishops of St. Andrews & Edinburch, from 1962: Cardinal Gordon Gray: 1962 – 1984. Cardinal Keith O'Brien: 1985 – 2013. Archbishop Leo Cushley: 2013 – to date (2018).

Jos Diocesan Priests in Bauchi Vicariate in 1996: Rev. Frs. Patrick Lasiri, Julius Jatau Abimiku, Sylvester Embu, Stephen Atawal, Linus Umoru, Michael Naanmiap, Michael Kelong, Malachy John Goltok, Andrew Dewan Danjuma, Sylvester Dagin, James Akau, David Ajang, Amos Nyangu, Richard Beanie, Matthe Chanshilip, Benedict Shilong Maigari, and Paul Gokok. *I am grateful to Fr. Benjamin Usakule Garba for providing this impressive list and replying promptly to my many questions.* The SMA missionaries were Frs Dominic Kearns (who would shortly open the station in Jimpi) and Fergus Tuohig – soon to be joined by Fr John Keane.

Subsequent Important Milestones (post 1996): Erection of Bauchi Diocese, with St. John's as its Cathedral, 12 December 2003.

Bishop John Moore installed as Bishop of Bauchi, 11 March 2004: his episcopal motto was, *Allah shi Daya ne*. Bishop Moore died in Ireland on 20th January 2010, aged 68 years. Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama was then appointed Apostolic Administrator of Bauchi Diocese.

Bishop Malachy John Goltok: Born, 12 - 7 - 1965. Ordained Priest for Jos Diocese, 4 Nov 1990. Ordained as second Bishop of Bauchi, 19 May 2011. His episcopal motto was *In Truth and in Love*. The late Bishop Goltok died on 21st March 2015. His Funeral Mass took place in St John's Cathedral on 26th March. Meanwhile the College of Consultors elected his V.G., Fr John Keane SMA, as Diocesan Administrator and he guided Bauchi Diocese for more than two years.

The Claretian missionary Religious, **Most Rev. Hilary Naanman Dachelem CMF**, was ordained third Bishop of Bauchi on 17th August 2017. He was born in Shendam Diocese, Plateau State. His episcopal motto proclaims, in three languages (Latin, English, Hausa), 'Primo Dei – **God First** – Allah Farko'.

REFERENCES

- Crampton E.P.T. (1979). *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. London, Chapman.
- Crowder M. (1962). *The Story of Nigeria*. London.
- Falola T. et al. (1991). *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*. Lagos, Learn Africa Plc.
- Hickey R. OSA (2010) *The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria*, second ed. Jos: Augustinian Publications.
- (2010). *Fifty Years of Grace: The Catholic Church in Nigeria. 1960 – 2010*. Jos.
- (2018) *Heralds of Christ to Borno: the missionary years*. Jos: Augustinians.
- Hogben, S.J. (1967). *An Introduction to the History of the Islamic States of Northern Nigeria*. OUP, Oxford/Ibadan.
- Jemkur J.F & Udeozo O, eds. (2007). *The Light:100 Years of Catholicism in Jos Archdiocese*. Jos.
- Makozoi, A. O. and Afolabi O, G.J. editors. (1982). *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. Lagos: Macmillan.
- O'Connnor E. SMA. (2009). *From the Niger to the Sahara – the Archdiocese of Kaduna*. Abuja: SMA Fathers.
- Walsh J. SMA. (1993). *The Growth of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Jos, 1907 – 1978*. Iperu-Remo, Ambassador.
- N.B:** Old Catholic Directories, Brochures of Episcopal Ordinations, funerals, etc.
- Information received from Rev. Fr. Benjamin Usakule Garba of the Diocese of Bauchi, to whom I am grateful.