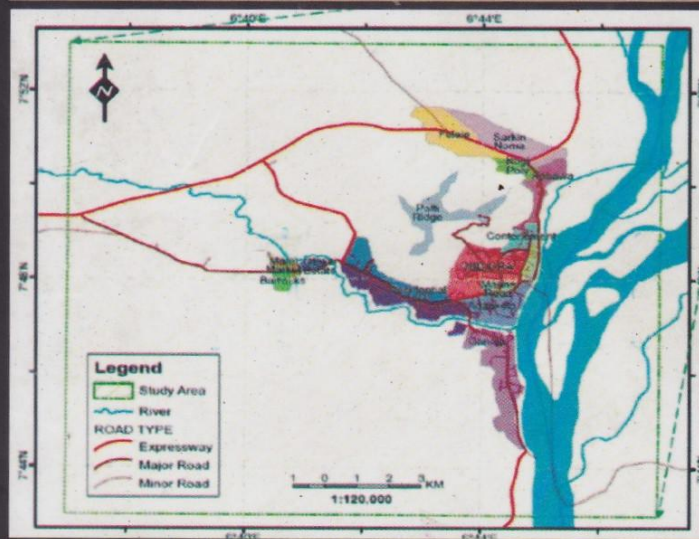


# HISTORY, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY OF LOKOJA



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History, Economy and Society of Lokoja

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**An Appraisal of Church Diplomacy in Lokoja and its  
Environs: The Era of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1841-1891)**

**Introduction**

Lokoja, the capital city of the present day Kogi State of Nigeria is a city with lots of historical antecedents. Apart from its rich historical particulars, primarily because of its location in the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue, the city and its environs hosted some of the early European explorers. By 1857, a permanent British settlement was established by the British explorer, William Baikie in Lokoja. The city also served as the home of the Royal Niger Company and later the capital of the British Northern Nigerian Protectorate, and after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, Lokoja became the seat of government where Lord Fredrick Lugard, the first Governor-General of Nigeria administered the emerging nation.

In addition, Lokoja and its environs served as citadel of missionary enterprise in Northern Nigeria, where the first Black Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther anchored his activities and also used as the "gate way" to the other parts of Northern Nigeria. Today, landmarks such as the Bishop Crowther Trinity Primary School, the first primary school in Northern Nigeria, established in 1865, and the Iron of Liberty are domiciled in the city as evidence to its historicity. Indeed, although many actors have made significant contributions to the evolution of Lokoja, one actor whose footprints remain indelible in Lokoja and its environs is Bishop Crowther, the pioneer purveyor of the Christian faith and Western type of education to the area.

This study therefore, examines the diplomatic exploits of Bishop Crowther in the area. It notes that Bishop Crowther and his associates adopted diverse diplomatic methods such as negotiation, persuasion, dialogue, gifts, and treaty, with the indigenous people and active collaboration with the colonial officials to extend the frontiers of the gospel in Northern Nigeria. Indeed, the enduring success of Christianity in Lokoja and its environs and the Northern part of Nigeria, to a great extent owe its origins to the sacrificial diplomatic exploits of Bishop Crowther.

#### **Birth, Early Life and Education of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther**

Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther was named and called Ajayi in the place of his birth. His "native" town was Osoogun, a village in Yorubaland, not very far away from Iseyin in Oyo State of Nigeria. At the beginning of 1821, the Fulani from neighbouring countries ravaged Osoogun along with many other towns. Ajayi, with his mother and two younger sisters were captured and taken as slaves, while his father was killed in the war. Three days later, Crowther could no longer find his mother and sisters, as a result of slaves being taken over by different masters during the distribution of war spoils. Not long after, they met again. For about three months, while they were in close contact, Crowther was permitted by his master to make casual visits to his people. Shortly after, they were once again separated, and Crowther was eventually auctioned for sale. He was bought by a female Muslim who took him to Egunland near the coast, where other slaves were being sold. The Spanish bought him along with many other slaves. They were immediately loaded into a ship, for transportation across the Atlantic Ocean, to the sugar-cane plantations in America (Akazue, 2005).

The slaves were stacked into a ship, in a jam-packed state, chained and padlocked one to another and they suffered much hunger and thirst. Their hunger and thirst coupled with very severe beatings, for the Spanish masters were notorious for indiscriminate and merciless caning of their slaves. Sickness and

death were rampant among the slaves. Many would die and be stinking for a long time, while lying next to living slaves to whom they were chained, before the masters would come to separate them and cast the dead into the sea. Ajayi partook of all these hardships and inconveniences.

By 1807, Britain had made enough money from the slave trade and the ancillary trades connected with it to enable her to industrialize, and that industrialization gradually rendered slave labour less necessary. One cannot doubt the important role played by those normally the humanitarians, such as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce, Fowell Buxton and so on, in bringing about the actual abolition. These men, were products of the evangelical revival which swept through Britain in the closing years of the 18th century, were those who felt, as Lugard once put it, that Britain had "duty of expiation to perform towards the African" for her part in depopulating and degrading Africa during the centuries that the slave trade lasted. Economic and humanitarian reasons thus, combined to make Britain the leading crusader against the slave trade (Ikime, 1977, National Commission for Museum and Monuments, 1986).

Through treaties, compensatory subsidies and continuous diplomatic and military pressure, Britain secured the agreement of other nations during the first quarter of the 19th century. According to Ikime (1977), the road to abolition was far from easy. Even in 1807, there were still groups in Britain anxious and eager to continue in the slave trade. This was why Britain had to persuade, bully, or dole out substantial subsidies to some of the European countries. Despite persuasion and subsidies, some of the European and American nations, especially Portugal, Spain and Brazil, continued to engage in the slave trade until about 1850. Britain did however succeed in getting the governments of the various European nations to pass laws which rendered the overseas slave trade illegal. Once these laws were passed, Britain could argue that any European caught engaging in the slave trade was breaking the law. However, laws require physical sanctions to make them effective. Hence, Britain instituted the anti-slave trade naval squadron in West Africa (Ikime, 1977).



Eventually, a Court of Mixed Commission was established in Free Town Sierra Leone to try the erring slave traders.

The Spanish slave ship conveying Crowther and other slaves had travelled many days on the Atlantic Ocean, before two British warships that had been on the watch for slave ships sighted them and caught up with them. The Spanish fought the British but the British gained the upper hand, captured the Spanish slave masters, liberated the slaves and put them into their warships. The captured slave masters were put in chains and also moved into the British warships. Regrettably, a terrible storm arose and sank one of the two ships, destroying all the crew, the slaves and goods inside it. Miraculously, however, God kept the second ship which as Crowther, the would-be Bishop, who would work mightily for God, safe from destruction. The ship sailed and landed in Bathurst, The Gambia, and from there to Freetown in Sierra Leone, where the slaves were camped, having been fully liberated. There, they were taken good care of, and given proper education (Akazue, 2005).

Crowther proved brilliant in formal education he was given. He was later made monitor in his school on a monthly pay of seven and a half pence. It was at this time that he became very much engrossed in spiritual learning. He felt the guilt of sin, asked for and received forgiveness of sins from the Lord. This gave him much joy. Following his conversion, Crowther was baptized by Rev. J. Raben on the 11th of December 1825, and given the English name, "Samuel", as it was customary to give newly baptized Christians names other than their indigenous ones. Right from that day, he had been known and so called. As time went on, he started to insert the use of his Yoruba name alongside his English name, and the whole world came to know him as Samuel Ajayi Crowther (Akazue, 2005).

Crowther's guardians did not know that he would eventually become a teacher and evangelist. He was made to learn carpentry and he performed well as an apprentice. When his guardians noticed his zeal for learning, they changed their minds concerning him, and consequently took him to England in 1826. He had spent only four months in school in Islington,

when he was recalled to Sierra Leone because a High School had been opened at Fourah Bay. The first name that entered the school's records at its inception was that of Samuel Ajayi Crowther. The school had a set of six young boys as its first intake. Two years later, he proved so competent in his academic pursuit to the extent that he was appointed an assistant tutor in the college. In 1830, he was appointed to be in charge of a school in Regent, Sierra Leone. After another two years, he was moved to Wellington. Shortly after this, he was recalled to Fourah Bay College as a full-time teacher. He remained there for a long time. In the year 1841, he was moved from his job to assist Rev. J.F. Schon, who had been appointed by the British Government as a member of a group of explorers to the River Niger (Akazue, 2005).

#### **Missionary Enterprise in Northern Nigeria**

Missionary interest and propaganda in Northern Nigeria may have begun before the 18th century. By 1798, it is recorded that, there were not less than 100,000 Christian adherents in the Kingdom of Kororofa and sixty-bed hospital has been built by the Roman Catholic priests. About this time, too, Rome attempted to introduce Christianity into Bornu and one Father Carlo de Genova was appointed prefect of the projected mission. Although these early efforts to Christianize Northern Nigeria were feeble and in the long run unrewarding, however, Christian missions did not withdraw attention from this vast territory. Eventually, they revived the agenda about the middle of the nineteenth century. Even among the explorers who had interest in Northern Nigeria there were a few who wished to see the Cross planted in the territory (Ayandele, 1966). This was primarily aimed at checking the influence of Islam in the area.

Meanwhile there were many Africans in England in the eighteenth century, mostly imported for domestic work straight from West African coast or re-imported across the Atlantic. The Lord Mansfield's landmark judgement in 1771, which declared that whatever their status, these Africans were free, created a social problem as many Negroes became homeless and destitute, having been released by their former masters. Their numbers

were swelled by ex-service men from the American Revolutionary War, who had escaped from slavery. The British government was persuaded to accept responsibility for them and grant them free passages to Sierra Leone, where it was proposed that they found the Province of freedom, a free, self-governing African community. The process was given impetus by an abolitionist, Granville Sharp, consequently, a trading company, The Sierra Leone Company, was therefore incorporated in London in 1791 to take charge of it (Okafor, 1971).

In the early history of Sierra Leone, various bodies, including Methodists and Baptist, tried to found societies, but with little success. However, in 1795, the London Missionary Society started. In 1799, the body changed its name to the Church Missionary Society to Africa and the East (later in 1813, to the Church Missionary Society). In 1804, the C.M.S. opened a mission in Sierra Leone. Three years later, slave trade was abolished and declared illegal for British subjects. Although the slave trade was abolished in 1807 in England, it took some time before it was completely stopped. National steps towards the abolition of slavery were accompanied by the search for new markets for Britain's growing industries (Okafor, 1971).

The humanitarians also came to realize that the abolition of the slave trade was not enough; it had to be attacked from its very source. This philosophy was recorded in a book by Thomas Fowell Buxton, known as *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, which was published in 1840. His thesis was that Christianity and trade, working in *pari passu*, would destroy the slave trade and "civilize" Africans thinking, thus, making "legitimate trade" more profitable than the slave trade. The task was to be carried out by Africans themselves, who because of their adaptation to the climate were to be trained as teachers, technical and agricultural agents, in industrial schools operated by the mission. Buxton's plan was popularly christened "the Bible and the Plough" (Okafor, 1971).

In this connection, Buxton appealed to the British government to undertake pioneer expeditions into the interior of Africa using the newly discovered waterways and sign treaties

with the chiefs and find ways of establishing trade relations. He also suggested that Africans from Sierra Leone and Americas should be used as agents, protected by Britain, guided by the missionaries, and working with capital from the European merchants who would start little settlements there which this new light was to be shed (Ajayi, 1965). Henry Venn, who was the Secretary of C.M.S. from 1841 to 1872 accepted Buxton's proposal and in 1840 formed the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa. The body drew together interested people in Britain and Africa and acted as a pressure group on the government. The result was that in 1841, an expedition of three ships was sent out to the Niger whose mouth had been "discovered" by Lander. Amongst members of the expedition were: Dr. S.F. Schon, a German missionary of the C.M.S. and a young African catechist, a freed slave, Samuel Ajayi Crowther (Crampton, 1978).

#### The 1841 Niger Expedition

The 1841 expedition was a very difficult one, particularly because the crew did not travel down the River Niger's course in a steam engine boat. The very clumsy course of the river, and the inability to understand the local dialect of the people, were among the problems they encountered. To crown it all, were the sicknesses and diseases that plagued many members of the team, and even killed some of them (Akazue, 2005). The high rate of mortality crippled the expedition, within two months on the river, forty-nine of the one hundred and fifty Europeans were dead, and several more were sick with malaria. The expedition turned out to be a failure, due mainly to the lack of understanding of the country, climate and tropical illnesses (Fleck, 2012).

The 1841 expedition attempted to introduce "legitimate trade" into the basin of the Niger and Benue rivers and establish model farms at their confluence. Farming and evangelism were considered as being connected. The team reached Idah and presented a copy of the Bible *in* Arabic to the Attah (the chief of Idah) and they explained to him the reason for keeping Sunday as a Sabbath. Moreover, a formal treaty was made with the Attah

on behalf of the British government. One of the provisions was that the Attah should agree to tolerate and protect Christian teachers. A party was dropped at Lokoja to establish a farm, but by this time, many members of the expedition were dying or becoming seriously ill with malaria. One ship managed to reach Egga and presented a message and an Arabic Bible to the *Etsu Nupe* at Rabba (Crampton, 1978).

However, the publicity of the expedition created in Britain generated interest in the commencement of missionary work in Nigeria. Consequently, many former slaves who were familiar with the languages of the Niger area were encouraged to attend the C.M.S. Training School in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The aim was that some of them would return to their homeland and teach their own people and also help in the translation of their languages for missionary purposes. Dr. Schon, a European missionary learnt Hausa from the ex-slaves in Sierra Leone and began to publish in the language.

Apart from the seeming failure, 1841 the exploration opened people's eyes to the sterling qualities of Samuel Crowther, due to the undaunted attitude he displayed in the midst of the problems encountered. He proved very useful. While other members of the expedition, black and white, were falling ill and becoming despondent, he remained very healthy and strong, giving succor and encouragement to others on their return trip. In preparation for the new office, Crowther was sent to England in 1842, to study for a year at the CMS Training School at Islington, preparatory to his ordination, which took place in 1843. After advancing more in theological education, the Bishop of London appointed him a deacon on the 11th of June 1843. Four months later, he was fully ordained, thus, becoming the first black man to be ordained a priest, and he performed well. His own success resulted in the appointment of other black men from other parts of Africa. Immediately after his ordination, Bishop Crowther travelled back to Sierra Leone to continue his work. On the 3rd of December 1843, he delivered his first sermon, in English, in his new capacity as a priest in Sierra Leone. The topic of his sermon that day was "there is still room". Following this,

he delivered another sermon in Yoruba to his own people – the newly liberated slaves. His exhortation pleased them so much that there was a resounding echo of Amen, Amen, Amen. Having fully settled in his new profession, for which God had raised him up and made him survive all odds, he zealously worked to propagate the gospel in his parish (Akazue, 2005).

In 1884, Crowther and two white missionaries, Revs. Townsend and Gollmer, went to Badagry, a coastal town in Nigeria. Their real destination was Abeokuta, but at the time they got to Badagry, they could not proceed to Abeokuta, because of "inter-tribal" wars. They therefore stayed on in Badagry for about one and half years. On the 2nd of August 1846, Crowther and Townsend stepped into Abeokuta and were warmly welcomed, especially by the liberated slaves, who had embraced Christianity in Sierra Leone, but had returned to Abeokuta. The Egba chiefs, in and around Abeokuta, were particularly happy to receive the evangelists. Three weeks after the commencement of the missionaries' work, Crowther unexpectedly met his mother and his two sisters in Abeokuta, after twenty-five years of separation. The mother and the sisters embraced Christianity and became part of the early converts in Abeokuta who were baptized by Rev Townsend. Crowther continued his work of spreading the gospel in the area with commitment and the work prospered in his hand. When Crowther arrived Badagry, he observed that the new Christian converts could not read the English Bible. He then single-handedly translated the Bible into Yoruba language. He finished the work within one year and the translated work was taken to England for printing. He also translated other books into Yoruba in order to help Christians who were being trained in the school established by the missionaries, and also the larger community (Akazue, 2015).

It should be noted that the failure of the 1841 expedition had for some time discouraged further effort in exploring the Niger. However, in December 1845, a group of missionaries of the CMS entered Nigeria consisting of Rev. C.A. Gollmer, Henry Townsend, Samuel Crowther. CMS had decided that after Abeokuta, which they had opened a station in 1843, they would



like to expand to Rabba on the Niger, in January 1849, David Hinderer, a new recruit from Basel Seminary, arrived at Badagary. He learnt the Hausa language with the aim of the mission expanding into Hausa country (Fleck, 2012).

Also, Macgregor Laird, the Scottish merchant pioneer, was determined that the Niger could, and must be opened to the influence of Christian civilization. His own expedition of 1832-1834 had proved disastrous, both financially and in human life - forty-out of forty-nine Europeans had died. Undismayed, he proposed another expedition. Even though the British government was sympathetic to the cause, it was not prepared to undertake the responsibility. At his own expense and risk, Laird fitted out a small steamer and gathered a few people to go with him. On the 12th of July, 1853, they sailed up the Niger. The team passed through Aboh and got to Idda. It was discovered that the reigning Attah was the same man whom Crowther had met in 1841. They were so glad to see the missionaries. Three days after Idda, the expedition visited the site bought for a model farm by Captain Trotter, thirteen years earlier - it was overgrown with weeds and abandoned. The expedition continued up the river Niger past the Benue tributary. For more than seven weeks they went forward contacting village after village, until they reached a place 250 miles from the confluence (250 miles beyond the previous expedition) (Fleck, 2012).

According to Walker (2012) as they could not obtain wood for the furnaces of the ship, they had to turn back. Eventually, they came again to where the Niger and Benue converge after a cruise of 101 days. They sailed down to Idda and further to Onitsha. On the 7th of November, with cheers of joy, the steamer crossed the bar and out to sea. The expedition was successful in promoting trade and a promised welcome to emigrants, but the most outstanding feature was that no European died of fever during the voyage which lasted 118 days - this was the result of quinine being used for the first time as an anti-malarial. For the first time, an African expedition had fulfilled its mission without the loss of a single life.

### Crowther's Diplomacy and the Missionary Enterprise

In July 1856, Bishop Crowther with his chief helper, an Igbo Anglican clergyman, Rev. J.C. Taylor, a son of slave parent of Igbo race, and others set sail on a smaller steamer *Dayspring*. Crowther diplomatically enlisted the services of a Muslim, who was a teacher of Arabic and full of gratitude to both the British government and the CMS for all they had done for him. Crowther "believed that such a man will do a vast deal of softening the bigotry and prejudice of men by his persuasion". At Idah, there were difficulties of etiquette with the Atta, but Crowther diplomatically secured his permission to open a station at Igbebe, opposite the site of Lokoja, which was then called Lairdstown. It was at Igbebe that the first baptism in the North took place in 1862. Some members of the expedition went on to Nupe and Crowther visited *Etsu Nupe*, Usman Zaki. He spoke very diplomatically and succeeded in making good impression on Zaki. Crowther acquired some land in Nupe area of Rabba to build, not a mission station, but missionary rest house where he hoped that from time to time, sympathetic missionaries could by kindness and discussion help to remove Muslim prejudices and misconception about Christians. Following that success, a Kanuri agent, Abegga, was stationed there (Crampton, 1978).

Crowther continued his voyage to the mouth of another tributary, the Kaduna, on the north side of the Niger. As this river appeared to be navigable and seemed to lead towards the Muslim camp at Bida, the centre of Fulani rule along the Niger, they decided to explore it. For a whole day, the steamer carefully went up until at sunset, they reached the ruins of Gbara, the ancient capital of the great Nupe kingdom. Crowther and Dr. Baike were anxious to visit the great Fula king in his famous camp at Bida. With considerable ceremony the representatives of Christian team were led into the presence of the Fula king, Chief Sumo Zaki. In dealing with such a man Crowther knew that the first step was to establish friendly feelings, and his policy of having with him the Muslim interpreter justified itself (Fleck, 2012).

The king and his chiefs were surprised to find one of their own people come to them in company of Christians and they

questioned him eagerly, hearing with some surprise of the kindness he had received at the hands of the British. Crowther was wise not to ask for permission to preach the Christian religion to Muslims, but rather he was introduced as a teacher – that he might teach the people the religion of Jesus and also introduce trade among them. To this, the king agreed and even offered to give a place for a station at Rabba, further up the Niger (Fleck, 2012). On leaving the Fula king, the expedition returned down the Kaduna River and continued up the Niger River towards Rabba. While travelling up the river, the “Dayspring” struck a submerged rock, drifted for a few minutes, then jumped upon other rocks and could no longer be used. Dug-out canoes were used to rescue the passengers. More than a year passed before the “Sunbeam” came to their rescue to take them back to the coast, but the time was not wasted. Crowther examined the possibilities of the district as a mission centre. He purchased a large dug-out canoe, and set about visiting numerous villages on both sides of the Niger. He was convinced that these people could and should evangelize (Fleck, 2012).

By this time, the colonial government was prepared to give a grant to such expeditions and in 1857, notices were posted in Sierra Leone inviting emigrants, who could pay their own fare, to take advantage of this opportunity. Again, Crowther was on the expedition, with Taylor and twenty-five emigrants as school teachers and evangelists who opened a mission station at Onitsha and another at Igbede just across where the Niger and the Benue rivers come together at Lokoja. Now the emigration to the Niger had begun and the CMS was there at beginning (Ajayi, 1965). In 1858, the party travelled down the River Niger. When they arrived Onitsha, Crowther left the vessel to spend time with the workers. After this he decided to go up the river again, this time in a dug-out canoe. It was not easy but he made it back to Idda, then to the confluence and to Rabba. After a brief rest at Rabba he decided to set out for Lagos across land to explore that “overland route” for himself – a distance of some 300 miles. It was a difficult terrain but he made it to Abeokuta and became the first member of the CMS to make the overland journey

between the coast and the river that afterwards became a frequent route (Fleck, 2012).

It should be noted that Crowther’s path in the Middle Niger was not a smooth one. When he returned to Rabba in 1859, he discovered that the new Emir of Bida, Masaba, who was less favourable to Christian missions, had closed the “station” Rabba. Crampton (1978) notes that some Brazilian and Portuguese slavers had influenced the Emir as they wished to keep the river crossing at Rabba open for the movement of slaves. Ayandele (1980) also states that some Yoruba, including Madam Tinubu, who had noticed the close connection between missions and government in the British occupation of Lagos, had warned Masaba that the missionaries were the “pathfinders of British imperialism”. Moreover, the Etsu did not find it palatable, the egalitarian teaching of the missionaries and their opposition to slavery and the slave trade. However, since he needed white people for mutually beneficial commerce and ammunition with which he hoped to consolidate his position in his kingdom, he asked Baikie and the missionaries to withdraw further down the river.

By this time, the Committee of the CMS was beginning to face a very important question with regard to the Niger Mission. There was only one Bishop in West Africa, the Bishop of Sierra Leone, nearly 2,000 miles away. He might occasionally visit Lagos and Abeokuta to conduct confirmations and ordinations and generally supervise the work, but it was utterly impossible for him to take charge of the river mission also. If the Niger Mission was to be established and developed, there must be a Bishop in charge. Yet all experience tended to show that Europeans could not, with any degree of safety live on the Niger. Since the Niger Mission began as a purely African enterprise, pioneered, staffed and directed by Africans, Henry Venn, the Secretary of the CMS in West Africa proposed to the Archbishop of Canterbury that an African Bishop should be appointed for Nigeria. Consequently, in due course, Her Majesty’s Government in Britain issued the Royal licence for the consecration of “our trusty and well beloved Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Clerk in Holy Orders,



to be a Bishop of the Church of England in the West African territories beyond the British Dominions" (Ajayi, 1965).

On St Peter's Day (June 29) 1864, in Canterbury, Crowther, the ex-slave, was solemnly consecrated Bishop of the Niger territories. Close by, dressed in full naval uniform, sat Admiral Sir. H. Leeke who, forty-two years before, had rescued him from the stinking hold of the slave ship in Lagos lagoon. Not far away sat an old lady, widow of Bishop Weeks of Sierra Leone, who quietly remarked to an officious sidesman who challenged her right to be there: "I think I have a right to this seat, for I taught Mr. Crowther his alphabets" (Ajayi, 1965).

According to Ayandele, by 1870, Bishop Crowther and his African lieutenants had succeeded in overcoming the suspicion of the traditional rulers, that they were heralds of alien rule. These missionaries carried out their activity within customary laws and traditional politics; they recognized and respected the authority of the chiefs and courted their favour and influence for the progress of their enterprise; there was no question of bluffing or hectoring. Patience, amiableness; sympathy and forbearance were their watchword. Moreover, they had to profess interest in the political and economic welfare of their protectors. Later on Crowther paid tribute to the great kindness of Etsu Masaba. He succeeded in opening a station at Egga and Rev. C. Paul who was put in charge was on friendly terms with the Etsus. Some years later, Archdeacon Johnson noted that Sunday was becoming established as a day of rest in Egga area (Ayandele, 1978).

Ayandele also notes that:

Crowther excelled all others in the display of these qualities and he made friendliness with the Etsu of Nupe an essential strand of his policy. Consequently, he became, perhaps, the most powerful external influence on the Muslim rulers of the Nupe country between 1869 and 1888. For instance, in the former year, when the British Consulate at Lokoja was abandoned and Masaba asked all the trading companies and missionaries to remove to Egga, ostensibly so that he might be able to give them adequate protection, Bishop Crowther alone was able to persuade him to

change his mind. In fact, the Emir allowed him to draw up the constitution by which Jacob Mieux Musa, a liberated Moslem African, administered Lokoja until the days of Goldie's Royal Niger Company. Every year the Bishop visited Bida, telling the Emir about the adoption of European technology and ideas in Egypt and the Middle East and the advisability of prospecting for minerals in his territory; he made presents frequently and offered political advice. (Ayandele, 1966: 505-506)

In 1871, Mr. Simpson, a diplomatic agent, carried out a survey of Lokoja. He estimated that most of the five hundred people were Moslems. About 40 were Christians. This was the first permanent Christian community in the North. There were two ordained and one lay missionaries, and there existed a school that had between 3 to 40 children. This was the first Western type school in the North. A decade later, the numbers of Christians increased. Crowther influence became greater and he was described as "an undesignated consul on the river". He conveyed letters and presents from the government to the Emir of Bida along with presents from the trading firms and the C.M.S. In return the *Etsu* would give presents to Crowther for him to send to the Queen. Crowther always treated the Etsu with great respect believing that it was better to deal with a ruler who kept order, even though he was a pagan or a Moslem, rather than with people in a state of anarchy (Ayandele, 1966, Crampton, 1978).

Having gained the confidence of the Emir of Bida, the later became disposed to consider Crowther's missionary programme for the Nupe Kingdom. The Bishop selected focal points for mission stations. Kipo Hill, where a station was opened in 1875, was on the direct route of the Hausa ivory traders from North and North-East, with connections with Keffi, Zaria and Yakoba, and Shonga. Another station which the Emir asked Crowther to occupy in the following year, was on the caravan route to Sokoto and Salaga. In 1878, the Emir of Bida wrote letters to the Emirs of Nassarawa and Yola, advising them to allow Bishop Crowther to begin missionary work in their territories. In the same year, Umoru, Emir, from 1873 to 1883, gave a boy to Crowther for

education and three years later assented to the establishment of a Mission station in Bida, an offer Bishop Crowther advised the Church Missionary Society to accept without ostentation. Also before 1880, the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emirs of Ilorin, Gwandu and Bida accepted, gratefully, leather-bound Arabic Bibles from Salisbury Square, and invitations to set up mission stations reached the Bishop from Ilorin, Egga, Loko and Yimaha. (Ayandele, 1966).

In 1881, Bishop Crowther was invited to open a station in Kantogora by one Mizinyamba, who described himself as a son of the Emir of that town. In that year too, the new Emir of Bida, renewed his predecessor's appeal to C.M.S. to start Christian work in his capital and the Emir of Nassarawa sent a personal letter to the Bishop to open a station in Loko and bring other missionaries to his province. In the following year Malam Sauda, son of the Sultan of Sokoto, offered assistance to Charles Paul, the C.M.S. agent at Kipo Hill, if he would undertake a missionary tour of Sokoto, Zaria and Adamawa Provinces. (Ayandele, 1966).

Fleck (2012) records that:

For Crowther, both academic and practical education were of the greatest value in evangelism. He centered the mission stations on schools, and at the same time emphasized the need for missionaries and converts to exercise direct Christian influence on laws and customs of the people. It was difficult for Crowther always to recruit men he wanted, for although the work swiftly grew, there was no increased support from C.M.S. either in money or men (Fleck, 2012: 72).

Bishop Crowther died in 1891, at the age of 89 years. Following his death Bishop Herbert Tugwell led a small party from Lagos to Zaria in the North. This marked the beginning of the church in that largely Muslim area. Bishop Tugwell's Episcopate of twenty-seven years was the longest of any European Bishop in West Africa at that time. Building on the solid foundation laid by Bishop Crowther, he moved the church far into the Northern part of Nigeria.

### Conclusion

The study has shown that Bishop Crowther, was an able diplomat, who adopted requisite diplomatic skills in the execution of his pioneering Christian agenda in Lokoja and its environs. Obviously, he was not antagonistic to the Moslems and the worshipers of traditional religion he rather wisely used some of them who were useful to achieve his primary purpose. He introduced Western education in the area and used it as a means of attracting converts. Bishop Crowther also collaborated actively with the colonial agents and some European traders and used their machineries to his advantage. Indeed, the path-breaking activities of Bishop Crowther were anchored on peace and tolerance and remain a model that present day religious leaders ought to imbibe to enhance the nation building agenda, especially as the monster of religious intolerance still confronts Nigeria.

Bishop Crowther was a historical figure, a "European Ambassador with African blood" who enriched the historicity of Lokoja and its environs. As noted by *Historical Flashback* of March 2- April 5, 2016, "as matter of fact, Lokoja can brag of being in possession of acclaimed two rare historical features. One of them is the Bishop Crowther Holy Trinity Primary School, the oldest school in the whole of Northern Nigeria and the other is the Iron of Liberty. The Iron of Liberty is a pair of solid iron bar stuck to the ground, two to three metres apart. In the dying days of slave trade, it was said every slave, who successfully reached this seemingly sacred stand and symbolically touched its bars, instantly became free. They were not enslaved anymore. It will be recalled that Lokoja was a slave route in those days. The town was a centre of commerce because of the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue. Slaves who were later rescued from their masters were set free at the Iron of Liberty. This is why till tomorrow, the spot is of great national relevance".

Bishop Crowther's activities made Lokoja and its environs the "gateway" of the missionary enterprise in Northern Nigeria. It also prepared the area to effectively host the Royal Niger Company of Geroge Taubman Goldie and the colonial enterprise pivoted by Lord Fredrick Lugard. Undoubtedly, the significance

of Lokoja in the evolution of Nigerian history and what Lokoja is today has strong links with Bishop Crowther's church diplomacy.

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