

AFRICA NEWS

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AFRICA PROJECT LAUNCHED !

Two pioneers, a Persian and a British Bahá'í, have won the inestimable privilege of launching the Africa project, and have thus set in motion spiritual forces of incalculable consequence. Their journeys create Bahá'í history; their experiences are of thrilling interest to believers everywhere. We are happy to include in this issue some details of these first pioneers, Jalal Nakhjawani and Claire Gung, and some excerpts from their letters. We hope that future issues will carry good news of their first victories, and that the service they have undertaken will open the way for other pioneers, many of whom are already strenuously seeking a path to Africa.

PIONEERS

Already the Africa Committee has had contact with twenty-six believers desiring to pioneer in Africa! Two have succeeded in arriving there, at least a dozen more have fully committed their hopes and efforts to finding the ways and means to pioneer, and others are in the stage of consultation and investigation. The fact that this great response to the Guardian's heartfelt call to Africa has occurred before the formal opening of the British Two Year Plan, which commences next Convention, gives bright promise for the unfoldment of the Faith in this vast continent.

Mr. and Mrs. Moussa Banani and Mr. and Mrs. Ali Nakhjawani, armed with the Guardian's approval and prayers, are planning to settle in East Africa as soon as permits and travel arrangements can be obtained. They will pioneer in Uganda or Tanganyika, depending upon the conditions they find out there, and are proceeding first to Dar es Salaam.

We have just had news of the plans of Mr. and Mrs. Mohammad Yazdani (and two children) to establish themselves in business in Kampala. Mrs. Yazdani is the daughter of that distinguished Bahá'í, Dr. Yunes Afrukteh, and this devoted family will, we hope, soon be able to proceed from Persia to Uganda. Also from Persia comes a pioneer offer from Faizollah Namdar, who hopes to settle in Dar es Salaam. The spontaneous action of these dear Persian friends is a source of encouragement to us all, and brings further honour to the Persian Bahá'í Community.

Although Philip Hainsworth and Hassan Sabri have not yet found employment in Africa, they are living only to fulfil the Guardian's advice to each of them to pioneer in Africa, and they are surrounded by many loving prayers at this critical time in their affairs. It is splendid news that Hassan's success will add another pioneer, for Isobel Locke has also been advised by the Guardian to work in Africa, and she and Hassan are being married on April 7th.

PORTUGUESE
AFRICA

Cheering news has just come from the Lisbon Assembly that Portuguese Baha'is confirmed in Lisbon have moved to Angola and Mozambique, and that a young Portuguese believer will shortly be travelling in Africa, where he will plan to contact Baha'is in various parts. The Lisbon Assembly is investigating native languages with the hope of making translations of Baha'i literature in future. This is but a further sign that Baha'u'llah has begun His invasion of Africa!

JALAL
NAKHJAWANI

The first pioneer to arrive on African soil was Jalal Nakhjawani, who travelled via Egypt and flew from Cairo to Entebbe, Uganda, on December 17th - 18th. As he hopes to establish his own business as exporter and importer, he spent his first weeks becoming familiar with East Africa, surveying the business centre of Kampala and then travelling by road, rail, and boat across Lake Victoria to Dar es Salaam, via Jinja, Port Bell, and Mwanza. Here are some of his first impressions:

"I reached Entebbe on the 18th of December 1950. We had passed Khartoum early in the morning. The distance from Entebbe to Kampala is twenty-three miles, traversed by an asphalted road. It passes through a very beautiful country; it makes its way through shady woods, small jungles and open down-like country, all green and grassy, full of trees such as coffee, banana, cotton and mango.

"The native capital of Uganda is Kampala, Entebbe being its administrative capital. Kampala is a place that one does not definitely and surely arrive at. There is in a sense no city, the place being composed exclusively of suburbs, each placed on a separate hill. Kampala is the city of the seven hills.

"Kampala is the centre of the commerce of Uganda. It has ... two good English hotels, and two Indian ones; it has garages ... three banks ... an important railway station for trains going to Nairobi and Mombassa, and an airport at Port Bell for flying boats. Kampala is the Head Office of Posts and Telegraphs in Uganda. It has bus services to all main centres of the Protectorate. Aside from churches and mosques of different sects, it has three cinemas, a European, an Asian and an African hospital. It has the well known Makerere School, where pre-medicine and three years' medicine is taught, aside from a short course of science and arts until the second year of University.

"Dar es Salaam, having the same advantages of modern European life, has them however more elaborately and to a greater extent than Kampala. It has a port and enjoys more activity and action than the capital of silent Uganda. Its population, in education, civilization and number surpasses Kampala very much. With broad avenues, up-to-date buildings, cafes, cinemas, several hotels, regular bus lines in the city, several consulates, and being centre of trade and action in Tanganyika, I find more possibilities of pioneering. But mind you, both capitals have a very good future, both cities are day by day developing, but the progress of Dar es Salaam is a bit quicker than Kampala, because it is a port and the main produce market, and meanwhile importations are in many cases in private hands, while in Kampala they are a bit monopolized."

Mr. Nakhjawani has been in Dar es Salaam since January 3rd, and has lately reported that he has applied for residence to establish his business, and has

found an appropriate house for which he is negotiating the lease. If these plans succeed, he hopes soon to be joined by his Bahá'í wife and four children. He has had the constant backing of the Persian Pioneering Committee, and we pray that he will soon be happily and permanently settled.

CLAIRE GUNG Our first British pioneer sailed from London Docks on January 4th on the "Warwick Castle", surrounded by many loving thoughts as she departed on her solitary mission. Never a sailor and ill from her injections, Claire endured a miserable trip except "when we went through the Suez Canal, so slow and quite nice and sunny, also the days the boat stood really still and I went on shore". Her destination was the Lushoto School, located at 4,500 ft. in Northern Tanganyika, a day's journey from Tanga and two nights and a day from Dar es Salaam. She is employed as Matron of the Boys' School, with thirty-two English boys of five to twelve years in her charge. Although Claire had several times pioneered in Britain, the call to Africa was a soul-testing experience and it was bounty to find on her arrival on February 3rd a letter from our beloved Guardian, a letter which Claire hopes may one day go to the N.S.A. of Tanganyika! And now to her own reactions:

"Everything is so new and strange to me that I have at times shut my eyes and opened them again, to make sure I saw right. At the ship a lot of people told me that Lushoto was the spot in Tanganyika. I can well see it now. It is beautiful, such a lot of wild flowers. The hills are more like Scotland, more trees on them, of course mostly African trees. I have five double windows in my one room, a very nice room indeed, and the view from my window I just can't get away from. I can hear the waterfall all day and night only fifty yards away. It has rained so far every day. It is like an English summer. The roses are in bloom; fresh strawberries are out. It is very peaceful and very quiet here....

"The boys are a bit of a handful, but with Bahá'u'lláh's help I shall soon get them in order. They are quite nice boys. I have at least six only five years old. I read them a long story, a real treat for them and me.

"I have at least ten (native) boys to work for me, such nice boys and I can't speak to them yet. I have tried to say a few words to three of them and their faces just lit up. I have asked them their names and the ones I have got to know so far I call by their names, and they seem so pleased. Also I have noticed I am the only one that says "Please" and "No, thank you" to them. We have got at least thirty native boys working for us here, and some seem to have such kind and really spiritual faces. I am trying to do every day one hour's Swahili and with Bahá'u'lláh's help I hope I learn it soon.

"Have we got a hair-dresser that wants to come out? There is none anywhere... If we want a hair cut or a perm, we have to go to Dar, or to Tanga and wait till a boat comes in and go on board ship. No bank here and no chemist. I have to send to Tanga for medicines, and by the time they come you are either better or dead!

"It is very lovely here, but oh so lonely! I miss you so much. There is nothing to talk about here except shop. When the opportunity arises I voice my opinion on the Bahá'í lines without mentioning the Faith. I feel I have to be a bit careful. Don't forget to pray for the work here. I am only a weak instrument. I need your prayers."

TEACHING IN AFRICA

Laws, Minor Observances and Secondary Aspects of the Faith.

In teaching we should try to avoid controversial issues in the beginning, the Guardian once wrote. As we Bahá'is know, many of the secondary elements of religion are controversial, for opinions may legitimately differ about them and indeed do differ, as people adhere to the laws of particular dispensations of the past.

There are two good reasons for not volunteering information on the secondary elements of the Bahá'í Faith, such as monogamy, avoidance of alcohol, the equality of sexes, treatment of criminals, etc. First, it is not tactful to shock people and fail to approach them from their own point of view. Second, a long way has to be traversed before people are ready for the full bounties of Bahá'u'lláh's wise provision, as is shown by the fact that many laws are not yet promulgated for compulsory observance in the West.

There is a strong likelihood that some of the laws of Bahá'u'lláh run directly counter to African practice, since ideas of the value of women and of property, for example, are founded on tribal custom and are of immemorial age. To upset such a long held practice deliberately at the beginning with any individual might well evoke collective opposition and perhaps set back the advance of the Cause by decades.

On the other hand we must not allow ourselves at any time to compromise the Teachings or prevaricate if we are asked a direct question on a particular matter. In such a case it is best to turn up the passage in Scripture or Esslemont, and quote it or show it to the enquirer, preferably on his own.

We are wisest if we seek first to demonstrate and teach the meaning of Bahá'í living, the pivotal teaching of the oneness of humankind, the idea of progressive religion, and the central issue of Who the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were. We thereby give prominence to the dynamic, constructive principles of the Cause which are best in keeping with the needs and spirit of the age.

We can do no better than try to bear in mind the example of the Master as given by the Guardian: "Wise and tactful in His approach, wakeful and attentive in His early intercourse, broad and liberal in His public utterances, cautious and gradual in the unfolding of the essential verities of the Cause, passionate in His appeal yet sober in argument, confident in tone, unswerving in conviction, dignified in manners," and suit the Message to the susceptibilities and varying capacities of our hearers.

STOP PRESS As this goes to press, news comes of the appointment by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the United States of a strong Committee to handle matters concerning Africa teaching.