

Protestant Missionary Work in Mindanao: A Short History of the Alliance Church in the Philippines

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Abstract

This essay attempts to retrace the history of evangelical (aka protestant) Christian missionary work in Mindanao. Missionary work in the area started in Zamboanga by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, an organization originally based in Nyack, New York that has significantly shaped the cultural make up of Mindanao. Its history, however, has not been considered succinctly, especially during the formative years of missionary work. The paper narrates the difficulties and struggles faced by pioneer missionaries, especially those of the missionary couple David and Hulda Lund, and their eventual successes in converting Filipinos to evangelical Christianity, the establishment of evangelical churches and the foundation of a school that eventually evolved into the Ebenezer Bible College and Seminary, the first school of its kind in Mindanao.

Keywords: Alliance, Protestant Christianity, evangelization, colonial expansion

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As early as the 1890s, the leaders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (from here on referred to as the Alliance), then located in New York, cast their eyes on what was construed to be a heathen island off the eastern coast of the Asian Continent which is now known as the Philippines. More than a century after, the islands have transformed from its heathen state to one of the influential centers of Alliance activities through the Christian and Missionary Alliance of the Philippines (CAMACOP), a Filipino evangelical Christian organization that has been engaging in missionary activities with the vision of propagating the Christian gospel to the Philippines and the rest of the world. It was founded in Zamboanga by a group of Filipino Christians under the influence of Alliance missionaries and was first led by the Zamboangueno pastor, Rev. Jeremias A. Dulaca, the organization's founding president in 1947. According to Dulaca's last surviving brother, the pastor was a third generation member of the Alliance and was educated in mission schools. His grandparents were alleged to be pioneer *protestante* converts (Dulaca, 2010). From its humble beginnings, the CAMACOP has grown into one of the largest evangelical organizations in the Philippines. Other than running local evangelical churches (popularly known as Alliance churches), it also established several institutions of higher learning and charity. The CAMACOP and its member churches also support a significant number of missionaries working in the Philippines and abroad. In a recent presentation of the CAMACOP's Missions Division, Rev. James Qisquirin reports that for the year 2009, the organization was able to deploy Filipino missionaries locally and internationally. Of these, 52 are assigned in international mission fields. To date there are 6 fulltime missionaries based in Thailand; 22 partners in Hong Kong, Cambodia, Palau, South Africa, Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, Paraguay, and Australia; and 24 tentmakers Japan, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Paraguay, and Palau. The figures do not include a notable amount of CAMACOP trained pastors who are ministering in the United States and other countries. Many also serve as heads of various Christian organizations. Significant steps were also

taken to initiate Filipino missionary work in the Czech Republic, Mongolia and Tibet. The CAMACOP also runs programs Missionary Awareness activities. (Quisquirin, 2010)

Detailing the achievements of the CAMACOP, however, is not the objective of this paper. It will instead attempt to trace the past in order to reconstruct its evolution in the Philippines with its formative years as focus. In doing this, it is hoped that this paper will be able to situate the role of the Alliance in the study of the history of religion in the country and articulate partly its role in the advancement of Protestant Christianity in Mindanao, an aspect of our history that has often been neglected by the popular discourses in Philippine history.

American Evangelical Protestant Christian leaders in the last decade of the 19th century subscribed to the ideological discourse on the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its religion. Albert Benjamin Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance shared this world view especially in relation to the Christian evangelization. In *Providence and Missions* (1899) Simpson wrote about "the remarkable pre-eminence of world-wide influence that God is giving to the Anglo-Saxon race" (11) and was certain "that God is pushing this race to the front and using them to prepare the world for the spread of the Gospel and the coming of Christ" (12) Simpson had the burden of the world evangelization, especially of the heathen and savage races. This missionary burden was prominently inscribed in Simpson's teachings on missions. In the sermon titled *Missionary Emergency*, Simpson maintained that the "immediate evangelization of world" (Missionary Messages, 3) a "greater crises and mightier emergencies in the higher world of our spiritual work and warfare" (3). In the same sermon, he articulated eleven reasons why evangelization of the world must be deemed as an emergency. Three of these reasons are directly related with missionary work to heathen lands; one with colonial expansion; and, one with activities by other religious groups. These reasons served as the backdrop for the quest to seek ways on how to set foot on Philippine soil.

Protestant churches and missionary sending groups saw the acquisition of the Philippines as a great opportunity to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of winning the lost. The April 11, 1890 issue of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly carried an article by A. P. Harper, D.D. titled *Unoccupied Territory*. In this article, Harper expressed the need to establish missionary work in the Philippines even

as he admonished Protestant groups to continue their work and not be contented with what they have accomplished in Tibet, one of the frontiers of missionary work then. (Harper, 1890)

In 1894, Mr. Le Lacheur, an Alliance missionary leader attempted to visit the Philippines as a first step to open a mission in the islands but, this was hindered by the hostility of the Spanish government against Protestant missionary activities. This attempt suggests that Alliance leaders were very much aware of a prospective mission field in the Asia Pacific coast. The outbreak of the Spanish-American War seemed to have heightened that awareness as evinced by the articles and editorials published in several issues of the 1898 publication of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly. According to Pratt, the Alliance "saw in the war not only the scourge used by God for sinful nations" (Pratt, 1936, 284) but an opportunity of "opening up the world to the Gospel, preparing the seed of the kingdom. The war therefore was a 'necessary evil' to cleanse Spain from its sins and for world evangelization (284). The editorial of the June 1, 1898 issue of the same magazine, predicted a positive outcome of the war on the part of the Americans and this would usher in "the freedom of these long oppressed lands... the opening of their doors for Gospels of Christ." (Alliance Weekly, 1898)

Aware of the politics for and against the annexation of the Philippines, the Alliance, in the August 10, 1898 editorial issued a strong warning should America decide not to pursue the occupation of the islands as shown in the statement quoted below:

If the government of President McKinley shall, for sake of good understanding with European powers, or as an act of consideration to Spain, relegate these islands to Spanish barbarity and priestly domination, a day of reckoning will surely come, not only with the American people, but with the Supreme Power that rules over the affairs of nations, and some day the dragon's teeth we sow now shall rise to meet us as armed men, in foreign complications which shall face. ...

So far God surely guided and guarded the Executive of our nation in the stormy path of war. God

grant that the same All wise and Omnipotent Hand may still guide our national leaders in the still more difficult paths of peace. (*Alliance Weekly*, 1898, 121)

The right path of course was the colonization and annexation of the entire Philippine archipelago. Through colonization and annexation, the Alliance can now materialize its vision of evangelization. For this vision to be a reality, two wars had to be fought staining the path to the Philippines with the blood of American volunteer soldiers and Filipino nationalists.



Figure 1. Elizabeth White

With the acquisition of the Philippines, Le Lacheur's foiled 1894 tour finally succeeded in c1900-1901. As result of the tour, he published a report under the title "A Tour of Our Principal Mission Fields: Manila and the Philippines" in the March 30, 1901 issue of the *Alliance* magazine. In this report Le Lacheur gave a description of the Philippines in terms of its natural resources, political conditions, "races" and the need for the establishment of missions work in the islands. (Lacheur, 1901) For Le Lacheur time had come for the Church of our Lord to give the pure Gospel to the people who are so disgusted with the system by which they have been burdened so long. There are scores of towns ready for the workmen of the Lord. (Lacheur, 1901)

The Alliance, however, was not the only religious organization interested in the evangelization of the Philippines. To strategize evangelistic work to avoid potential conflict with other evangelical groups

active in the Philippines, the islands were partitioned into areas or sectors between the churches and groups through the Mission Comity Agreement of 1898-1910. The Alliance was designated to do missionary work in Western Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago with Zamboanga as its center. With the signing of the agreement, the stage was set for the Alliance to commence its mission in the Philippines.

The first Alliance Missionary to be assigned in the Philippines was Ms. Elizabeth White (aka Ella White and Bessie White). She was an American missionary assigned in Columbia but was later reassigned to the Philippines. Reports about Miss White's stay in the Philippines are conflicting. According to a module titled "Early Missionary Activity," which was presumably used in the missionary classes in the Philippines, White "never reached the Philippines" because of financial difficulties.

The Annual Report of the Superintendent and the Board of Managers of the Christian & Missionary Alliance of May 5, 1901 indicated that Miss White "has gone to the Philippines during the past year as a pioneer missionary but "has not gone further than Manila." (Superintendent and Board of Managers, 1901) The report also claimed that Miss White "is doing good work in connection with the Presbyterian mission in Manila." White also published significantly in the Alliance Weekly on the progress of her work in the Philippines. In the March 24, 1900 issue of the said magazine, she wrote the article "The Philippines from a Missionary Standpoint". In



Figure 2. Rev. H. Marshall

this article, White narrated about the Filipino's history and described their character and how this may serve as an advantage for missionaries.

She also warned about Roman Catholicism as a major obstacle for the success of missionary work. (White, 1900)

She observed that "the Filipinos morality is one of his strong points" as she expressed support for the campaign to the annex the Philippines. She wrote:

To leave him (*the Filipino*), as too many advocate, without making known to him the immortality and light which Jesus the Saviour brought to men, would be to leave him in a state of spiritual unrest which few besides unsatisfied Romanist can possibly realize. (White, 1900)



Figure 3. John McKee

White was very active with missionary work in Manila. While in Manila, she married the Presbyterian missionary, Rev. F. Jansen. Her credentials were subsequently transferred to her husband's ministry, ending her work with the Alliance. However, her partnership with the Alliance missions continued.

With this transfer, Mr. John A. McKee and Mr. H. Marshall succeeded White as Alliance Missionaries in the Philippines in 1902. McKee, an American soldier who was part of the American campaign against the Filipino revolutionaries, proposed "to train the natives

to industrial work." Although both missionaries reached the Philippines, Marshall had to return to the US (Annual Report, 1902-1903). It was

reported later that he died on April 27, 1903 in Washington. (AW, 1903-05-23, p 290).

McKee stayed on and became the first Alliance missionary to set foot in Mindanao. Originally, he wanted to work in Zamboanga but later decided to stay in Iligan where he could be closer to the Moros (most probably the Maranaos). His mission work, however, started even before he joined the Alliance. He wanted to become a medical missionary and this was one of the reasons why he joined the US military service. His first year of service as a soldier "furnished opportunities for exploring and surveying the field otherwise not possible." (AW 10-31-1903, p. 303). He also established a YMCA in Jolo during the five months he was stationed there. Through the YMCA, he ministered to American soldiers by "preaching every Sunday night." (303). In May 1900, he was stationed in Zamboanga for a short while, and later, in Siasi where his "work among children, moros, Filipinos and Chinese pushed vigorously in the day school." (303) As a soldier, McKee took part in the Philippine-American War and renewed his commitment of "lifelong service" to God "among the lost ones of the Philippines as he "knelt beside my army cot in the Second Reserve Hospital in Manila the night after the great battle of San Matteo December 18, 1899..." (303) McKee later returned to the US to be discharged from the military service and subsequently trained for missionary work under the Alliance board.

On June 10, 1902, after about a month of stay in Manila, McKee sailed to Cagayan de Oro to begin his missionary work in Mindanao. He arrived on June 21 and commenced his work through the selling and distribution of more than "two hundred Bibles, Testaments and portions in both Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog" (303). McKee, however, failed to reach Zamboanga. After a few months of missionary work in the Iligan area, McKee succumbed to cholera. His death led to the suspension of Alliance work in the Philippines.

This, however, did not necessarily translate to the suspension of missionary endeavors in Zamboanga. The Peniel Mission, an interdenominational holiness group that was started in Los Angeles, California in 1886, was already conducting missionary work in Zamboanga through William Able, a Spanish Native American (Apache)

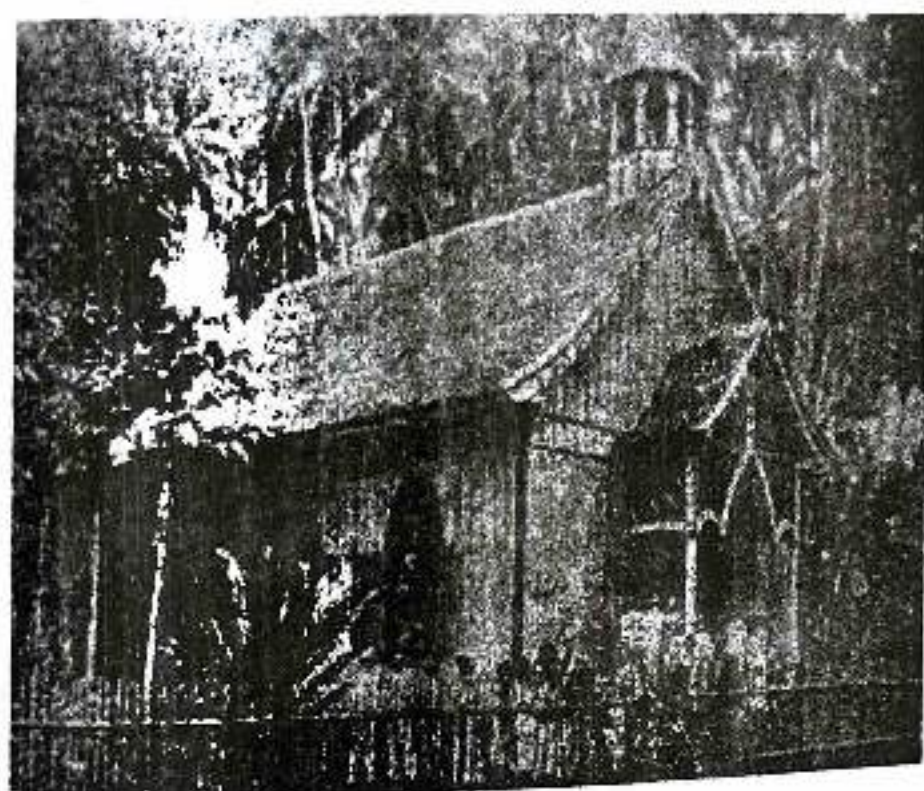


Figure 4. First Protestant Chapel, Zamboanga

Missionary, assigned in Zamboanga in c. 1900. Able later affiliated with the Alliance together with David and Hulda Lund. It is unfortunate, however, that Able left no documents about his missionary career. It was reported in the 1911 Annual Alliance Report that Able retired from mission work on that account of ill-health. According to the Peniel Mission Society, Able went to Bolivia in 1927 for mission work but died of smallpox a few months after (Williams 259-260).

Gustave Carlson, a Spanish-speaking missionary from Sweden (Rambo, 1974), joined Able later. Carlson constructed the first Protestant chapel in Tetuan, Zamboanga. The Lutheran missionary couple, David

and Hulda Lund, working under the auspices of the Seaman's Missionary Group, under the Carlson's invitation, joined the Zamboanga Missionaries as independent workers in 1904.

The chapel was inaugurated on December 25, 1904 and later became the headquarters of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Soon after, Carlson "transferred to Davao where he married a Filipina and became a lumberman" (Rambo, 1974, 61).

The Legacies of the Lunds

The Lunds began their missionary careers in the early 1900s and affiliated with the Alliance shortly after. According to the Board of Managers Minutes of the Alliance, Mr. Lund met with Alliance Board on June 9, 1906, regarding his application to be affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. His application was accepted a year after as indicated in the 1907-1908 Annual Reports of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, signifying the rebirth of Alliance missionary work in the Philippines. The Lunds were first listed as Alliance missionaries in the same report. Along with William Able, they became the first Alliance missionaries to actually conduct missions work in Zamboanga.

Among the many seeds that they had sown were the establishments of many missionary outposts, including those in Jolo, Siasi, Basilan and Margosatubig. Through their efforts, as well, Zamboanga became the nucleus of Alliance activities in the Philippines. They as well laid down the foundation for the establishment of a Bible Training Institute which started initially as a school for girls. Their seminal work forged the foundations of the Alliance church in Zamboanga. Without them, the present day Zamboanga could have been different. Through their efforts, Mckee's vision for Zamboanga of being the seat of Alliance missionary work in the Philippines saw some realization.



Figure 5. Rev. David and Mrs. Hulda Lund

David Lund: The Intrepid Soldier of Jesus Christ

The Rev. Robert Hess, a former Alliance Missionary to the Philippines, used the words above to describe David Lund. David Lund, who was Norwegian, was truly a fearless missionary. (Hess, 1941) He was originally called David Olai and was born on December 22, 1863, at Indrevaer, one of the small Norwegian Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, to a poor family of fisher folk. According to Steinsund, Lund already heard the calling of being a missionary at a young age. Steinsund also narrated that the young David was intelligent and musically gifted. He had a good singing voice and played the piano and the guitar. His parents' inability to support his education did not hinder him from pursuing his missionary calling. He worked and studied and his faith and Christian example paved the way for him to take the family name Lund, as an inheritance from a wealthy Swedish business man for whom he had worked for. His employer was blessed by the young David's life and was converted. Lund studied both in a seminary and medical school before he commenced missionary work. In his native Norway, Lund is regarded as one of its

greatest missionaries and is often referred to as Filippiner Lund because of his mission works in the Philippines (Steinsund, 2007).

Lund's roots as a fisherman, work ethic, and talents all proved to be valuable resources when he ventured to the Philippines to fulfill his missionary vocation. The word challenging is perhaps not strong a word to describe the ministry of David Lund. Lund, along with William Able, had a huge share of hardships in the Philippine frontier. In times of very limited and inaccessible technological advancements, they had to journey on foot carrying their amenities for evangelism. They also rowed "their heavy 16-foot native boat 40 and 45 miles" (Jansen, 1909) in going to some outstations. Philippine tropical weather was also a major factor and exposed the missionaries to conditions that put their very lives in danger. Jansen described this condition in the following excerpts: "As we read this, praying friends, remember that no white man, can undergo such exposure to the tropical sun, and such constant arduous toil, without grave risk to life..." (138). Despite these conditions the missionary work was very promising.

In 1920, a chapel was finally constructed in Siasi under the pastorate of Mathias Cuadra, a convert from the Island, who studied under Lund and

later in Manila. Cuadra, however, left again for Manila leaving the chapel without a pastor. Nevertheless, Lund had sown the seeds of *salvation and the Alliance* missionaries who came in the 1930s saw these seeds bring forth life. Lund also ventured into Basilan, a big island several miles off the southern coast of the Zamboanga Peninsula. It is the

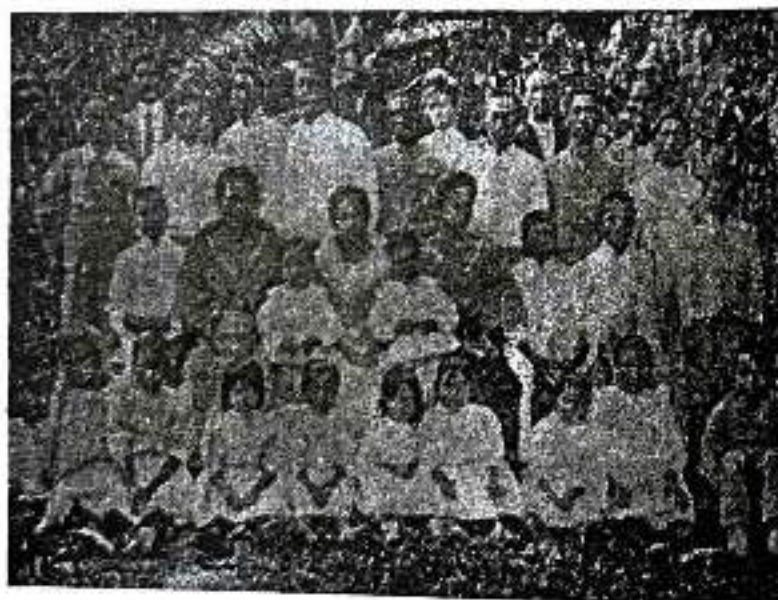


Figure 6. Pioneer Converts, Zamboanga, c. 1910

ancestral domain of the Yakans but had been significantly settled by other groups like the Chinese, Zamboanguenos and other Filipino groups. Although it was the Sullivans who commenced extensive work especially among the Yakans in the 1930s, it was the Lunds who planted the seeds of missionary work. According to Hess, the Alliance opened a school in Basilan and the "first classes were, held under the house of Datu Pedro Cuevas in Lamitan" (30). The Cuevas house also served, for a time, the venue of the Gospel services which the Lunds conducted. For the history enthusiast, this is a very important detail considering that Datu Pedro Cuevas, the son of Datu Kallun, is a prominent historical figure in Basilan history. Datu Kallun was a convict-sentenced to be incarcerated at the San Ramon Prison in Zamboanga. Popular history says that he escaped from prison and gained the leadership of Lamitan by beating its chief in a duel. Some of Cuevas' children and grandchildren are still active in church work in Basilan.

David Lund might have travelled in many nearby areas and attempted to preach the Gospel and convert but the center of his ministry had always been Zamboanga. As pointed out earlier, he was able to establish several outstations in Zamboanga with the help, at least for some time, of William Able and some Filipinos who have been converted. According to Gulbranson, one of these converts who faithfully assisted David Lund was Primitivo Ibanez. Ibanez helped in transporting a portable organ for Lund to use in his campaigns. "He possessed a goat and a small cart and until he reached the age of eighty he was faithful in loading the portable organ into the cart and transporting it to the place of meeting, be it on the street corner or in the downtown chapel." (42)

Some properties were also acquired in first decade of the 1900s. By 1909, the Zamboanga Mission had native-style missionary dwelling, a chapel, a lot, a small cemetery, a horse, a rig, "worth in all between four and five thousand dollars Philippine currency" (Lund 1909, 1).

Hulda Lund: The Brave Wife of David Lund

The missionary Elizabeth White Jansen described Hulda Lund as the "brave wife of Mr. Lund." Brave, perhaps, is an understatement considering everything that Lund had to go through to accomplish the work of the Lord. If available records are accurate, Hulda spent a significant part of her life as a missionary in Zamboanga working with

various missionary groups and as an independent missionary. As pointed out earlier, she commenced her work in 1902 with Seaman's Missions. She then worked with the Alliance for more than two decades, retiring in 1926. As will be shown later, she continued working as a missionary until after World War II with other religious organization. With this under consideration, her missionary career expanded for at least four decades.

Hulda Frykmann Lund was an American teacher of Swedish descent. According to a genealogy website, Hulda descended from a family of Christian believers from Sweden. She was born Keula Christina Frykman to John Frykman and Kajsa Olson on March 18, 1875 in Little Plum, WI. There are no explanations for the change from Keulca Christina to Hulda. It also referred to Keuloa Christina as "Hulda".

Early in her missionary career, Lund had to work to take "in sewing and dressmaking" for Americans who were residing in Zamboanga while her husband and Able set out to preach the Gospel. She also had a ten-year-old daughter, Evangeline, to care for while active in missionary

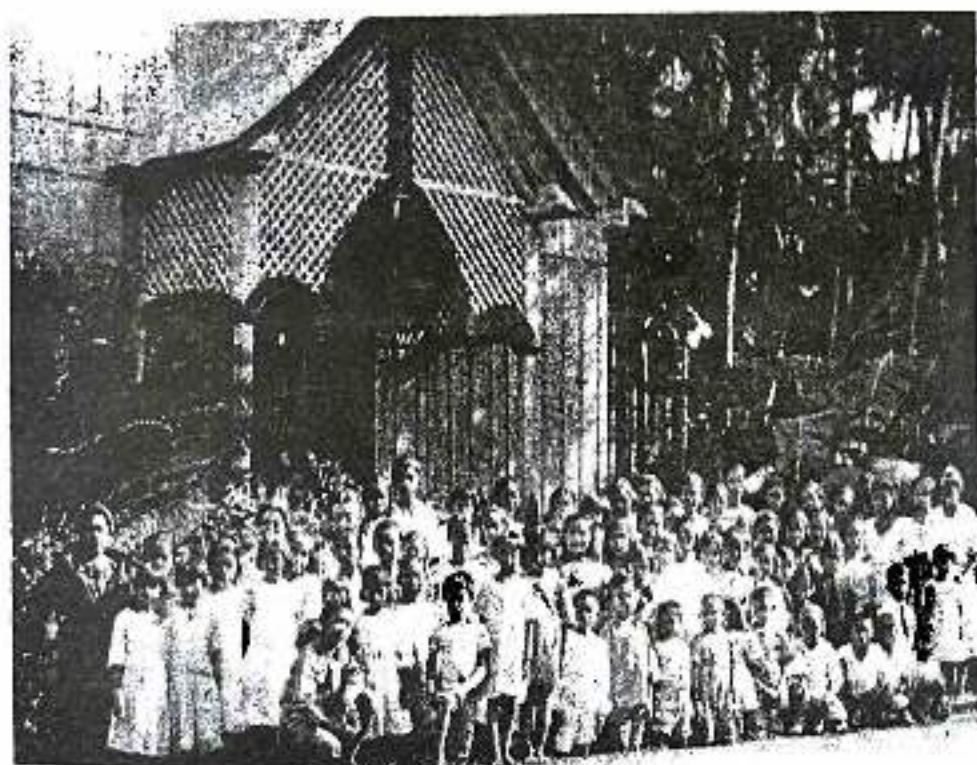


Figure 7. Hulda Lund's School in front of the Chapel, Zamboanga, 1924

work. She was also working with the public school system as a teacher prior to her affiliation with the Alliance (Annual Report, C&MA, 1908-1912:28). In addition to all this, she was an active missionary. When Elizabeth Jansen paid the Lunds a visit, she found Hulda with her "legs and feet had been covered with tropical ulcers brought about being pierced by the thorn bushes and poisoned through wading rivers and swamps in their missionary journeys." (Jansen, 1909: 89).



Figure 8. Intermediate Graduates, Ebenezer School, 1924

Like her husband, Hulda was a valiant soldier of the cross. She marvelously contributed to mission work both as her husband's helpmate and as an individual. She engaged in pioneering work specifically among the Chinese and was responsible for making initial contacts with the

Subano, the ethnic group with whom the Lommasson's worked with later.

Among the most prominent legacies of Hulda Lund is the establishment of a school which, in its inception, primarily catered to girls, mostly children of American soldiers stationed in Zamboanga and Filipino women. She was responsible for the acquisition of several properties that would later be utilized by the Alliance missions. Lund in her report to the Alliance mentioned that the school "is of no expense to the Mission, the equipment being furnished by the Government. It came unsought, and was thrust upon us providentially." (AW, 1912, 202). With the establishment of this school, Lund inadvertently laid down the foundation of what is now known as the Ebenezer Bible College and Seminary.

It is of great misfortune, however, that there are very limited documents on the ministry of David and Hulda Lund. The documents at the Alliance archives in Colorado are mostly composed of reports published in the Alliance weekly magazines and annual reports. David Rambo's dissertation also made use of interviews conducted with the former students of Mrs. Lund in the school for girls which the Lunds established. White, Gulbranson, Hess and Lommasson also mentioned the Lunds in their writing about Alliance work in the Philippines. Despite this drawback, the documents may still be sufficient to sketch the Lunds' arduous toil of sowing the seeds of Christianity in the Philippines, thus enabling us, the present, to get a glimpse of the hardship that the pioneer missionaries had to undergo to plant the seeds of Christ's salvation in Zamboanga and Mindanao. Moreover, this brief history situates the role of the Christian and Missionary in forging the history of Mindanao.

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