This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Charles James Guth (CN 311, T2)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case [unclear] was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as "ah" or "um" are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

. . . Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence of the speaker.

. . . . Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Word in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Bob Shuster, Katherine Graber, and Paul Bartow was completed in April 2014.

Please note: This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.

Collection 311, Tape 2. Oral history interview with Charles James Guth by Robert Shuster on September 26, 1985.

SHUSTER: ... a second. [Pauses] You were saying about the bridge?

GUTH: Yes, the British had built the bridge of cement across the part of the river where the current was strongest and deepest. And during the dry season, you could actually drive a vehicle across the bridge there, yes, this bridge. And then in the rainy season, there would be many feet of water on the rivers and flood flowing over the top of the bridge itself. So obviously, there was no road transportation during the rainy season. Where were we?

SHUSTER: Well, you were talking about how you went to Yabus Bridge to settle.

GUTH: Yes, we settled there then and began doing treks out into villages in that part of the tribal area.

SHUSTER: Where was this again? Trying to do a survey to find out where people were where you would be ...?

GUTH: Well, I guess we were...had decided that the station would be at Yabus Bridge. But then we wanted to learn where the people were in that part of the district too. So we trekked down to points as far as twenty miles away or so from there to different sections of the Koma peoples.

SHUSTER: How did you decide where to locate the station?

GUTH: One thing that caused us to locate at Yabus Bridge was that it was the end of the tribe and obviously it would be better to be in the center of the tribal area. But unfortunately, in the center of the tribal area, there's a vast territory where there were no people, it was an uninhabited area. There were people in the Koma group of tribes in the north and then in the south of their...area, a large mountainous section in the middle...

SHUSTER: So it was kind of like a donut?

GUTH: Similar to that, yes. And so you couldn't be in the middle. You had to be on one end of it or the other. And because the north end was closer to our chain of stations for communication and getting mail and for getting medical help if we needed it in an emergency, seemed the obvious choice to be on the north end of the tribal area. So we were just on the south side of the Yabus River.

SHUSTER: And what did the station consist of? Was it a single building?

GUTH: Well, when we first settled there, we lived in native style huts made of woven bamboo walls and grass roofs. And even when my wife and I were married just after our honeymoon, we came and lived in these kinds of huts for a while. We had one for a dining room and one for a bedroom and one for a kitchen. And our more permanent house was being built but was unfinished so we were still living in these houses. And one afternoon, we were having what we call siesta

time, a huge cobra came into the hut we were using for our bedroom. And he had climbed up into these woven bamboo sticks that formed the walls. And suddenly we heard this hissing noise and there he was looking down on us. And so we got out. I held a...it was a spitting cobra, and they had the capacity for...hitting a victim's eyes and causing temporary blindness. So we stripped a sheet of the bed and I held some bedding between my wife and the snake while she got out and she went and called Sam Burns, our colleague, who was still single in those days but living in another place, and he came with his shotgun and killed the cobra. So we decided that night we'd move into the house that was unfinished. There were no doors hung and the windows were just holes, no screens or anything. And I remember my...there were a lot of lions around in those days. We would hear them roaring all the time, especially in the night maybe, three in the morning. And sometimes after day break. And my wife insisted that we had to put our suitcases in the doorways. So if the lion came in he might at least stumble over the suitcases, and we could hear him coming [laughs]. Well, we never any problem that way, although we often saw leopard tracks and lion tracks around the house in the morning.

SHUSTER: And so that building then became the station building that you built?

GUTH: Yes. We had that house. We, at the same time, built a small store room and a small building for a clinic where medical work was carried on. And then the next year we did another house because Sam got married to one of the gals at a neighboring station. And so there were two mission houses there.

SHUSTER: Were there any Sudanese also living at the station?

GUTH: Yes. We had some workmen living there. It had its plus and minus factors. But ....

SHUSTER: You say workmen, you mean they were working in the surrounding area or they were working on the...?

GUTH: They were working for us.

SHUSTER: What kind of work did they do?

GUTH: Oh, we were in the early days trying to get a garden started, fruit trees and so on. And we needed some water hauled. We had to haul water from the river for washing clothes. And you had to have it in storage barrels or containers until it would settle because there would be so much mud in it that it had to settle down. And then dip it off carefully without stirring up the settlings and so on. And these men would help with chores like this.

SHUSTER: How many were there?

GUTH: Oh, it depended on how much work there was being done. Sometimes, if we were building something around the place, we would need a lot of bamboo cut. And we might be ... I'd be hiring fifteen or more fellows.

SHUSTER: And so they also had huts or houses on the station?

GUTH: Yes, we had places where they could stay while they were there.

SHUSTER: [Pauses] You mentioned a little bit earlier about you studying Arabic. Did the SIM have some kind of program for testing you as you were learning the language or for determining how far along you were?

GUTH: We were working in that in cooperation with the American Presbyterian Mission. And they did the testing for us. SIM would send us to them for language testing. There were certain levels.

SHUSTER: Was there any kind of policy about how long you were supposed to spend to reach a certain level or how much time you had to spend studying or ...?

GUTH: There wasn't a strict policy. The situation in the Sudan was that ...where we were going to be located, our most influential work would be with the tribes people among whom we were assigned. And that obviously would be the primary language responsibility. But wherever possible, missionaries were assigned to study Arabic for a time so they could at least be fluent to some degree in the lingua-franca of the country. Arabic was the official language of the country apart from, well, English to an extent too in the southern Sudan.

SHUSTER: You become proficient in Arabic?

GUTH: I wouldn't say proficient. I got to the place where I could use Sudan colloquial Arabic in Bible teaching and so on.

SHUSTER: How would you describe Arabic as a language?

GUTH: Great [laughs]. They have a fantastic language.

SHUSTER: In what sense?

GUTH: It's a...it's a fairly regular language. There are a lot of...many classifications of verbs and so on, a very exotic script. But the...the script itself is not a particularly difficult thing. It looks, you know, a stranger looking at it would think it's impossible. Of course it isn't. The grammatical structures are far more significant in presenting difficulties. But it's an interesting language. We enjoyed it very much.

SHUSTER: Are there particular advantages or disadvantages to it as a means of communicating the Gospel or theological....?

GUTH : It would have a much greater potential for explaining theological truths than would some of the tribal languages that we were working in later.

SHUSTER: And why would that be?

GUTH: Well, I think Arab thought probably deals more with abstract concepts than did some of

the tribal languages. And so there would be vocabulary for some things that you'd need to explain. We used Arabic as a ...a stepping stage for learning tribal language as well when it was possible. A lot of our tribal language acquisition had to be done the slow way, picking up expressions where we could. Finding a few expressions and asking questions and picking up nouns and then verbs and other classes of words and so on and then trying to analyze them. Classify them. But Arabic was some help. Our first informant was a man who knew a little bit of Arabic, and so we could get equivalents a lot faster that way than we might have otherwise. But they all had to be tested out.

SHUSTER: How would you compare or contrast Arabic with English?

GUTH: It's hard to do that, I think because we've grown up with English. And consequently, we think that it's easy. I think if a person were...knew neither English or Arabic and was starting to study both of them, maybe you'd say English is harder. I don't know. Arabic has a lot of sounds that are a puzzle to people learning it from outside. Some of the sounds are gutturals that are not the easiest reproducers for some people. And ...well that's part of the picture.

SHUSTER: You mentioned a little earlier that there were pluses and minuses to having Sudanese workmen living on station. What were some of those pluses and minuses?

GUTH: Well, the pluses were that the ones who were willing to work lived in a village out of our tribal area and came in from another tribe. And they could be there and they would be available when their help was needed. They certainly didn't hurt themselves in their output of work [laughs]. They needed supervision if they were going to get anything done and that itself was a problem. But I think though that was a plus, their availability. A minus is that you develop a ...a thought that certain people, because of association then, maybe are tied in with this new thought or this new kind of thing that's entered their area. This new religious thinking and so on just by nature of proximity, and of course it may be working against their really coming to the Lord because of feelings of dependence.

SHUSTER: Do you mean that other Sudanese regarded these people as Christians because they were living at the station?

GUTH: Well, I think that in some cases, was possible [ongoing recording static]. Maybe not so much there in our first assignment as in other places that we have seen. Especially where the station concept had been going on for a long time. People become identified with the place, and so they become identified with the religion. Which may be entirely a false thing.

SHUSTER: How long were you at this particular station?

GUTH: We were there only for our first term, which was a five year term. And that wasn't really long enough to get to know the Koma people and language well. I got to the place where I was teaching and preaching in Koma language.

SHUSTER: How do you spell Koma?

GUTH: K-O-M-A. But I wouldn't say anything like satisfactorily. I'm sure it was a disaster to the

ears of people. And then we were moved following our first furlough to the Mabaan tribe that was about thirty miles away. That's M-A-B-A-A-N. Our superintendent asked us if we would move to the Mabaan area because the man who had been supervising the work there was not returning from Australia. And it would mean getting into a much larger station situation where there was a hospital coming into being and there was an elementary school. And it would be my responsibility to oversee the work in this place and supervise the school and be involved with teaching in the school and so on.

SHUSTER: [Tape recorder turned off and on] What...?

GUTH: Ah....

SHUSTER: I'm sorry.

GUTH: Go ahead.

SHUSTER: When you were working with the Koma tribe, your primary work then was as an itinerant preacher?

GUTH: Yes, evangelist and trying to get the beginnings of a church going. And actually, we saw that coming into being.

SHUSTER: When you went to a village or a group of people, how did you begin? Did you simply stand up and start preaching or was there some kind of preparation? [voices in background].

GUTH: Sometimes we were able to get a little group together for what we might call a message. Certainly, when we went to further villages we tried that because we wanted to contact a lot of the people and get to know larger numbers. We tried to look for the chief and get cooperation from the chief. And often he would be cooperative and call the people together for us.

SHUSTER: And why would he do that? What...?

GUTH: Oh, I think maybe it was that he may have thought he was supposed to. Which is unfortunate. Because though he might of been expected to call the people together when the British administrative officer came around in order to tell the people they all had to work at clearing the road so many days this year, it would have been very wrong for the chief to think that he had to call the people to listen to us. And I'm afraid sometimes that kind of thing happened.

SHUSTER: Uh-huh. But when a group of people was gathered, what kind of message did you give them?

GUTH: We had to start with very, very basic things, because we found out that the Koma people (though they did have a word that seemed to be satisfactory for God, it was the spirit of God, Walamish[?]) they had little understanding of the spirit world. Except for things related to their fear of spirits that had to be placated with sacrifices. And so often times, rather than simply start where we might and giving a gospel message to interested people here, we had to deal with the

basics of who the spirits were and are. And what God's role in creation was. And where these spirits came from that they're afraid of. And that God isn't that kind of spirit. And that Walamish [?] has a son. And I tried to show how he was a spirit, but he also entered our experience as a man. And what his role as redeemer in our situation was. And there ...you know, it was an enormous package for them to try to comprehend. And I suppose in many ways we tried to give it to them too fast. I suppose that we ... probably with the understanding that comes from hindsight and more experience, would have tried to maybe not get so much across in one message. If we had gotten one truth across about the nature of the spirit world, it probably would have been something to build on. And yet the Spirit of God obviously moved their...at times it was hard to tell just how much the people would understand. I recall in one village situation, Sam Burns and I went ...climbed up a very steep hill. A high elevation. I guess some...mountains ... the edge of the mountains that come along the border of Ethiopia and Sudan there, we found a Koma village and the people all gathered. And I think they're probably there largely because of the influence of [the] chief calling the people together. And as we presented the gospel message and asked them if they understood it and if they would like to be Christians, we had the man who was helping us in the language-learning doing the preaching. We would give it in simple Arabic, and he would ... we didn't know enough Koma at that time. And he would give it in the Koma language. And practically, the whole village indicated that they wanted to believe.

SHUSTER: How did they indicate this?

GUTH: I forget what we asked them to do as a sign, whether come to over here.... I think that's what it was. If you want to believe, you come and join us over here, and we would move off to a side and ask if they wanted to come. And practically everybody did. And you know, whether it was a case that you talk about the village conversion where a whole village is moved by the Spirit to move into a new thing. Well, it possibly was that, I don't know. I guess I'd say probably not, and yet I would maintain it is a possibility. And we thought they didn't understand, so we explained again. "No, we mean just those who really want to understand and believe this and give your lives to Jesus Christ, will you come over." And we moved to a different place, not far away. "Now if you really want to, you come." And they'd all come again. And so only God knows how much in those early days they were perceiving and appropriating truth.

SHUSTER: What kind of questions or comments were they making?

GUTH: I don't know that I can say. There seemed to be a genuine openness. On the other hand, whether it was what they thought they were expected to do ...I have to...remember that that's more than a small possibility.

SHUSTER: From what you were saying before, I take it these tribes were not Islamic?

GUTH: No, no. These were animistic peoples. Their concept of religion was going to the witch doctor with chickens or goats for sacrifice. Especially when they need rain or when someone is sick. And then the witch doctor would do various incantations for bringing rain or for expelling evil spirits from people who are ill.

SHUSTER: Did you find that there was any particular aspect of the message, or any perhaps particular Bible stories that they strongly reacted to?

GUTH: [Pauses] I think that...generally the kinds of stories that really struck them was the stories of the crucifixion when we'd use flannel graph figures.

SHUSTER: And why do you think that was?

GUTH: I don't know. I wish I knew more, because we were there, as I say, just for five years. Our first term on the field. And how much comprehension there was, I don't know. I know that Sam, when he continued there, he and his wife and then later other people in that tribe, there were some who continued in the faith and developed. And some who bore some persecution for the Lord. And obviously with some, there was a real entering into spiritual reality. With others ... perhaps with the majority, there was simply an initial response that may not have been complete.

SHUSTER: After you had come to a village and you had preached for the first time, what was the next step? What happened then?

GUTH: We had some dreadful problems to cope with. One of the things that we would liked to have done is to have started a Bible school. We could not get permission from the government authorities to establish a Bible school.

SHUSTER: Was this Bible school just for Koma or for the whole Sudan?

GUTH: No, it would have had to have been just for the Koma because they were so limited in their language ability that it would have been almost impossible to try. You would have had to teach them Arabic or English in order for them to work along with people from other tribes. [Coughs]. And in those days, for a number of years, we were trying to get permission for starting a Bible school. In fact, after our first furlough, that was also to be my assignment to get a Bible school started for the area. And that would have been in Arabic for those few from the various tribes who were picking up some Arabic of a sufficient level where they could receive instruction in it. But unfortunately, as we see it, we couldn't get that kind of a provision. Later, God brought a Bible school into being in the Sudan and great things happened.

SHUSTER: Why couldn't you get permission from the government?

GUTH: I don't know. I think that the government was very reluctant to give us much in the way of permits. They did not want to arouse the ire of the Muslims. And the Islamic north was wanting and finally did put on a great effort to Islamic people of the southern tribes that were animistic.

SHUSTER: What did that effort consist of?

GUTH: Well, in jumping down for a number of years into the late '50s when the Civil War of Sudan was beginning, developing and which continued for seventeen years until 1972, there was a lot of pressure from northern troops (that would be Muslims) in the southern Sudan. They went into areas especially after the missionaries were all expelled from southern Sudan in 1964. They

burned villages at ... a church in Maloot on the Nile River where one of our pastors was developing a good work. He ... they killed the pastor and other leaders of the church. Their bodies were thrown into the Nile and presumably taken by the crocodiles. The charges against him was that he had a list of people and these were those communicants in the church who had been making financial contributions. It was a list of their offerings. And these were ostensibly regarded by the northern troops as lists of rebels who were opposing the north because there was a lot of rebel activity of some of the people in the southern tribes. Especially the larger tribes who were trying to hold back this Islamization or the northern dominance.

SHUSTER: What was the pastor's name who was killed?

GUTH: His name was Gideon Adwok.

SHUSTER: And how do you spell Adwok?

GUTH: A-D-W-O-K.

SHUSTER: Did he...?

GUTH: He was of the Dinka tribe.

SHUSTER: Did the effort at Islamitization consist wholly of negative ...killing the Christians and burning down the churches?

GUTH: Well, I suppose not entirely. Because there had been from a way back in southern villages, merchants who were selling salt and a little sugar maybe, a little tea, soap, cloth. They may have...a sewing machine and sew simple garments for the people and so on. There might be a blacksmith there who would from old pieces of broken truck springs beat out heads for axes or hoes for their fields and so on. And these people would be Muslims. And they would be Arab, people of Arab background. Or Northern Sudanese. And they would be in all the time, be exerting an influence for Islam. And they often times would get a group of retainers around them who would be starting to pick up bits of the Koran and so on.

SHUSTER: Going back to the Koma people [Guth coughs], you had mentioned that you had wanted to get a Bible school started there. What would have been the purpose for that school?

GUTH: For training some of these who were declaring themselves believers so they that could carry on a more effective ministry than we could do. Especially because of the wide distances between villages. In some of the areas, we wouldn't be able to contact them except very, very infrequently.

SHUSTER: How...after you had preached in a place and there had been some people who were interested and who became believers, what happened then? I mean....

GUTH: Not enough, I'll tell you that. We ...because it would be only a restricted part of the year because of the climate that you could even get to the southern part of the tribe. Unless you hoofed

it through mud and rain and so on for 100 or so miles to the south, there was no way of getting there except during the dry season period. And the dry season also had other demands on it as you'd have to work our missions conference in the dry season and vacations would have to come in the dry season simply because of transportation problems. And the dry season always was badly interrupted. And yet that was our only time for our getting out to the widely scattered areas. And so there was a conflict they were trying to work all these things together. It was a problem we really wrestled with, and we know we didn't cope with it very well.

SHUSTER: How large were the churches in most of the places where you had started?

GUTH: I would say that in that period during our first years there, the only thing that you could have even called a church was right at Yabus Bridge. You might call the others preaching points but not churches.

SHUSTER: What would be at the preaching point? Who would be people who were...?

GUTH: Yes, in some cases there would be someone who would...would be sympathetic at least and maybe genuine believers. Of course, the discipleship problem: they were not being trained as they should and so consequently there wasn't growth from one visit to another visit. And their cultural pattern where it probably needed to be changed because of factors that were clearly ...unsuitable for Christian people, these things were not being ...were not changing because...

SHUSTER: What were some of those factors?

GUTH: Well, here again, I think it would be the drunkenness and immorality and so on that often followed the drinking party.

SHUSTER: [Pauses] Was there any kind of Bible, Scripture in the Koma language?

GUTH: No, there was not a word of it written when we went in. So our early, you know, we spent a lot of our time in trying to apply what we learned at Summer Institute of Linguistics and reducing the language to writing. And after we were given a new assignments, Sam Burns of course continued this kind of thing.

SHUSTER: Is there a written grammar, dictionary for Koma language, Koma, languages, dialects now?

GUTH: I'm not sure I can give you a good answer to that question. I know a small dictionary was prepared. It would be some statements of grammar. But whether you'd call it ... certainly not in a condition that would be publishable perhaps.

SHUSTER: Has there been any portions of Scripture...?

GUTH: Yes, some were portions of Scripture were put into Koma language. Not nearly enough when the missionaries had to leave.

SHUSTER: You mentioned your first furlough back in the United States. What did you do during your furlough?

GUTH: During that furlough we lived for a while in New Jersey where my home was. We lived for a while in Iowa where my wife's home was. We visited supporters all the way from New Jersey, well in the areas of Michigan and Iowa and Nebraska and South Dakota, this area. And I guess we didn't accomplish too much apart from that kind of thing.

SHUSTER: You were in the States for how long?

GUTH: We were home about a year.

SHUSTER: When you visited people and talked to them about your work, what kind of things did they ask you about? What were they curious about?

GUTH: Well, they were very interested in our photographs, our slides and so on. And people were almost spell bound by some of the things that we showed them. They simply had genuine interest, and I think a real concern for praying for these people. And later the same was true of the Mabaan people where we were assigned. A real concern. Some of the people today, that we've been home now for well beyond twenty years, are still concerned about what is happening in Mabaan country.

SHUSTER: You say they were spellbound by some of your photographs. Do you recall some of the images they found so fascinating?

GUTH: Oh I suppose things like some of the things witch doctors were doing, trying to expel evil spirits from sick people. The simple lifestyle of farmers. The medical problems that they had and so on. In the Koma tribe, there was a lot of syphilis that they had apparently gotten from Ethiopian tribes that had crossed over the border. And this was supposed to have come into some of the Ethiopian area through Italian soldiers during the time that Mussolini and his soldiers were in Ethiopia . And one of the real problems of treatment was that syphilis and yaws have very similar kinds of lesions. And sometimes that could be, well I suppose impossible for us to know without that clinical capability for diagnosis which was which. But fortunately the treatment was effective that we gave. It probably would work for both as we understood it. And so Sam continued helping a lot of people. Unfortunately many would get cleared up only to come back before too many weeks reinfected.

SHUSTER: Did you get any kind of impression of American's picture of Africa from the kind of questions, comments that they asked you while you were on furlough?

GUTH: Well, I suppose in many ways that because we came from that sort of a cultural situation in Africa, what we had to say fit in pretty much with a lot of people's understanding of what undeveloped Africa would be like. A missionary whose assignment would be to work in an African city might have more trouble with his supporters to help them to see: yeah, Africa isn't that different from what it is here because in the cities ...there are all kinds of things. There are skyscrapers and there are businesses. There is industry and so on. And a lot of people, maybe especially a few decades ago wouldn't have expected that kind of thing where they might have

expected some of the things that we talked about.

SHUSTER: You had mentioned a little while ago about anthropologists in the Sudan. Did you have personal contact with any?

GUTH: Yes, we did. Often times they would stay at our place and live with us for some days. My wife would provide meals for them while they were out doing some of their field work.

SHUSTER: What ...what was their viewpoint of your work?

GUTH: They were very friendly, I suppose. They basically thought that what we were doing was not necessary and maybe that it would be better if we weren't there. There were some exceptions to that I think. I think some people developed a real respect for what we were trying to do. Because they saw that we were really trying to make some solid progress in understanding the language and recording it in a scientific way and so on. In fact, I think if I remember right, my friend Sam Burns has a friend who...a university professor in Germany who used language material from the Koma tribe and is in one of the libraries in Germany now. One of the universities.

SHUSTER: Of course Wycliffe has often run into some very strong opposition from anthropologists.

GUTH: Right.

SHUSTER: Did you ever encounter anything like that in your work?

GUTH: No, I can't say that we ever had anything that really ...that we would classify as a hindrance.

SHUSTER: How was the...how was the SIM mission in Sudan governed? How were decisions made or assignments made?

GUTH: We had a superintendent who was Mal Forsberg. Wheaton class of '32 maybe? And he was ...he came onto that responsibility, superintendent, just about the time we arrived on the field in 1948. He had before that been working in the Udu tribe which was adjacent to the Koma tribe in southern Sudan. We had a field council. And in the early days, it was made up of the people who in charge of the various stations. While I was the head of the station at Doro and the Mabaan tribe, I would have been on the council just by reason of my having the position in one locality. Also there were district superintendents. And we had one district out along the Nile, the stations near the Nile river ...

SHUSTER: ... So, so many stations would make up a district?

GUTH: Well, not necessarily how many, but just the geographic distribution. There were three or four stations or so along the Nile River or near the Nile River in the Dinka tribe. And then further east over closer to the Ethiopian border, there were four or five stations each of which was in a different tribe. And that was a district. And one person would be sort of a district superintendent

for each of these districts. Occasionally, these two persons would have meetings with Mal Forsberg in Khartoum, and decisions regarding people's location and responsibilities and assignments would be considered at such times. Certainly they'd be considered when all the heads of stations would get together for an annual meeting.

SHUSTER: Now were the...the heads of different stations and the district supervisors and the field director would be selected positions or appointed positions?

GUTH: Let's see. Certainly the superintendent, that is the top man, was an elected position. And the district superintendents were elected positions.

SHUSTER: And...?

GUTH: The heads of stations? No, I think they were assignments by the superintendent.

SHUSTER: I know that in the China Inland Mission, they had senior missionaries and junior missionaries.

GUTH: Yes.

SHUSTER: Senior being those who, I think, had been there longer than five years. Was the system like this in SIM?

GUTH: Yes, there was in those days. I don't hear of it anymore. I don't know just at what stage that concept just sort of died out. But we definitely had people that were after a certain amount of time were reclassified from junior missionaries to senior missionaries.

SHUSTER: What was the relationship of this ...SIM in Sudan with the home council?

GUTH: [Pause, tapping the desk] The home council.

SHUSTER: Councils.

GUTH: Yes, the home councils were responsible as they are today for assigning a new missionary to a given field of ministry. That is to a given country. Once he's on that field, he is responsible to the field council. Not to the home council as far as what area he's going to work within that field. The field council will determine whether he's going to be in this tribe, this station, or working with ex patriots or whether he's going to be doing tribal work, or if he's going to be doing agricultural work. This will be determined by the field council. And the home council will not raise any issue about that, because the understanding that we have is that the home council will relate to problems that the missionary has until he leaves. Or if there are problems out there, and he has to be, let us say he had to be dismissed for some reason, the home council would want to know why and be involved in the decision and what's going to happen to him from that point on. But as far as his responsibility on the field, that will be in the jurisdiction of the field council.

SHUSTER: So both field council and home council would have to decide about something like a

dismissal.

GUTH: Yes, they both would be involved in that, because he'd be coming back into the home situation again, and they get to decide ...they would want to know, I'm sure why he's being dismissed. That it's legitimate that they are treating him so harshly and so on.

SHUSTER: [Pauses] You mentioned that the home council would assign people to different countries. I assume that the different field councils told the home council their needs and ...

GUTH: Yes. Yes. Our personnel officer in our New Jersey office in the international department has a list that is kept up-to-date all the time of all the needs in all the fields. And so there is a matching of people and the needs as well as the interests there of the people themselves.

SHUSTER: In the 40s and 50s, were the different home councils have a formal or informal responsibility for different areas of SIM's mission or is it people all kind of all jumbled together as far as sending home council?

GUTH: I'm sorry, I'm afraid I didn't follow that.

SHUSTER: Okay, well for example, did the British home council generally send people that were stationed at Khartoum, Canada, the United States to one particular area in south Sudan or maybe Australia?

GUTH: No, we didn't do that. With the exception that when Ethiopia first became a field of SIM ministry, the general director at that time reckoned that this would be a good place for Australians to work because it's on the far side of Africa as we think of it from North America and it would be a more natural place for Australians who are starting then to send missionaries to Africa with SIM. Not that that was the beginning of missionary work or workers coming out of Australia by any means. But I suppose it was about maybe concurrent (I'd have to check into this) maybe concurrent with the beginning of an Australia council for SIM. And it was reckoned that the Australian workers might more naturally gravitate to East Africa rather than to West Africa. And this I think was a pattern for quite a time. Now that kind of thing would be broken down.

SHUSTER: They would more naturally gravitate to East Africa because it is closer...?

GUTH: Closer to Australia, yes.

SHUSTER: I see. And you say now this kind of thing would be broken down.

GUTH: Yes.

SHUSTER: Why would that be?

GUTH: Well, I think that with travel being what it is now, and so on, if an Australian felt strongly inclined to meet a personnel need in Liberia, in West Africa, he wouldn't be urged to go to East Africa because East Africa is closer.

SHUSTER: When you returned after your first furlough, you said you were stationed among the...

GUTH: The Mabaan.

SHUSTER: The Mabaan people. And your assignment again was working on administrating the hospital?

GUTH: Yes, my responsibility was being station head, if we want to use the term. We had a clinic and we had a doctor and the hope was to build a hospital, get a hospital going there which eventually we did. And a hospital, an elementary school which was already established and a larger church though not a large church. And a bigger tribal area as far as population and so on. I had ...a different role than I had had in the Koma work, our first five years.

SHUSTER: What were your responsibilities as a station head?

GUTH: Oh, just trying to see that everything was coming together as smoothly as possible. We had more people on staff obviously. A doctor and at times two or three nurses. We built a twenty four bed hospital. And a large clinic work. Outpatient clinic. We had ...a church and preaching points in a number of villages. There was a responsibility for getting students in for the school and keeping them there because not all of them were happy to be in school. The chiefs in those days ...it was sort of toward the end of the British regime in Sudan. And the chiefs were under pressure from the British government officers to get boys from their districts into the school. And so it was trying to keep this kind of thing running well. And keep the boys happy in school when they're there because they would far rather chuck the clothes and go back home.

SHUSTER: How many people were there, how many SIM staff members were there altogether at this station?

GUTH: I suppose there were ...two ...four ...up to ten.

SHUSTER: And how large was the church?

GUTH: It was hard to say how large the church was. It would be easier to say that the church building was often filled with 120 people or 150, this kind of thing. Those who became real believers endured quite a lot of persecution, and it was difficult for them. The tribal system, for example, and the Mabaan tribe, exerted a lot of pressure on people to be conformists to the group. And for a person to act as an individual was a very difficult thing. A person became a Christian and of course this is a very individual thing by the very nature of it. And for him to make individual decisions about how he will behave and his new religious position is very difficult. Because it's putting him in a new kind of experience. He is relating now to Christ who he recognizes as chief. Who is a bigger chief than the local village chief. They learn that they have the responsibility to do what this chief says. And this doesn't involve decision with the brothers and sisters and uncles and fathers and grandfathers in the village. And that's a rather radical turn of events for the person. For example, the Mabaan would scarcely be able to conceive of working alone. You always work in a group. And today you work in this man's field and the next day in another man's field and the next day in another man's field in sequence. I want to say there were twenty men in a village. And in

twenty days, you've worked in twenty different fields. And each man has had twenty people working for him one day out of that twenty day sequence. I suppose that one man working alone for twenty days in his own field could accomplish as much in his field as having twenty people work there one day. But they absolutely, you know, it would be totally, absolutely unthinkable for them to work on that kind of basis. And yet, working in their fields involves what they eat. For example, the man whose field is being cultivated on a particular day, his wife has to provide beer for all the village because they're working for him that day. And at the end of that day, she has gourds full of beer that she has worked for several days in preparing and some of the village women have been helping her in this. And ...she jealously guards this as her womanly responsibility. And the drinking at the end of the day ...well, this really constitutes the food of the day. It's a weak kind of beer that they make. It's not highly intoxicating. But when that's their food for the day, they can get drunk on it anyway even though it's weak. It's like a thin porridge. And the alcoholic content is there. And with large quantities, they can get quite drunk. And so if a man becomes convicted about drunkenness and the problems that often follow that, the fighting and the immoral behavior and so on, and wants to change that and if he decides, let us say, "Well, on my day that we have everybody working in my field, we'll roast some pumpkins, and we'll even kill a goat," he'll get no takers. Because that's not the way the Mabaans do it. And besides that, his wife will have ten fits because no [self] respecting Mabaan woman would do such a thing. She's going to have beer for everybody just as all the other women have for their husband's field work. And so it was an awful lot of pressure on some of the early Christians because of such issues as this. Another complicating factor in village life too was that in Village A, all the males would be related. There would be an old grandfather, and his sons...

SHUSTER: A clan.

GUTH: ...and their sons and the women of course obviously would ...a fellow would have to marry from a village outside the village because all the women there would be ...would have become blood relatives directly or indirectly. And so the women would be brought into the village from Village B and Village C and Village D and so on. The problem comes from these kinds of things maybe that a boy from Village A and a boy from Village B and a boy from Village C are all wanting a girl from Village D. And so they lie in ambush for one another with fighting sticks and inflict dreadful wounds on one another. But sometimes all the men from Village A will help the boy from Village A. And all of the men from Village B will help their boy. And all the men from Village C...

SHUSTER: So they would re-fight the Trojan War?

GUTH: That's right. Yes. Would be enormous fights. And I remember sometimes our doctor and the nurses would be up all night literally digging fragments of skull bone out of the brain. Or patching broken arms and legs and so on. I recall one night, there came some fellows to our sleeping porch. It was so hot, we had like a screened sleep out where we slept. And they woke me up at about two or three in the morning and asked me if I'd go down the road with a pickup and bring in a lot of people. There had been a fight over boys courting. And they had been joined by their whole village. Relatives. And we brought in as many as I could get on to that pickup. And the less serious cases had to walk. But then the rest of that night and the next day, the medical staff was

patching up these people. And this is a strong cohesion of people within these village clan systems. It was a very real thing. It had some very good things about it of course. Very supportive. And there's a genuine love among them. And there is much about them that we really respected. The poise of the people, you know. We...even though the women would be unclothed (or essentially unclothed) and the men totally unclothed, some people would have a stately bearing about them just as you'd see in our own culture. You'd say, "Oh, that woman is so stately." Real dignity. You'd see that through the same kinds of differences among some of these and be so... almost elegant in the way they would do some of their chores and the way they moved themselves and their hands and what not. You know, just a lovely proficiency. And unhurried grace about some of their movements and so on. My wife used to admire it so much. So a lot of these things, this village cohesion and the things that were spin offs from it were very good. But at the same time, they created real problems for young believers because they couldn't act as individuals. They were pressured to act as members of a whole.

SHUSTER: So how were they able to resist?

GUTH: Many didn't. And consequently, they would continue with the conflicts that came from the problems associated with the compliance. The drunkenness and so on, the fightings and so on. And many I think within themselves were struggling. Wanting to be like a few who had taken a strong stand and were willing to suffer the gap. Now, because there are more Christians, things like that are easier than it was for some in the earlier days.

SHUSTER: Now did they become outcasts? Or simply was it a question of always going against the grain?

GUTH: Always against ...always going against the grain. I don't know of cases where they were actually, say, disinherited from the clan. Or, you know, actually forcibly put out and say that they wouldn't tolerate them. But there was a real struggle there and a very up and down experience for many of them. Maybe most of them. It was hard for us to know where to...in Bible teaching ...where to make clear what things are Biblical as separate ...trying to leave what is simply cultural. Because plenty of the things there are, you know, just because it's different from the way we do it doesn't mean it's wrong. The very fact that they can't work alone, they just can't think of working alone, that's not a bad thing. There's nothing wrong with that. It was just some of the problems that were spin offs of that that created difficulties.

SHUSTER: [Pauses] The ...of course, it was in the mid '50s, was it not, that Sudan actually got its independence.

GUTH: Yes, about 1956. January 1, 1956 I believe Sudan became independent.

SHUSTER: How did this affect your work?

GUTH: From that point on, there was increasing tension in the field. The Islamic presence, Muslim presence became felt much more from that point. It was not too long after that that a youth group from a town near where we were (the government center for the tribe is just two miles

away), a youth group that had been trained by some Muslim leaders in the community came marching through our station. And there was a lot of shouting and so on. And it was after that that one of the Arab merchants told us that their real intention was to kill us. But they just marched on through the tribe, through our station. What their real intent was, I don't know if they really intended to kill us. I suppose only God knows, but at least they went on through. But there was a lot of; you could feel it in the air. There was a change of atmosphere during those years following independence because the Islamic pressure moving into the south was a very real thing.

SHUSTER: What were the Muslim Tarigas (T-A-R-I-G-A-S)? One of them, I heard, was called the Ansar of Mahdia.

GUTH: Yes, the Mahdi and the Mahdia was a much earlier period in Sudan history.

SHUSTER : But as I ...at least in some of my readings I read that there were two large groups called Tarigas. Some kind of associations that ... Muslim associations for spreading the Islamic faith or perhaps something close to it.

GUTH: Yes, I don't know the word. The Tarigas. It's probably ... I'm sure it's just my ignorance.

SHUSTER: Well, it must be mine, I'm sure. But anyway, in...another thing that I've read was that in 1957, all mission schools were naturalized?

GUTH: Yes.

SHUSTER: How did this affect SIM?

GUTH: Okay, it meant that the school that I was responsible for...

SHUSTER: Among the....

GUTH: ...among the Mabaan suddenly was no more. And....

END OF TAPE