New Insights into Source Materials

The First Missionaries of The Church Missionary Society in Sierra Leone, 1804–1816: A Biographical Approach

Katrina H.B. Keefer

Abstract: Many early records in West Africa arise from missionary accounts. While they may contain rich ethnographic data, this detail should be approached only after analysis and consideration of the authors of the sources in question. In early Sierra Leone, important data was recorded on behalf of the English evangelical Church Missionary Society, but the missionaries reporting on the ground comprised an insufficiently studied group of German-speaking Pietist Lutherans originating from central and northern Europe. This article analyzes the authors of this information in order to approach their accounts with a better appreciation of existing bias and to better engage with how diverse sociocultural perspectives affect the historical record.

Résumé: En Afrique de l'Ouest, les écrits des missionnaires figurent parmi les premières sources disponibles sur l'histoire de la région. Bien que ces textes puissent contenir de riches données ethnographiques, les détails qu'ils fournissent ne doivent être abordés qu'après analyse et prise en compte des auteurs des sources en question. Au début de l'histoire de la Sierra Leone, des données importantes ont été mises par écrit au nom de la Church Missionary Society évangélique anglaise, mais parmi les

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missionnaires travaillant sur place se trouvait aussi un groupe insuffisamment étudié de luthériens piétistes germanophones originaires d'Europe centrale et du Nord. Cet article analyse les auteurs de ces informations afin d'aborder leurs écrits ainsi que leur biais de manière critique et afin de mieux approcher la manière dont diverses perspectives socioculturelles affectent les sources historiques.

Introduction[1]

In the early nineteenth century in Sierra Leone a series of events took place which could not have been replicated elsewhere or at any other time. Those events were the British Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, the influx of freed African slaves from vessels that had been seized and adjudicated by the Vice Admiralty Court, and the establishment of a western-style education system which served to knit together a tremendously diverse region. Central to the transformation of society in that region and period, but too little studied by scholars, were a group of German-speaking Lutheran missionaries who worked on behalf of the English evangelical Church Missionary Society. The pedagogical efforts of those individuals – all of them men – served to affect the socio-cultural fabric of the country and its inhabitants radically over time. However, the missionaries themselves have been largely underreported within the historiography, forgotten in fact over the last half century although with the recent exception of Bruce Mouser's study of the Reverend Peter Hartwig. No study prior to this one has examined their sociocultural origins, instead categorizing them as "Germans."[2] However, their

[1] I am grateful for the support of Paul E. Lovejoy, who supervised me in the dissertation from which this present article arose. Suzanne Schwarz's excellent advice, as well as that of innumerable friends and colleagues with whom I discussed this subject at conferences, proved invaluable. Had they not asked me about the missionaries themselves, whose documents provided me with such rich data, this biographical approach to these complex historical figures would remain under-explored. Thanks also to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which indirectly helped support this project, and the British Library's Endangered Archives Project for Sierra Leone which continues to preserve documents at risk. Thanks are always owed to my partner, Chris Kurak, and his unswerving support of my work and research.

[2] Bruce L. Mouser, *The Case of Reverend Peter Hartwig: Slave Trader or Misunderstood Idealist? Clash of Church Missionary Society/Imperial Objectives in Sierra Leone, 1804–1815* (Madison: African Studies Program, 2003); Bruce Mouser and Nancy Mouser (eds.), *The Reverend Peter Hartwig 1804–1815: A Sourcebook of Correspondence from the Church Missionary Society Archive* (Madison: African Studies Program, 2003); Nancy Fox Mouser, "Peter Hartwig, 1804–1808: Sociological Perspectives in Marginality and Alienation," *History in Africa* 31 (2004), 263–302. These missionaries were the subjects of comprehensive study during the two excellent histories of Sierra Leone published in the 1960's by Christopher Fyfe and John Peterson respectively; but in the following half century, their contribution has not received serious scholarly consideration. See: Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone 1787–1870* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1969).

lives and their origins fundamentally shaped the region, and any effort to approach their work and impact would be incomplete without a detailed recognition of how they differed from the largely British agents in the colony with whom they worked, and how they differed from one another due to the peculiarities of central European geopolitics of the period. These men were not only ultimately transformative, but also served as important sources on the ground for ethnographic data concerning the Susu and Bullom peoples, and for the process of acculturation of African recaptives which went on all the time in Freetown. It is therefore crucial to analyze the missionaries biographically as far as the data will allow, so as to recognize the value as well as the limitations of their contributions. While later German-speaking missionaries were significant in the history of Sierra Leone, this earliest group experienced a unique situation. They were breaking new ground and their efforts began in an ad hoc fashion, rendering their correspondence and accounts important as they represent the initial steps in developing the CMS in the region.

This article ends with the year 1816 when the CMS mission was centralized in Freetown and the missionaries were given full authority over the steadily increasing demographic of the Liberated Africans who were being judicially emancipated into the colony. After that point, the detailed and personal nature of each man's African correspondence shifted, as each missionary found himself responsible for many hundreds of pupils instead of just a few dozen. Simultaneously, the overall approach of the CMS became more structured and codified.

Sierra Leone: Company and Colony

The first decade of the nineteenth century was one of enormous social change in Sierra Leone. The nascent settlement at Freetown, controlled by what was by that time a crumbling British-based Sierra Leone Company, was home to a diverse mixture of settlers. They had first come from the United States to Nova Scotia following the 1763 American War of Independence, and then in 1797 they emigrated from an inhospitable eastern Canada to the coast of upper Guinea. Their second migration was funded and overseen by a group of ardent abolitionists in Britain who directed the Sierra Leone Company in tandem with wealthy investors who hoped that a settlement in West Africa would prove profitable. In 1800 these Nova Scotians now settled in Africa were joined by approximately five hundred Jamaican Maroons, who had been exiled to Nova Scotia in turn after the Second Maroon War; like the Black Loyalists, they found Nova Scotia far too cold and unappealing and begged to be moved. In 1808 the Company which administered the settlement finally collapsed under the financial burden of supporting its colonists, and Freetown was annexed by the British Crown. Freetown then became home to a Vice Admiralty Court which implemented the Act to Abolish Slavery by dealing with the

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adjudication of captured slave vessels. Within a decade people rescued from slave vessels had outnumbered the settlers.

Freetown was surrounded by an equally complex mixture of peoples with long histories in the region as well as by comparative newcomers. Families of Afro-European coastal traders who could trace their lineage from inter-marriage of local elites and European agents dominated the trade networks connecting the interior to the Atlantic system, while powerful Muslim kingdoms at Moria and Fuuta Jallon represented connections to the Islamic systems inland. Many of the local peoples, including representatives of the Afro-European coastal families, belonged to a male initiatory society, Poro, which served to oversee judicial processes, trade disputes, warfare, and spiritual matters, and which provided authority to local governing bodies.[3] Both Islam and Poro offered systems of education to children of the region, but access was limited by the wealth and social standing of a given child's parents. It was into so diverse and complicated a blend of peoples and religion that the missionaries whose lives and work form the core of this article arrived, in 1804. They brought European innovations in pedagogy which afforded children an education no matter their origin or social standing, and their work as teachers paved the way for an entirely new educated elite in West Africa. That said, their regionalism and actions set them apart from the more typical narrative which privileges the European male interloper within African society, so that an examination of each different context becomes central to a deeper interrogation of these seven individuals.

The Church Missionary Society and its Missionaries

The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 by the Clapham Sect of the London abolitionists as the "Society for Missions to Africa and the East."[4] The purpose of the Society was conversion within the colonies,

[3] Olfert Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique, contenant les noms, la situation & les confins de toutes ses parties, leurs rivieres, leurs villes & leurs habitations, leurs plantes & leurs animaux; les Moeurs, les Coutumes, la Langue, les Richesses, la Religion & le Gouvernement de les Peuples* (Amsterdam: Chez Wolfgang, Waesberge, Boom & van Someren, 1686); Adam Jones, "Decompiling Dapper: A Preliminary Search for Evidence," *History in Africa* 17 (1990), 171–209; Braithwaite Wallis, "The 'Poro' of the Mendi," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4–14 (1905), 183–189, 183; E. Ojo Arewa and Everett E. Hale, "Poro Communications (West Africa). A Spiritual Channel Where Men Are the Means of Transmission," *Anthropos* 70 (1975), 78–96, 79; Ayodeji Olukoju, *Culture and Customs of Liberia* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 25–26; Kenneth Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1967), 241–243; Giorgi (Fr.) Gello, *La Società Segreta del Poro (Sierra Leone)* (Bologna: EMI, 1977), 27; Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 3.

[4] Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, its Men and its Work,* volume 1 (London: The Society, 1899), 68–71.

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and their mandate was to address what the founding members believed was a lack of interest in Africa by other missionary societies. Despite their intentions, the CMS was unable to recruit any British missionaries to serve their cause, but with the mediation of Carl Steinkopf, who was the Lutheran pastor at the Lutheran Savoy Chapel in London, the society was able to come to an arrangement with a seminary in Berlin which provided them with missionaries to send overseas.[5] The CMS therefore sent these men to the West African coastal area with which the Clapham Sect was already involved through its interests in the Sierra Leone Company. The CMS had been founded by evangelical members of the Church of England, but the missionaries from the German and Baltic regions were Protestant Lutherans[6] with whom at that time the Church of England had amicable relations. The cordial relations of the two Churches had developed in part due to the long tradition of intermarriage between the English and German-speaking royal families and in part due to the general agreement in doctrine between the two Churches. Furthermore, the evangelical movement within the Church of England had a great deal in common with the Pietist Lutheran movement in German-speaking Europe. The German-speaking early missionaries whom the CMS was forced to send out in lieu of English speakers often clashed with colonial authorities, but most tensions were ameliorated considerably in 1816 when the CMS, and by extension the evangelical branch of the Church of England, became the official religious denomination of the Colony.[7] That reliance by the colony's leaders on the CMS intensified as the colony explicitly sought to educate and indoctrinate newly arrived Africans freed from slave ships, with the CMS given primary charge not only of Liberated Africans but of most of the children in the colony too.

[5] Steinkopf served as pastor in London from 1801–1859, and had previously been secretary to a society at Basle in Switzerland. See: J.C.S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760–1800* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2002), 189; Frank Hatje, "Revivalists Abroad: Encounters and Transfers between German Pietism and English Evangelicalism in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," in: Stefan Manz, Margit Schulte Beerbuhl and John R. Davis (eds.), *Migration and Transfer from Germany to Britain 1660 to 1914: Historical Relations and Comparisons* (München: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 65–81, 76–78.

[6] Whether because their correspondence was intended to be read by their superiors in London or because they genuinely did not experience any sense of discomfort with their position, the missionaries did not write concerning the oddity of acting as representatives for a different sect of Protestantism. It is entirely possible that they were uncomfortable with their circumstances, and that any records of such unease did not survive, or that it simply was not put to paper.

[7] Arthur T. Porter, "Religious Affiliation in Freetown," *Africa: A Journal of the International African Institute* 23–1 (1953), 3–14, 8. As a result of having to rely on German-born missionaries for many of the first men sent out, the CMS arranged in 1806 to set up its own seminary school, overseen by Dawes, former Governor of Sierra Leone. See: Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, 88.

The Missionaries and their Relationship with Church History

The first missionaries largely originated in the Berlin Missionary Seminary, founded in the Pietist Lutheran tradition in Berlin in 1800 and led there by the Reverend Johann Jänicke.[8] The Seminary had missionaries but no funds with which to send them abroad, while the CMS had funds but no interested missionaries.[9] CMS historian Samuel Walker's 1845 narrative adheres closely to the original documents from which it derives its information, documents now kept in the University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library's Special Collections.[10] Walker described in detail the recruitment of the German-speaking missionaries from Berlin, and the difficulties they faced in Africa. The 1873 *CMS Atlas* gives no names of missionaries who worked on the upper Guinea coast prior to 1816, and from then on indicates only success in conversion, although it attributes that success to the Reverend William A.B. Johnson.[11] In 1899, Eugene Stock, likewise a CMS historian, described also the arrangement between the CMS and Berlin Seminary and further explained that upon their arrival in London the new missionaries were unable to speak English. Stock's account paints a picture of challenges from the outset, describing German-speakers who were literally unable to communicate without the

[8] *The Missionary Magazine for 1802, a Periodical Monthly Publication Intended as a Repository of Discussion and Intelligence Respecting the Progress of the Gospel throughout the World,* volume 7 (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1802), 382. See also: Karl Friedrich Ledderhose, *Johann Jänicke, der evangelisch-lutherische Brediger an der böhmischen- oder Bethlehems-Kirche zu Berlin, nach seinem Leben und Wirken* (Berlin: Eduard Beck, 1863), 38–41, 44–45.

[9] Mouser, *The Reverend Peter Hartwig*, 16. Phyllis Jane Wetherell, "The Foundation and Early Work of The Church Missionary Society," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 18–4 (1949), 350–371, 356. Jänicke evidently left the Berlin Missionary Seminary to found the Berlin Missionary Society in 1824. See: Brian Stanley, "Christian Missions, Antislavery and the Claims of Humanity c. 1813–1873," in: Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 8, World Christianities c. 1815 – c. 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 443–458, 444.

[10] Samuel Abraham Walker, *Missions in Western Africa, among the Soosoos, Bulloms, &c: being the first undertaken by the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East,* volume 1 (Dublin: William Curry, Jun. and Company, 1845). This present article represents an analysis of documents drawn from CMS sources and from contemporary European documents; further research in Germany concerning any and all documentation related to these individuals is anticipated as part of a future project. The Berlin Missionary Society Archives do not reach back before 1800 for example, and further research into the earlier lives of these first missionaries is ongoing.

[11] Church Missionary Society, *The Church Missionary Atlas: Maps of the Various Missions of the Church Missionary Society, with Illustrative Letterpress* (London: Church Missionary House, 1873), 11.

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assistance of Steinkopf. In fact it was Steinkopf who eventually arranged accommodation for them in Clapham so that they could learn some English before being sent to Britain's first Anglophone African colony. He also facilitated their brief return to Berlin to be ordained as Lutherans, in order to place them at the same level as other missionaries acting overseas.[12]

Most intriguingly, in 1953 the Anglican church historian J.R.H. Moorman, later Bishop of Ripon, offered a wholly revisionist account of the CMS's efforts in Sierra Leone and its hinterland. Moorman's history differs considerably from those relying explicitly on the original archival sources:

> At first no English missionaries could be found to go out to West Africa, and the Society had to employ a party of German Lutherans, all of whom, with their wives and children, perished on the River Pongas in 1807. In 1815, however, a Norwich solicitor, Edward Bickersteth, offered his services, was ordained, and became the real founder of Anglican missionary endeavour in West Africa.[13]

Moorman cites Stock's 1899 account as his primary source for what is a patently inaccurate description. Moorman's revision of the work of the early missionaries is troubling in both a prominent figure within the Church of England and an ecclesiastical historian. His erroneous emphasis upon the English influence through Bickersteth if anything emphasizes the need not only for the correction of the historical record but for a better understanding of the true origins and sociocultural backgrounds of the men whom the CMS actually sent.[14]

The Impact of the Missionaries in Sierra Leone

Although other earlier missionaries had been in Sierra Leone, the CMS mission proved to be the longest-lasting and most successful. Sierra Leone was ecumenical to a startling degree, with representatives of the Methodists and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion as well as Baptists and the CMS. The Baptists were primarily comprised of the Nova Scotians, most of whom followed the "New Light" doctrine and with few of them formally

[12] Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, 83.

[13] J.R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1967 [1953]), 121.

[14] Moorman's revisionism and his effort erroneously to attribute the contributions of these earliest missionaries to Edward Bickersteth is a primary reason for the emphasis on these first seven German-speaking men within this present article despite the later German-speakers who were active in Sierra Leone.

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trained as missionaries. Whole congregations of Black Loyalist Baptists went to Sierra Leone after John Clarkson, younger brother of Thomas Clarkson, recruited settlers in Nova Scotia.[15] Once they arrived in Sierra Leone, David George, a charismatic Nova Scotian revivalist, continued to act as the leader of the Baptists. However, according to Cassandra Pybus's study, after George had left Freetown to study with the Baptists in England in 1795 he was viewed with suspicion by the Nova Scotian Baptist settlers when he returned to the colony.[16] Methodists too, under Moses Wilkinson, joined the settlers along with the Baptists who had accompanied Clarkson after his trip to Nova Scotia. Mingo Jordan's Methodist congregation from Preston and Boston King's from Dartmouth were both persuaded by Clarkson's recruitment efforts, and Wilkinson's and Jordan's parishioners elected to emigrate.[17] The first

[15] B. Wallace Brown, "The Black Loyalists in Sierra Leone," in: John W. Pulis (ed.), *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), 103–135, 107. While a slave, George had been a potent force. He was converted by the Connecticut preacher Wait Palmer. See: Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Books, 2006), 210. George eventually took over Palmer's church, Silver Bluff, and eventually moved his slave congregation to Nova Scotia from its original location in Georgia. See: Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 26. George had also learned to read after his conversion, and began in Nova Scotia by preaching to interracial groups, but after attempting to baptize a white Nova Scotian, William Holmes, George was severely beaten by neighboring whites, and left Sherbourne for Birchtown. There he began to speak not only for his faith but for his race, and engaged Clarkson on those terms when they met. See: Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997 [1971]), 55; William H. Brackney, "Baptists, Religious Liberty and Evangelization: Nineteenth-Century Challenges," in: Ian M. Randall, Toivo Pilli and Anthony R. Cross (eds.), *Baptist Identities: Baptist International Studies from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 311–337, 321.

[16] Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 210. Any suspicions did not stop George from continuing to act as his people's advocate, raging at Macaulay for the insinuation that his Baptists were blasphemers. See: Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 187; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 346–347. There were problems with the Baptists sent as missionaries from England, as they reportedly held revolutionary views which threatened Macaulay's leadership at that time. Accordingly, they were instructed to leave the settlement. See: Stiv Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1972), 88–99.

[17] Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 213–214, 219. Wilkinson must have been a remarkable man; reportedly blind and crippled, the former Virginian slave was a fiery preacher whose piety facilitated many conversions including those of Boston King. See: Joanna Brooks and John Saillant, "Introduction," in: Joanna Brooks and John Saillant (eds.), *"Face Zion Forward:" First Writers of the Black Atlantic, 1785–1798* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 3–35, 9.

attempt at a formal mission by European Methodists did not last long, for those who left for Freetown in 1796 had returned within six months because of the hardships of life in the new settlement. Nevertheless, even without guidance from their sect's authorities in England the Nova Scotians persevered under Wilkinson,[18] although his congregation was problematic because it was considered undisciplined. Appeals to Thomas Coke then led to both the abortive 1796 missionary attempt from England, and a later one in 1811, which was successful.[19]

As a result, the German-speaking missionaries from the CMS who arrived in 1804 were remarkable not only in their early presence in the colony but in their perseverance too. The colonial authorities pressed the incoming missionaries to serve as colonial chaplains – denomination was not a factor for the prospective Chaplain and after the departure of John Clarke the colony was without a spiritual leader. Official Government Chaplains for the colony included men of varied denominations. There were the Reverend Melvill Horne, a Methodist-leaning member of the Church of England in 1792, a Presbyterian named John Clarke, who traveled to Freetown in 1796, Malchior Renner, who was a Lutheran acting for the evangelical CMS from 1804–1806, and his fellow Lutheran Nylander from 1806–1812. Then there was Rickards,[20] 1812–1813, and finally another Lutheran Butscher, from 1813–1817.[21] To begin with therefore what was important was not denomination but availability, until the formal affiliation in 1816 of the CMS with the colony's leadership, whereupon CMS missionaries tended to be placed as chaplains and as superintendents of recaptive villages and enjoyed much greater influence within the colony.

The CMS Mission Schools

The missionaries established settlements and schools, and their educational contribution to the colony and region was arguably their most significant in this early period. The CMS missionaries' schools were unique regionally

[18] John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1760–1900* (Ashgate e-Book, 2013); Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone,* 67.

[19] Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 69.

[20] Beyond Nylander's mention of this name, little else is known about who he was nor his denomination. He does not appear in any CMS lists. Evidently, he was unable to take up his position, as later histories note only that the colony was without a chaplain between Nylander's departure and Butscher's arrival. See: Henry Seddall, *The Missionary History of Sierra Leone* (London: Hatchards, 1874), 74.

[21] Church Missionary Society Archives, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham (henceforward abbreviated as CMS Archives), CMS Calendar Appendix B, Private Circulation.

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and remarkable historically.[22] The first agreement made between Renner, Butscher, and local traders along the Rio Pongo which established Bashia settlement included the stipulation that the children of slave traders should be taught English by the CMS representatives. They subsequently added to their classrooms enslaved children whom they purchased and then freed, and those children then studied alongside the children of the local elites and of the Maroons and Nova Scotian settlers. The classrooms therefore served as a first and crucially important regional melting pot, allowing the pupils in each school to cross social and ethnic lines. Those children later became the nucleus of a new educated Sierra Leonean elite many of whom in turn themselves opened schools, such as that of Stephen Caulker on Sherbro Island. The first CMS schools were built along the Rio Pongo among slave traders and Susu people, while later mission schools were established nearer Freetown on the Bullom Shore or at the slave factories of the Îsles de Los. During his period in Freetown prior to 1812, Nylander "opened a school for native children in Freetown, for which purpose a house was provided by the governor, it being found that there was no instruction afforded to the Maroon children; their parents not choosing to send them to the schools of the settlers, there being enmity between the Maroons and the Nova-Scotians."[23]

The first of the CMS schools to be completed was Bashia, established in 1808 on the site of a former slave factory. Overseen by Renner, Butscher, Wenzel, and Wilhelm at various points until its eventual destruction by fire in 1817, Bashia was the most successful of the early mission schools of the CMS. The land ceded for its use was offered by a local slave trader, Benjamin Curtis, in return for education to be provided by the CMS missionaries, so that Bashia was a school right from its beginning. By 1809 Renner's letters to Pratt indicate that Butscher was instructing eight local boys at the two settlements of Canoffee and Bashia on the Rio Pongo. By the summer, Butscher's own account describes him as being often at nearby Fantimania, to negotiate with M. Fantimani about which children ought to be sent to which school. Butscher's letter raises the same problem of language as each of the other German-speaking missionaries faced. Butscher offered to resign his post teaching English to the local Susu boys because of his concerns about his grasp of the tongue; he hoped that one of the newer missionaries might be better suited than he was to teach the local children

[22] The contributions and impact of these men and their wives upon the children of the region is complex, and beyond the scope of this present article to discuss. It is also the subject of a book manuscript under review, and an outgrowth of the author's doctoral dissertation. Education, acculturation, belief systems, and transformations of social hierarchies all served to shape the experience of the pupils of these earliest mission schools in Sierra Leone. See: Katrina H.B. Keefer, "Mission Education in Early Sierra Leone, 1793–1820," PhD thesis, York University (Toronto, 2015).

[23] Walker, *Missions in Western Africa*, 217.

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to speak English.[24] The missionaries had been explicitly requested to teach the pupils in English, which must have been a considerable challenge for the first few waves of CMS teachers for all of them spoke English as a second language. In Butscher's case he had had only nine months of training!

After discussion among themselves, in 1809 Wenzel and Barneth took over the Kakara settlement near what would become Canoffee, leaving Butscher and Renner in charge of nearby Bashia. Wenzel's letter to London dated December 1809 indicated that they had made considerable progress with a dictionary.[25] But by March of the following year Barneth had died and Wenzel had become dispirited, lamenting that at Kakara there were only two children willing to be educated while Bashia supported forty. By the end of 1811 Wenzel's school was flourishing, with a hundred and twenty pupils, so that Wenzel chose to accept the offer of "Perry's factory" to serve as a larger house within which to teach, which would have put Canoffee on an equal footing with Bashia – both schools being housed in former factories.[26] However, by the close of the year the offer had fallen through with Perry unable to displace his workers, but fortunately a neighboring site was offered by local leader Munkgé Backe, and Wenzel began building a larger schoolhouse there.[27]

Nylander was initially stationed as chaplain in Freetown where he was teaching a hundred and seventy-seven pupils.[28] After losing his first wife to illness he was able to journey to the Bullom Shore as for some time he had wished to do, and there he established a settlement and school near Yongroo.[29] Nylander was well received by the Bullom who appeared pleased at his settling among them and promised to commit their children to his care for instruction. He commenced his school at Yongroo Pomoh with two boys and two girls reportedly liberated from the "Congo nation" and by permission of the governor he brought with him from the colony.[30]

After arriving in Sierra Leone in 1811, Klein first journeyed to Canoffee, where his wife worked alongside Wenzel, teaching the girls at the school there. The Kleins were then moved to Bramia where they

[24] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/2A, Butscher to Pratt, Fantamania, 30 June 1809.

[25] Despite his apparent success, however, Wenzel admits that by relying on the dictionary to try to converse with locals, he as often hears laughter as they give him the word he was trying to use. CMS Archives, CA1/E2/25, Wenzel to Pratt, Kakara, 2 December 1809.

[26] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/107, Wenzel to Secretary., Freetown, 14 November 1811.

[27] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/111, Wenzel to Secretary, Kakara, 30 December 1811.

[28] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/116, Nylander to Secretary, Sierra Leone, 10 February 1812.

[29] Walker, *Missions in Western Africa*, 232.

[30] Walker, *Missions in Western Africa*, 280.

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established the Gambier settlement, believing that they would quickly see a number of interested students. But their optimism was not fulfilled, as Samuel Walker explains:

> As the headman, William Fernandez, had shown so much anxiety for the residence of a missionary in his place, sanguine hopes were entertained that this would prove a valuable Christian station. However, man's calculation was proved defective, for it soon became evident that few scholars could be obtained; and the distance of the settlement from any native town rendered the situation very inconvenient, so that, after waiting for a short time, Mr. and Mrs. Klein were induced, by the offer of a building on one of the Isles [sic] de Los, which lie off the mouth of the Dembia, to remove thither. Here they remained for six months, and had collected nearly fifty children, when the owner of the premises wanting them for the purposes of trade, gave them notice to quit them.[31]

Despite Walker's generous appraisal of the pupil numbers at the short-lived Îsles de Los school the Kleins amassed a student body of only twenty boys and fourteen girls – considerably short of the number ascribed by Walker.

The Trajectories of the Missionaries

Those early missionaries, whose pedagogical efforts became the backbone of the colonial educational system after 1816 and whose first pupils went on to establish their own schools in the region, must be understood in the light of their respective socio-cultural backgrounds. They were from what would become Germany, Estonia, and Poland and must be contextualized further as individuals who, rather than being able to trace their origins from a stable and cohesive singular state, had emerged from central continental regions which were fragmented and in turmoil. Each man had been born in a different region of the former medieval kingdoms of north eastern Europe and accordingly each man as missionary brought pre-existing cultural tensions with him to the upper Guinea coast. After their respective arrivals in West Africa, these men dispersed outward to found missions, and yet those from Swabia congregated at one location, while the Silesian missionary found himself largely alone at another, and the missionary from Revel (modern-day Estonia) similarly was isolated in a settlement by himself. They were persons whose origins dictated their decisions implicitly, and their lives on the Upper Guinea coast cannot be divorced from their cultural backgrounds in central and northern Europe.

All of them had grown up in a turbulent socio-political landscape within which various new philosophical ideals were spreading rapidly. As Johann

[31] Walker, *Missions in Western Africa*, 374.

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Reusch has noted, German-speaking intellectuals in the late eighteenth century were experiencing an obsession with the trope of the *nobler wilder* though their valorization of the idea differed from other similar movements due to the connection drawn between contemporary "tribal" peoples and the tribes of early Germany who had been so feared by the Romans.[32] Various student associations in late eighteenth century German-speaking cities embraced the same fantasy, idealizing life in distant regions as being true to their own shared cultural heritage as they envisioned it.[33]

The CMS missionaries ranged from what had once been Swabia situated near today's Switzerland and Bavaria, to as far north and east as Revel (now Tallinn, the capital of modern Estonia). Each man was giving up his regional vernacular to a large degree, and preaching the gospel under the auspices of a variant branch of Protestantism. In her examination of Peter Hartwig, Nancy Mouser details the possible trauma Hartwig would have experienced in being so deeply separated from his native Prussian language and culture.[34] But Hartwig was hardly the only one under such pressure, for each of the missionaries spoke German initially, and language and dialectical differences must have informed regionally-based divisions between them.[35] The parts of Europe from which these first representatives of the CMS originated had undergone radical social and political changes during the eighteenth century. The rapid expansion of Prussia and the death throes of the Holy Roman Empire transformed national boundaries, affected the practice of Christianity, and imposed languages through conquest. Whether a missionary spoke Swabian German or Silesian German, regional dialects would have shaped both his cultural identity and how he interacted not only with his fellow CMS missionaries but with the children under his care, too. English remained a challenge for each of the German missionaries to

[32] Johann J.K. Reusch, "Germans as Noble Savages and Castaways: Alter Egos and Alterity in German Collective Consciousness during the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42–1 (2008), 91–129, 92–93.

[33] As Reusch points out, the etymology of the German words used for the noble savage differ from English or French's "savage/sauvage," which indicate cruelty or a bestial nature. As he states, "only *Guter* or *Nobler Wilder* [good or noble Wild Man/Woman] or *Eingeborener* [aboriginal or native] exists. 'Wild' in German, as in English, denotes untamed, a term charged with admiration and awe – often steeped in mythology – that is deliberately absent from the vocabulary of English and French colonial terminology characterizing native peoples." Reusch, "Germans as Noble Savages," 91.

[34] Fox Mouser, "Peter Hartwig," 277–278.

[35] As the notable German linguist of African languages Koelle notes in passing, the regional identities in Africa may be compared to Germany, where, as he states, "the Würtembergerians or Bavarians would never suffer themselves to be called Prussians." Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana; or A Comparative Vocabulary of Nearly Three Hundred Words and Phrases in more than One Hundred Distinct African Languages* (London: Church Missionary House, 1854), 5.

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Sierra Leone and complaints were often made about their accents when they gave sermons, while each of them in letters home acknowledged his respective concerns about his grasp of the English spoken in Freetown.

The Swabian Missionaries

- *Melchior Renner*

Melchior Renner was thirty-one when he journeyed to the upper Guinea coast to arrive in 1804. He had trained at the Berlin Seminary then spent fifteen months at Clapham in England, studying Susu under William Greaves there. In 1803 he was ordained as a Lutheran on the continent, and sailed soon after. On arrival he acted as the Government Chaplain for two years and then oversaw the Rio Pongo settlements between 1808–1818. He finally died in Kent, Sierra Leone on 9 September 1821 at the age of forty-nine, survived by his wife. Renner's nearly eighteen years of working with the CMS helped to shape and form policy in the region. His official birthplace, as noted in the CMS documents, was Würtemberg, but his letters to London shed light on his home village of Grodenheim, which he mentioned in a letter to Secretary Josiah Pratt in 1806.[36] No official CMS histories confirm that birthplace for Renner however, and its location is no longer given on modern maps, although Renner referred to it as being near Ulm. The German commonly spoken in rural areas of Würtemberg was *Schwäbisch*, or Swabian German, and was a regional dialect unique to what had been known in the Middle Ages as Swabia.

Once in West Africa Renner's main interest was seeking out the hinterland and its people expressly for the purposes of evangelism. That, rather than teaching or translation, informed his trajectory in Sierra Leone. Renner's early letters note the same hardships described also in 1805 by his fellow missionary Hartwig – Freetown then was a place where food was scarce and sickness frequent.[37] Like Hartwig's, Renner's letters reflect an intriguing and challenging picture of life on the ground at that point in Sierra Leone's history. At first the situation seems to have been trying, to say the least, with Hartwig venturing into the country to the north and east and Renner remaining in Freetown, ministering to the people there. Renner's diligence is notable despite pressure from London which seemingly ignored the situation on the ground in Sierra Leone and repeatedly instructed both men to go out and look for Africans to convert. Renner's letters from 1806 indicate that with the rainy season and steady illness he was unable to do as asked, much as he wished to go out of the colony. He further expressed his fears for his family in Grodenheim given the onset of the First Napoleonic

[36] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/84A, Renner refers to it being a small village, ten miles from Ulm district. Renner to Pratt, Freetown, 1806. It does not appear on modern maps.

[37] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/16, Hartwig to Pratt, Sierra Leone, August 1805; CMS Archives, CA1/E1/17, Renner to Pratt, Sierra Leone, August 1805.

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War – a fear which seems to have been altogether justified when Napoleon's armies defeated Austrian forces over the three days of the Battle of Ulm in October 1805.[38] By early summer of 1806 Renner's letters to London were reflecting his frustration at being confined to the colony while Hartwig journeyed inland, and Renner mentioned increasing disagreements and arguments over which was the superior in the mission.[39] From that time, tensions between Renner and Hartwig seem to have spiralled rapidly out of control despite various directives from London and the Society. Hartwig's continued journeys outside the Colony were in obedience to repeated directions by the CMS that he learn Susu and Arabic, and determine the character of the local people. Yet Hartwig's continued absence seems to have placed a heavy burden on Renner, who was obliged to remain in what he initially described as a colony rampant with sickness and subject to starvation. By the autumn the colonial officials wrote to Pratt to instruct him that Renner and Hartwig were to be accompanied at all times by one of the newly-arrived missionaries because their disagreements were so violent.[40]

Described by his fellow missionaries as overbearing and harsh, Renner nonetheless impressed the people around Bashia once he left Freetown for the Rio Pongo far to the north and west, with one of his first pupils at the school, Bangu, recorded much later by John Godfrey Wilhelm as having been willing to risk his life in defence of Renner despite Bangu's own dismissal from Bashia:

> The son of Mungké Chatee, about 19 years old, was dismissed from the school, as soon as I was informed of his fall with one of the redeemed females, which occasioned their being married. Mr. Renner occasionally instructs him & employs him according to his discretion (…) But he shews much affection toward Mr [sic] & Mrs [sic]Renner. When Mr. Renner was kept in arrest in M. Chatee's place, & Bangku saw that his father was so enraged against M.R., he said, "If my father kill you, he must kill me too; for I shall not forsake you."[41]

Leopold Butscher's letter to London in 1807 suggests that much of Renner's previous harshness might have been due to his confinement in the colony and the unlikelihood of his exploring and evangelizing as he wished to.[42]

[38] The battle was a strategic triumph for France, costing Austria approximately 60,000 troops and 30 generals, with a tally of 10,000 killed, while Napoleon's army incurred few casualties after winning an easy victory.

[39] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/60, Renner to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 30 May 1806.

[40] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/79, Committee: Minutes, Freetown, 30 September 1806. See also note 60.

[41] CMS Archives, CA1/E4/74, 74A, Wilhelm to Pratt, Bashia, 1815.

[42] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/108, Butscher to Pratt, Bashia, 30 June 1807.

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Judging by his activities once he was stationed at Bashia he was clearly driven by religious zeal rather than philology or simple curiosity about the African world. His records of students are brief at best and unlike many of his fellows he published no translations. Renner seems instead to have focused on working with his parishioners and, to a greater degree than many of the other German speakers of the CMS, seeking new converts. His accounts by 1815 offer important representations of how local headmen felt about Abolition as well as proposed solutions to the problem of legitimate commerce beyond the colony which Renner reported upon as originating among specific local headmen such as M. Backe.

> (…) if the English Government is not vigilant, the slave trade will take up in its headquarters again in this river. I am glad that M. Backe had no dealings with this vessel, and he dislikes it very much that the people down the Bar, white and black, should receive a slave vessel, knowing what they suffered a short time ago on account of slave dealings. I believe were he King over the whole country, he would not suffer a vessel of this description to come into the river.
>
> The other day I met him at Canoffee (before this vessel arrived) the time M. Wenzel christened his children. He called us in a separate room, and made the following observations: "I see more and more what for you are come into this country to teach children and old people, and I have no objection to it: You are no traders – sometimes you have little goods – sometimes none. You go on your way in teaching, which may do us good; but the people reproach me, that I can get all the money I want from you, and that I do not care for my countrymen. I would therefore say, is there no body that would come for our temporal concerns? The Governor of S. Leone abolished the slave trade, burnt all the factories, and permits no slave vessel to come into the river, which we all can bear. But could not that Governor help us in another way? And set up a factory in our land, that we could sell our country produce, and the produce that comes from other quarters."(...) I told him that it is not likely that the S. Leone Governor would establish a trade business, being out of his way.[43]

Renner's letters provide important details and data for historians of the region, and serve to highlight the lack of support for such outlying settlements as Bashia. By 1819 the British colonial government had centralized all missionaries in Freetown, closing their settlements and effectively terminating their relationships with the people among whom they had worked for so long.

- Leopold Butscher

According to CMS documentation Leopold Butscher was aged thirty and from "Swabia." Like his fellows he had studied at the Berlin Seminary

[43] CMS Archives, CA1/E5/37, Renner to Pratt, Bashia, 28 August 1815.

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and then spent nine months in England, after which, like Nylander, he was ordained a Lutheran Minister in 1806. The ship taking him to Sierra Leone was wrecked off the coast of Ireland, and on Butscher's second voyage in 1813 after his leave from Sierra Leone he was once again shipwrecked, this time off Senegal in the company of his Afro-European student Richard Wilkinson, whom he had taken with him to England. In the intervening years Butscher taught at the Bashia settlement alongside Renner, until he was put in charge of the Christian Institution in Freetown in 1814 after his return to Sierra Leone. He died on 17 July 1817 at the age of forty-one, after eleven years working for the CMS.

Butscher's home region overlapped Renner's to some degree, encompassing a broad portion of central Europe. Walker gives Butscher's birthplace as "Ueberlingen, at the Bodensee, in Swabia."[44] Prior to 1803, Überlingen was a Free Imperial Town answering only to the Emperor, so ruled itself as well as representing itself at the Imperial Diet. The *Reichsdeputationshauptschluß* of 1803, the last significant law of the Holy Roman Empire before its dissolution, redistributed territorial sovereignty between German and French rulers in compensation for major land losses during the French Revolution.[45] It abolished Überlingen's status and the town was absorbed into the Margraviate of Baden three years before Butscher's arrival in Sierra Leone. Importantly, Überlingen was also staunchly Catholic and Butscher's birth and baptismal records indicate that his later adherence to Lutheranism must have been as a result of conversion.[46] That aspect of Butscher's origins bears emphasizing, for it demonstrates that for him as for many of his fellows there was no home to return to even if he or any of the other German missionaries had chosen to leave the upper Guinea coast. That stands in stark contrast to his British colonial contemporaries who could and often did return home, whether to recover from various ailments or to pursue alternative professions.

As soon as he landed in Freetown Butscher seems to have left immediately for the Rio Pongo, by December 1806 journeying into the interior onto land claimed by the Mandinka. Butscher went to act as arbitrator in the matter of the expulsion from the colony of an influential local man, Dala Modu, who had been charged with slave dealing. Butscher then accompanied Renner and Johann Gottfried Prasse out of the colony after Nylander had relieved Renner of his duties as chaplain, and although Prasse died soon

[44] Walker, *Missions in Western Africa*, 211.

[45] Alfons Semler, *Überlingen: Bilder aus der Geschichte einer kleinen Reichsstadt* (Überlingen: Oberbadische Verlag, 1949), 161.

[46] The documents held by the Archdiocese in Freiburg indicate that Butscher was born on 14 August 1776 to Meinrad Butscher and Agatha Bülmayer and was baptized within the Roman Catholic Church. See: *Albus Baptizatorum* 1776, 256. (Personal e-mail with Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat, Stabsstelle Archiv Bibliothek, Registratur, 29 September 2015).

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afterwards the three men founded Bashia together in what they then called "Susu country."[47] Butscher's achievements for the CMS primarily revolve around his impact as a teacher. He was described by Peterson as being ahead of his time in his stated interest in urging Africans to develop alternative commodities, although in many respects that agenda was very much in line with the burgeoning abolitionist interests of the time.[48] Despite linguistic insecurities expressed in his correspondence to London soon after his arrival, by later accounts from Leicester Mountain in Freetown, Butscher clearly evoked considerable affection from his pupils. Over the years until his death in 1817 his letters and journals primarily focused on the training and successes of his students, first at Bashia and then at Leicester Mountain. His fellow missionaries wrote glowingly of him, with the Kleins indicating that although he and Renner both managed to win the affection of the local people, Butscher especially merited respect along the Rio Pongo.[49] His relationships with his pupils continued even after the closure of the outlying missions, with Wilhelm commenting on the devotion to Butscher he observed among the pupils in Freetown after Butscher's death. Wilhelm wrote of one of his students that "I believe that many of the Leicester Mountain Children, proved far more obedient, pleasing, & careful under the School of the late Rev^{d} Butscher, to whom, as first Master, they were attached like children to their own father."[50]

Butscher's work at Bashia alongside Renner may well have been facilitated by the common regional dialect both men would have known. Überlingen's position in former Swabia, and Butscher's categorization as Swabian – as opposed to any connection with Baden – suggests that he thought of himself as being from Swabia, which would have lent itself to the Swabian German which rural Würtemberg also used.[51]

- Jonathan Solomon Klein

Jonathan Solomon Klein was thirty-three, and instead of at the Berlin Seminary studied in England at Clapham near London for four years, and took Lutheran Holy Orders in 1811. After some time spent with Nylander

[47] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/92, Nylander to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 20 January 1807; CMS Archives, CA1/E1/117, Butscher, Journal 10 January 1807 – 31 March 1807.

[48] Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, 67.

[49] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/135, Klein to Secretary, Kakara, 14 February 1812.

[50] CMS Archives, CA1/E8/18, Wilhelm to Secretary, Sierra Leone Leicester Mountain, 8 July 1819.

[51] Swabian German varies considerably even within the regions of former Swabia within which is it spoken. It is reportedly difficult even today for speakers of Standard German to comprehend, and the accent is notably thicker in the countryside than even in Stuttgart, where a "standard" form is used. It is categorized as an Alemannic dialect of Upper German. It may be further subdivided into South-East Swabian, West Swabian, and Central Swabian. See: Cecil Arthur M. Noble, *Modern German Dialects* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983), 62–64, 85.

he journeyed to the Canofee mission on the Rio Pongo to work with Wenzel there, though after some personal difficulties between the two men Klein left Wenzel and went to establish first a settlement along the Rio Dembia, then another at Gambier, one on the Îsles de Los, and finally one at Kaparroo. If we may judge from the correspondence, Klein and his wife, a niece of his English teacher the Reverend T. Scott, were polarizing figures and after ten years with the CMS, his connection with them in Africa was dissolved.

Klein has left us accounts of the Fula attacks on the settlements, and the tensions along the Rio Pongo, along with a vivid and ethnographically important description of the marriage of the son of a local headman to Elizabetha, one of the Bashia girls described as a "captive."[52] Klein's accounts of the activities both of slave traders and of members of the Royal African Squadron offer a sense of the increasing tensions surrounding the two settlements at the Rio Pongo, and his narrative serves to contextualize the eventual closure of the mission. His detailed accounts present the first example of the missionary as reporter of local events, and demonstrate the importance of analysis of these men to modern scholarship. By the end of 1814 the Kleins had left the Rio Pongo region and were traveling from town to town attempting to establish schools and settlements but with little success. Klein's overall impact is difficult to quantify because of the nature of his letters to London which largely amount to observations of events as opposed to giving any indication of his own achievements or ambitions. He was generally disdained by colonial officials and seems largely to have sought to establish his own settlements rather than join existing missions.

Like Renner and Butscher Klein's stated birthplace lay in the modern Baden-Würtemberg region of Germany. Unlike Renner, who hailed from a small village, Klein came from the urban capital of the duchy, Stuttgardt (present-day Stuttgart). Importantly, in the wake of the German Mediatization which attempted to rebalance territorial gains and losses between the German states and France, Stuttgardt was made the capital of the Electorate of Würtemberg. When Napoleon broke up the Holy Roman Empire Stuttgardt became the capital of the Kingdom of Würtemberg and its regional importance rose during the eighteenth century and continued to do so into the nineteenth. Unlike the more modest origins of his fellow missionaries therefore, Klein's home was by all accounts an important urban centre in its region. Whether that sparked tensions between Klein and the others is difficult to know, for Klein's journals relate nothing substantial about personal relationships.

We can see then that although each of the three men had come from approximately the same region of modern Germany, differences in their birthplaces might have influenced their interpersonal interactions once the men arrived in Africa. In all probability Renner and Butscher shared

[52] CMS Archives, CA1/E3/119, Klein to Secretary, Canoffee, 1 March 1814.

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Swabian cultural identity and by all accounts their time together at Bashia demonstrates a good working relationship.[53] All told, they founded the settlement together and worked there for six years without any complaints being lodged by one against the other, in stark contrast to the fractious relationship which had marred Renner's and Hartwig's time together.[54] It is probable too that Klein spoke Swabian, though his dialect would have been the Swabian spoken in Stuttgardt as opposed to that spoken in the countryside which, with their regional origins outside the capital, both Butscher and Renner shared. Klein was a less popular missionary, though his problems reportedly stemmed more from difficulties others had with the behavior of his English wife.

The Strasbourg Missionary

- John Godfrey Wilhelm

At thirty-three, John Godfrey Wilhelm had come to Africa from Strasbourg in Alsace, and had not attended the Berlin Seminary. Instead, like Klein he studied for four years in England, taking Lutheran Orders in 1811. He went to the Rio Pongo almost immediately and taught there with Renner at Bashia during Butscher's journey to England and subsequent assignment to Leicester Mountain. In 1819, the *Royal Gazette* reports Wilhelm and his wife as teaching at Leicester along with a Mr. Cates.[55] Wilhelm died in Sierra Leone on 25 April 1834 at the age of fifty-six, the longest-serving missionary of those who ventured out at that time. His accomplishments included a translation of the *Gospels* and *Acts of the Apostles* into Susu.

Wilhelm and the Kleins arrived in the colony in 1811, and like the Kleins and the Wenzels initially stayed with Nylander in Freetown. Like them too he complained that Nylander's behavior to the newcomers was poor. Wilhelm's role in the CMS, in the settlements and later in Freetown, seems to have been primarily centred around education and teaching. Like Wenzel he left no letters inquiring about European affairs nor the problems caused by the various geopolitical struggles taking place at that time. Wilhelm's fluency in

[53] There were tensions which arose during the latter years of the outlying missions, with the missionaries writing to London to complain about one another. That did not change the dispersal of missionaries, which seems to have followed linguistic lines; those who shared the Swabian dialect all worked at Bashia, though Klein moved around after his period there; while Wenzel and Nylander each worked alone in their respective missions. Neither spoke Swabian nor shared that cultural identity, which argues for informal alliances having formed among the German-speaking missionaries.

[54] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/94, Nylander to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 27 January 1807; CMS Archives, CA1/E1/108, Butscher to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 30 June 1807.

[55] CMS Archives, CA1/E7/111, *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, Freetown, 27 February 1819.

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English seems to have been strong after his years in England, though later accounts suggest that his heavy accent was a problem for Anglophones to decipher. In 1827 Governor Campbell wrote of three missionaries including Wilhelm that "They are all Germans, who speak a kind of English which is scarcely intelligible."[56] Wilhelm's interest was primarily in ensuring that his students succeeded within the educational approach which he brought with him.

Wilhelm's cultural identity is considerably complicated by the historically problematic nature of his homeland, Alsace. He was born in the capital Strasbourg which had been a Free Imperial Town much like Überlingen, but similarly lost that status after being forcibly annexed by France during the French Revolution. Alsace as a distinct region on France's eastern border has always been a matter of dispute between France and Germany. Founded by Germanic people, the region's acquisition by the French under Louis XIV in the late seventeenth century introduced a new territory which was fundamentally at odds with traditional France. As David Bell has explained, Alsace and similar lands claimed by France "were alien to France in their history, social structure, government, patterns of trade – even in their language and religion."[57] Bell goes on to note the characteristics of the Alsatians, including – and importantly in light of how well Wilhelm fitted in at Bashia – their language. Bell explains that even "in 1789, nearly all Alsatians of native stock still grew up speaking a Swabian German dialect."[58] That Wilhelm was able to join the others who most likely shared that dialect and that they worked so well together seems no accident.

Wilhelm clearly identified as culturally German by both his name and his preferred native language, and his accommodation at Bashia as Butscher's replacement suggests that he shared the socio-linguistic identity which seems to have become part of that settlement. Like Butscher, Wilhelm was celebrated as a teacher and his detailed student records emphasize that aspect of his nature. However, he is often described as working on translations and dictionaries, suggesting that even more than his fellows at Bashia his priorities were to his teaching, his linguistic efforts, and then evangelism. His accounts offer rich data concerning medical treatments available to African children at that time from local specialists, interpersonal tensions at play on the Rio Pongo, and intriguing snapshots of the individuals whom he was overseeing and teaching.

[56] Colonial Office Records, The National Archives, Kew, CO 267/81, Campbell to Earl Bathurst, 19 January 1827.

[57] David A. Bell, "Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism in Eighteenth-Century France: The Case of Alsace," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21–4 (1988), 472–490, 472.

[58] Bell, "The Case of Alsace," 476.

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The Northern Missionaries

- Peter Hartwig

Peter Hartwig joined the CMS at twenty-five and studied alongside Renner at the Berlin Seminary Missionary School under Dr. Jänicke. He spent fifteen months at Clapham in England acquiring English and studied Susu at the School for Africans under William Greaves, a missionary from Edinburgh who had worked in Sierra Leone before returning home. Hartwig was ordained a Lutheran in 1804 and sailed to Sierra Leone that year. However, in 1807 he was dismissed for a presumed affiliation with slave traders, although, as Mouser has compellingly argued, circumstances forced Hartwig's departure from the colony and his affiliation with slave traders might have been exaggerated. In 1814 Hartwig begged leave to return to his former duties and was engaged expressly as a linguist. He died shortly thereafter of yellow fever and was followed six weeks later by his English-born wife Sarah, a former governess in the Reverend John Venn's family. In total Hartwig served the CMS for four years and survived in Sierra Leone outside the CMS for seven years.

The first entry concerning Hartwig and his colleague Renner praises both for their hard work studying Susu.[59] Much of the early correspondence for the first two years of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone focuses on the volatile interpersonal problems between Renner and Hartwig. Hartwig was a more accomplished linguist, translating the *Gospel of St. John* into Susu, but he and Renner were so mutually opposed that letters from the Governor to London noted that both men were unable to join any expedition together, nor share quarters nor even travel together.[60] Of the pair Hartwig has been more closely examined, in large part because of his deviance from the norm, and because his connection to the CMS was dissolved explicitly owing to suspicion of slave trading.

A common element mentioned both by Nancy Mouser's analysis and the CMS documents is the relationship between Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig. Their problems might have been due not only to influences once the missionaries arrived in Africa and traced by Mouser, but could have had cultural origins too. Of all the missionaries sent to Freetown in the first decade of the 1800's, Hartwig alone is described as being from Prussia. Only with John Henry and Schulze in 1815 did the Society find another missionary "of Prussia." During the latter half of the eighteenth century Prussia had rapidly begun to make itself known as a major political force in Europe. The kingdom's rulers had seized upon various pretexts to launch into wars of territorial expansion, and Prussia was now therefore considered a threat by many of the southern German states. Hartwig's Prussian cultural identity perhaps proved a considerable stumbling block in his tumultuous relationship with Renner given the

[59] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/1, Zachary Macaulay to Corresponding Committee, London, 10 June 1803.

[60] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/79, Meeting of the Corresponding Committee, Freetown, 30 September 1806.

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different birthplaces of each man. Along with Austria, Prussia was by 1800 one of the two most powerful German-speaking states, and had claimed large swathes of territory along the Baltic coastline into modern Poland, and was sharing a tense border with Russia. In 1792, the beginnings of the Napoleonic War pitted Prussia against the French, and conquest and conflicts in Poland had weakened the state enough to allow French victories, which led to Prussia's severance from the Coalition against France. In 1795 Prussia signed a separate peace with France allowing French occupation of the Rhineland while Prussia took more of Poland to the east. While Prussia assumed a pose of neutrality, Austria continued to fight France disastrously, losing most notably at Ulm, near Renner's birthplace.[61]

Though no mention is made by the CMS nor in Hartwig's correspondence of his birthplace, Hartwig did write to London inquiring whether Berlin had truly been taken during the course of the war, suggesting either his Prussian national pride or that Berlin was his home.[62] It seems unlikely that Hartwig was overly nationalistic, however, as Nylander's letter of 10 July 1807 indicated. Nylander said that the missionaries had learned from a Mr. Vanneck that Hartwig had become a missionary in order to avoid military service, writing that "he did not like to be a soldier in the Prussian army and for fear of being forced to it as it was custom in Prussia, he joined the mission, only to get out of his native country by that means."[63]

One of the many criticisms leveled at Hartwig by the Corresponding Committee in Freetown was his accent, which Governor Ludlam noted in passing as contributing to a reported inability to preach effectively.[64] Hartwig's own letters indicate his problems in writing sermons in English, and the minutes of the Committee in Freetown indicate that his accent was often incomprehensible to parishioners.[65] That might have been a case

[61] Considering that Renner's home village was very near Ulm, it is not impossible that some of the tensions between Hartwig and Renner emerged from frustrations at hearing of Ulm's terrible defeat under Austrian leadership, while Hartwig's homeland in essence sat on the sidelines. Hartwig's rumored own avoidance of the conflict as opposed to genuine missionary fervor might have been a further cause of the animosity between the two men.

[62] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/93, Hartwig to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 27 January 1807.

[63] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/110, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 10 July 1807.

[64] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/41, Ludlam to Venn, Sierra Leone, 20 March 1806.

[65] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/16, Hartwig to Pratt, 16 August 1805; CMS Archives, CA1/G/C1, Committee Minutes, 2 June 1806, 7 June 1806. Hartwig's journals and letters are all written in clear comprehensible English. Indeed, Pratt invited the missionaries to concentrate on Susu at the expense of their English, permitting them to keep their journals in German, which Renner seems to have done on more than one occasion. Hartwig, however rejected the invitation, claiming by 22 December 1806, that it was easier for him to write in English. CMS Archives, CA1/E1/21, Pratt to Renner and Hartwig, 14 January 1806; CMS Archives, CA1/E1/91, Hartwig to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 22 December 1806.

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of the mutual hostility between Hartwig and the Freetown society emerging, and coloring accounts. Hartwig's problems in composing his sermons perhaps reflect the comparatively brief period he had spent learning English, though his translations into Susu and Arabic would seem to indicate a talent for languages. Nylander's own letters later comment on the ease with which Hartwig evidently displayed his proficiency in English, writing that "he speaks better English, than his mother tongue."[66]

Nylander also offered a variant account of the crisis which saw Hartwig eventually dismissed from service in 1807. Nylander wrote to London that the colonial officials had forbidden Hartwig from ministering in the colony, offering his own perspective on the evidently difficult situation on the ground for the first few missionaries.[67] Shortly thereafter Hartwig left the colony without permission and set out for Rio Pongo while having in his possession some CMS property. He was dismissed, and later denounced as a slave trader himself, though his final letter offers another interpretation of events:

> I am as put in irons. I will go into the Rio Pongas but I am limited on all sides. So I go with a slave dealer & speak kindly to him, I am called one too. Will I avoid it, there is no other way. But then again I have to please the corrupt fancy of a Committee here. What Disasters.[68]

The paper the letter was written on is torn in many places, and the handwriting is unlike Hartwig's earlier careful script, offering a sense of the violent emotions he must have felt as he wrote it. Hartwig was instructed to wait for passage to England, but he refused and departed in a Mandinka canoe with nothing more than the clothes on his back.[69] While this personal drama was taking place Renner and his fellows had settled along the Rio Pongo and wrote to Pratt enthusing over what they saw to be a decrease in the slave trade locally. Nylander wrote that Hartwig was not only treated

[66] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/94, Nylander to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 27 January 1807.

[67] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/94, Nylander to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 27 January 1807. Nylander wrote fondly of Hartwig at that point, praising his command of English and mentioning that Hartwig was aiding him in correcting his sermons.

[68] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/95, Hartwig to Pratt, Sierra Leone, 29 January 1807.

[69] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/96, A. Smith (for Corresponding Committee) to Pratt, Freetown, 16 February 1807. A resolution was passed shortly afterwards which clarified that the Committee had exceeded its powers in attempting to force Hartwig to remain in colony, and in its stripping him of his rank of Missionary. The Corresponding Committee therefore dissolved itself by general resolution in the aftermath of the Hartwig affair, condemning Governor Ludlum in its minutes for having obstructed the missionaries in their financial support. See: CMS Archives, CA1/E1/97, Corresponding Committee Minutes, Sierra Leone, 22 February 1807.

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poorly by the colonial officials, but was mistreated by Renner too.[70] By contrast, Butscher's letter to Pratt of summer 1807 indicated that Hartwig's behavior the previous year reflected poorly on the CMS. Butscher further reported that Hartwig now worked as an overseer in a slave factory in the region.[71] Eventually Hartwig was welcomed back to the CMS in 1814, primarily to act as a translator. After surviving for seven years in the interior, however, Hartwig died of yellow fever soon after returning to the colony and the CMS. His wife, Sarah, who had sailed to rejoin her husband after advocating on his behalf to the Society in London, died six weeks after he did.

- *Gustavus Reinhold Nylander*

Nylander was from furthest north of all the missionaries sent to Sierra Leone by the CMS, and one of the most important sources among them for modern scholars of ethnography. Nylander's given birthplace of Revel places him further north than much of Livonia, though the CMS documents specifically describe his home as "of Revel, in Livonia, Poland."[72] In the sixteenth century Livonia and Revel were separate; after continuous attacks by Russian forces leaders of the region begged both Poland and Sweden for aid. In return for his assistance the King of Poland demanded the annexation to his own crown of all of Livonia. While Livonia negotiated with him, the semi-autonomous town of Revel and its surrounding Estonian peoples were treating with the King of Sweden and had sworn fealty to him before messengers could stop them. Despite those differences, under the treaties of 1719–1720 Revel, like Livonia, was granted to Russia. Boasting foundries and distilleries it became a Russian fleet station. Today the town of Revel is known as Tallinn and is the capital of Estonia. It is a port town, and by the nineteenth century was well known for its commerce and trade. The town's complicated history emphasizes why a deeper analysis is necessary, as even the CMS's presumptions about Nylander's birthplace are problematic, for in the early nineteenth century Poland was not in control of Revel nor even of Livonia.

Despite its considerable distance from Germany as we now know it, Nylander's homeland was ruled from the medieval period onwards by a largely German-descended nobility. Tensions existed between many of

[70] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/105, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 29 April 1807.

[71] Butscher's own journal indicates that Hartwig went to the Bashia site after his dismissal from the colony, and that the missionaries there offered him a place among them, but that he refused, having decided to go to America. In that account Butscher expressed his fears that if Hartwig elected to stay with a slave dealer in that process, it would tarnish his name. See: CMS Archives, CA1/E1/117a, Butscher, Journal 10 January 1807 – 31 March 1807.

[72] CMS Archives, CMS Register of Missionaries, List I, 1. Private circulation.

the peasantry and their former German-speaking rulers. Culturally therefore, Nylander's regional homeland was a mixture of the local peoples, influenced by Swedish conquerors and by centuries of Germanic rule, followed by more recent Russian domination. In 1721 much of the region was ceded to Russia by Sweden as a result of the Great Northern War, and Peter the Great confirmed that German would be the official language of the country. Nylander would therefore have spoken vernacular German, with an accent considerably different from that of the other missionaries who were from what are now the south western parts of modern Germany.[73] From Nylander's own journals and journals signed by all the missionaries present in Sierra Leone, his preferred given name was "Reinhold," and it is as "Reinhold Nylander" that he signs himself in the journal of 30 June 1807.[74] It is impossible to say whether any inferences may be drawn from that preference as an indication that Nylander wished to emphasize his German cultural identity as opposed to any Swedish ancestry that might have been suggested by the name "Gustavus," but the question is certainly intriguing to consider. In later documents, he used the initials "G.R." but still refrained from using his first name. Otherwise however, he brought a remarkable level of objectivity to bear on his descriptions of the traditions and rituals he observed at Yongroo Pomoh, which offers some insight into his mind-set and character.[75] On pages 52–59 of his *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Bullom Language* Nylander records three Bullom fables as an exercise in syntax, demonstrating an interest in ethnography which is without any value judgments.[76]

Arriving in 1806 in Sierra Leone, Nylander was thirty when he made the journey to the upper Guinea coast. Like Renner and Hartwig he was educated at the Berlin Seminary. He spent nine months in England, and took Lutheran Orders in 1806. After his arrival in Sierra Leone he took over the post of Government Chaplain from Renner and acted in that capacity until 1812 when he was able to venture to the Bullom Shore where he founded the Yongroo Pomoh settlement. He remained there until 1818 when he was called back to oversee Kissy Town's settlement after Wenzel's death. After nineteen years' service to the CMS Nylander died at Kissy in 1825 at the age of forty-nine. During his time there Nylander offered many

[73] Nylander's letters to London indicate his own unease with his proficiency in English, and fears over his accent and grasp of English. CMS Archives, CA1/E1/94, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 27 January 1807.

[74] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/119a, Renner, Butscher, Prasse, and Nylander, "Abstracts of Journals."

[75] Gustavus Reinhold Nylander, *A Spelling Book of the Bullom Language; With a Dialogue and Scripture Exercises* (London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1814).

[76] Gustavus Reinhold Nylander, *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Bullom Language* (London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1814).

ethnographic studies of the local people and, working through the *Gospels* of Matthew and Mark, the *Epistles* of John, Anglican Morning and Evening Prayers, and Watt's *Catechism*,[77] made translations into Bullom and had them printed.

Arriving at last in October of that year, Nylander's first message from Africa concerned his worries about the previous missionaries' work, noting that the inroads he saw being made by Christianity were few at best.[78] That point is supported in another of Nylander's communications from April 1807, where he wrote of having taken the position of Chaplain, explaining that he had been preaching on Sundays to a largely Methodist audience. Like Renner he expressed his considerable concern about events in Europe surrounding the Napoleonic War, having heard that Napoleon had captured Berlin.[79] Just as Renner had done, Nylander, evidently as unhappy at being stationed within the colony as his predecessor had been, soon began to write – in fact by June 1807 – asking to be replaced as Chaplain. Nylander clearly had a far greater interest in working outside Freetown among local peoples, and his letter to London of July 1807 emphasized his own work as Chaplain out in the colony while the other men were inland.[80] Nylander suffered considerable ill health during his time as Chaplain, and wrote to try to ensure that any poor reports of himself by the newly arrived Wenzel would be viewed in a favorable light. Evidently, despite the departure of the contentious Hartwig the various missionaries were still not in harmony, although that too might have stemmed from Wenzel's Silesian origins and Nylander's own more northern roots. Nylander wrote of tensions between the Governor and himself, and between himself and the Wenzels.[81]

Wilhelm and the other newly arrived missionaries offered another perspective on Nylander in their letter to Pratt from November 1809, which is perhaps ironically not much different from Nylander's view of Renner on Nylander's own arrival. They describe Nylander as tyrannical,

[77] These catechisms were designed in the eighteenth century for educational purposes, to be used with children from three to twelve. This text was used as a teaching aid worldwide by missionaries and in Sunday schools, and translated into a wide variety of regional languages. The CMS records do not identify which of the many editions was used in this case, though it is possible that it was the 1806 edition. See: Isaac Watts, *The First Set of Catechisms and Prayers; or the Religion of Little Children under Seven Years of Age* (London: C.E. Knight, Williams and Smith, [et al.], 1806).

[78] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/82, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 28 October 1806.

[79] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/105, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 29 April 1807.

[80] CMS Archives, CA1/E1/110, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 10 July 1807.

[81] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/9, Nylander to Pratt, Freetown, 20 September 1809.

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quarrelsome, and demanding, insisting that they pay to lodge with him and viewing Mrs. Wenzel's chronic illness without any compassion at all.[82] By the next spring the Wenzels were in the Rio Pongo while Nylander was still in Freetown focused on translating the Bullom language and preparing to marry one Phyllis Nazely.[83] He wrote to London in April 1810 asking for more school books and described the arrival of seventy-two children between eight to twelve years of age, making totals of sixty boys and seventy-seven girls whom he taught in Freetown. It is incidentally rather a frustration to the modern scholar that no pupil lists exist from that period. Nylander's wife taught the girls and Nylander the boys, and Governor Thompson completed a school for Nylander's use in Freetown by the end of that July.[84] By December of 1811 Nylander was no longer waiting for instructions to vacate Freetown in the aftermath of losing his wife to illness there, and ceased preaching altogether, citing complaints that his style was too much like that of a Methodist. He wrote of his steadily increasing grasp of the Bullom language and by June 1812 he had amassed a vocabulary of over a thousand words.[85] In that same year permission was finally granted for him to depart and see to the founding of Yongroo Pomoh, and he remained there until 1818 when Wenzel's death and increasing local hostility forced its closure.

While stationed at Yongroo Pomoh, Nylander became an avid ethnographer and important reporter of funerary customs, local judicial trials among the Bullom, and Poro rites and rituals. His drawing of a Kolloh ritual mask is of considerable interest anthropologically as an example of a ranking member of Poro.[86] In his detailed examination of the letter in which Nylander describes a masquerade with a "Kolloh devil," William Hart observed that "The masquerade he describes has long since been discontinued and is known about from no other source. The letter is therefore a unique historical document and one which deserves to be more widely available to scholars in ethnography and the history of religion in Africa."[87] Hart considers that in his evaluation of the contributions of each missionary Nylander made remarkable observations.

[82] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/19, Wilhelm and Klein to Secretary, Sierra Leone, November 1809.

[83] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/29, Nylander to Secretary, Sierra Leone, 2 March 1810.

[84] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/31b, Nylander to Secretary, Sierra Leone, 11 April 1810; CMS Archives, CA1/E2/32, Nylander to Secretary, Sierra Leone, 25 July 1810.

[85] CMS Archives, CA1/E3/15, Nylander to Secretary, Sierra Leone, 2 September 1812.

[86] To Hart, the detailed description which Nylander presents provides a number of important symbols which correspond to ritual implements of the Poro Society. William A. Hart, "A West African Masquerade in 1815," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 23–2 (1993), 136–146, 143.

[87] Hart, "A West African Masquerade," 137.

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To Hart, Nylander anticipated the language of anthropology in his descriptions of life among the Bullom, and his accounts are therefore of considerable value.

Nylander also offers extensive information on witchcraft and judicial trials involving accusations of witchcraft, which are of importance to

Figure 1. Nylander's Representation of a "Kolloh Devil." Source: CMS Archives, CA1/E5/12A, Nylander to Pratt, Yongroo Pomoh, 19 July 1815.

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anthropologists and historians alike.[88] His settlement and his work there by himself may well reflect his comparative isolation from the other missionaries due to sociolinguistic or cultural origins and identity, and once again underpins the purpose of this present study, given the wealth of data he provides.

- *Charles Frederic Christian Wenzel*

Like Hartwig and Nylander, Charles Frederic Christian Wenzel was a linguist more than anything else. He arrived in 1809 in the colony, around thirty-six years old. He was at the Berlin Seminary as the other missionaries had been and studied English in England for two years. He took Lutheran Orders in 1809 and once Nylander's health had recovered enough to permit Wenzel and his wife to leave Freetown worked for the early period of his time in Sierra Leone primarily in Kakara, Canofee, and Fantimania along the Rio Pongo. In 1816 Wenzel was sent to Kissy, as the situation along the Rio Pongo was becoming increasingly tense due to efforts to stem the slave trade. Two years later on 1 August 1818 he died there at the age of forty-four. Wenzel's first wife had died in Africa in 1811, and in 1813 he married an African woman named Beverith. He was the first missionary to marry an African, and she survived him.[89] During his time in Sierra Leone, Wenzel created a *Compiled Susu Dictionary*.[90]

Wenzel is recorded by the CMS as being "Of Breslau, Silesia." Breslau is known today as Wrocław in Poland but was then the capital of Middle Silesia, which had been conquered by Prussia in the 1740's. Prussia used the excuse of the dynastic legitimacy of Empress Maria Theresa to launch the War of Austrian Succession, and the town was taken without a struggle in 1741. Three major wars were fought between Austria and Prussia over Silesia during the eighteenth century, and arguably Prussia's success in taking and holding that important region shaped its later ambitions. In language as well as in faith Breslau's Germanic roots are clear even in its nineteenth-century name. Silesian German is now a nearly extinct dialect but flourished prior to the imposition of New High German in the 1860's. Wenzel therefore would have spoken a vernacular shaped by very different roots than those of his Swabian German-speaking fellows. Influenced by Slavic

[88] CMS Archives, CA1/E5/13, 13a, Nylander to Pratt, 19 July 1815, Yongroo Pomoh; CMS Archives, CA1/E5/30, Nylander to Pratt, Yongroo Pomoh, 2 March 1816. See also: Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 295; Katrina H.B. Keefer, "Red-Water Trials, Recaptives and the Human Cost of Slavery," presented at the conference *Slaves and the Law: Comparative Questions and Approaches* (Providence RI, 28 October 2016).

[89] There is some ambiguity in this; Wenzel is the first missionary recorded in the CMS biographical lists as having married an African, but in his own letters, he identifies Mrs. Beverith as being the sister to Nylander's own wife at the time.

[90] CMS, List of Clerical and Lay Missionaries, Register of Missionaries, List I. Private circulation.

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language groups, German was spoken as the language of government, higher culture, and innovation, as Hannan's study of identity and language for the region notes:

> (…) from the seventeenth century the names *Wasserpolack* and *wasserpolnish* were used to refer to Slav Silesians and to their dialects exhibiting obvious German influences. The origins of that language may be traced to code-switching among Slavs and Germans, chiefly in the urban centers. In the larger towns and industrial centers, *wasserpolnisc*h was used in the work place, shops, and public areas where chance encounters between Germans and Slavs were frequent. It was more often spoken by men than by women. By the nineteenth century, *wasserpolnisch* represented a type of pidgin language, although it possessed few norms and might vary significantly from speaker to speaker.[91]

With influences from Prussia, Poland, Germany, Moravia, and Russia among others, the idea of Silesian cultural identity shifted depending upon political alliances and conflicts. Then as now cultural identity was shaped by religion and language for Silesians, with Silesian speakers drawing upon both Western Slavonic as well as German linguistic elements.

Unlike those of Nylander, Wenzel's letters back to London are in clear English, suggesting that he had less difficulty with and was much more confident in the language in which he was expected to preach. Wenzel initially stayed with Nylander for six weeks after his arrival due to his wife's illness, and, as Nylander too was unwell, Wenzel took over many of his duties within the colony. Eventually able to depart, the Wenzels took ship from Freetown to the new settlement on the Rio Pongo, a voyage which took five days during which Barneth and the Wenzels were extremely ill. They met Butscher on the way and were all met by Renner in a canoe near the settlement. Wenzel immediately began helping with thirty-three of the children, and labored to translate more Susu in order to assist Wilhelm and Klein upon their anticipated arrival at the mission.[92]

The perspectives offered by the Kleins suggest that Wenzel was friendly to them on their arrival at Bashia, and they reported to London how studious the children under him were, enthusing that many of them might themselves become schoolmasters in turn. By October 1812 the buildings downriver from Bashia at Canofee/Kakara were finally completed and Wenzel moved there at last with Barneth, but Barneth died before very long. From 1812's completion of Canofee until his removal to Kissy, Wenzel's priorities were clearly much as they had always been – translation of Susu, evangelizing and teaching his pupils, in that order. He was the first of the German-speaking missionaries to send no letters home worrying about

[91] Hannan, "Identity and Language," 141.
[92] CMS Archives, CA1/E2/16, Wenzel to Secretary, Bashia, 18 October 1809.

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Europe or his family there, suggesting that unlike Renner, Butscher, and Nylander, Wenzel was able to embed himself successfully in his adopted country, despite the loss of his English-born wife and despite the personal hardships he faced. His proficiency in English assured he was comfortable teaching in that language as instructed, suggesting that his dual legacy, to both students and mission, was his dictionary and the preparation from which his students benefitted. His accounts are primarily of importance concerning the continuing mission to acculturate freed Africans within the colony itself. He also provided chilling narratives of starvation and illness among those placed in Kissy town shortly before his own death from disease in 1818:

> To the beginning of Month Nov I had near to 200 Captr Negr 2/3 were children but in the month of Nov a vessel was taken with 550 slaves on board, and the poor creatures who were confined in her, suffered so greatly that in the course of bringing her to S. L. during fortnight more than 200 died, the other were so emaciated as they did not eat the food (white Carolina Rice) on board.
>
> More than 180 children about 20 men and women who were sent to Kissey in a course of 10 days. The poor children being very glad to enjoy their liberty, though they did not eat bread they fell upon every insect, reptiles, so venomous, however if some snakes, toads, frogs, ants, as also upon any fowls and ducks and with these things they sought to gratify their appetites. They all were of the Ebo nation (carnivorous beings). We had need to keep a continual watch day and night but it was impossible to keep them in the houses, they were running about in the night and stole from the farms, what they could get by this they brought a deplorable disease among themselves.
>
> The Dysentry became greatest among them and more than 50 were carried off in the space of one month, to this came the smallpox which is still making great havock and more than 90 have become a victim by this disease.[93]

Wenzel gives the numbers of recaptives as well as conditions on the ground in a way that is of considerable use to historians of the colony. His work demonstrates the challenges faced by those whose trajectories out of enslavement into the colony were clearly not at all simple.

The CMS Effect

The mission in Sierra Leone was one of the earliest major missions to Africa, the other situated in what is today South Africa. In large part because of the inter-relationship of colonial authorities, missionaries,

[93] CMS Archives, CA1/E5A/48, Wenzel to Pratt, Kissey, 30 April 1817.

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CMS authorities, and the Vice Admiralty Court in Freetown, those first missionaries had a profound impact, but a complex one. After the retrenchment of the CMS schools and its missionaries into Freetown itself in 1816, the CMS was granted full control over the education of the steadily increasing recaptive population. From among those formerly enslaved individuals arose such religious luminaries as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, whose experience with the CMS has been characterized by historians like Gibril R. Cole as betrayal and exploitation.[94] Cole recognized the inherent paradox of the evangelical Anglican Society expecting Lutherans and German-speakers to serve as the primary forces of acculturation in early Sierra Leone.[95] Peel's analysis of the missionary endeavor in nineteenth century West Africa hinges upon his recognition of the paradox inherent in the missions themselves. Peel argues that by their very nature missionaries and their work grew apart from the colonial and European origins which fostered them. In his examination of the CMS within Yorubaland in the middle of the nineteenth century, Peel pays particular attention to the complexity of the missionary agenda and its intentions, and emphasizes the role of CMS-educated Yoruba like Crowther as agents of conversion.[96] The spread of Christianity in West Africa was shaped to a considerable degree by the actions and effects of these earliest missionaries and their decisions, especially concerning education in Sierra Leone. The prominence of Sierra Leone as the "Athens of West Africa" developed in part because of the early establishment there of schools along the Rio Pongo which educated the children of former slaves alongside slave traders' children, children of the elites, and children who had

[94] Gibril R. Cole, "Samuel Ajayi Crowther: Race, Otherness, and European Evangelicalism in West Africa," paper presented at The Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (Washington DC, 3 December 2016).

[95] Cole's analysis characterizes the early missionaries as "German" as per the CMS documentation, but does not dwell upon variations of individual perspectives as understood by these CMS agents. See: Gibril R. Cole, *The Krio of West Africa: Islam, Culture, Creolization, and Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 70–73.

[96] Peel's excellent examination of nineteenth century missionaries and especially of the rich data within the CMS documentation draws upon the journals which CMS missionaries were required to keep and send home. Unfortunately, he touches only briefly upon the subjects of this present article. His analysis is valuable broadly in terms of the general theories with which to approach evangelization and the CMS missionaries at large, and more particularly in his evaluation of the merit of this type of source. His detailed descriptions of what the CMS missions offered and how they adapted to the Yoruba culture while offering their own European and westernized belief systems are of particular interest, as those approaches evolved from the considerably more improvised methods which the first seven CMS missionaries developed in Sierra Leone. See: John D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003 [2000]), 5–7, 11–12, 130–131, 215–218.

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themselves been slaves.[97] That unique situation produced an educated elite who valued education as a cultural currency and who presented a western centre of education in West Africa to which elites could send their children.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Missionaries

Accounts written by missionaries can be of considerable importance in shedding light upon the often turbulent regional situations in early colonial Africa. But to interpret their accounts without considering their authors is to approach the evidence without due regard for inherent bias and cultural differences. The turbulent experiences of the missionaries, their students, and the continuing tensions within the colony served to shape its later social dynamic. As a result of their work in Sierra Leone overseeing classrooms comprising a truly unique blend of pupils, these men personally shaped the men and women who became a new West African elite. That they were not British natives but were working on behalf of a British missionary society is important for our understanding of their contributions to the region.

As teachers and mentors the missionaries of early Sierra Leone changed the lives of their students – sometimes for the better, sometimes not – and in turn those same students went on to establish more schools, promulgating the values which they learned from Renner, Butscher, Hartwig, Klein, Nylander, Wilhelm, and Wenzel. The missionaries personally intervened in cases of enslaved children, redeeming pupils who subsequently ended up sitting alongside the children of local elites in the classrooms. None of the missionaries reached what might conventionally be considered old age, in part because the homelands which they had each left were in the process of being forever altered by the turmoil which raged in central Europe and had probably caused their departure. The biographical sketches outlined

[97] While scholars like Paul Hair note the early contribution of the CMS missionaries, specifically Nylander, to early Freetown and its culture, little attention is paid to the nuances or origins of what Hair describes as a school run by a "George Caulker" in the 1820's. In 1828, George Caulker was described as assisting his brother Stephen in translation of evangelical material into Bullom, but it was Stephen Caulker, a Bashia graduate, who was described in contemporary documents as a "Schoolmaster" or "Catechist," and who was one of the earliest Africans to be recorded as one of the CMS's own. See: Paul E.H. Hair, "Colonial Freetown and the Study of African Languages," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 57–4 (1987), 560–565, 562. See also: Charles Williams, *The Missionary Gazetteer, Comprising A Geographical and Statistical Account of Various Stations of the Church, London, Moravian, Wesleyan, Baptist, and American Missionary Societies, &c, with their Progress in Evangelization and Civilization* (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1828), 302, 400; Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 133.

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here are a first effort to restore them to scholarly consideration, and to offer another dimension to current research into the earliest period of colonial Sierra Leone as reported in the journals and letters of these CMS missionaries. It is to be hoped that subsequent research will be well served by analysis of these important and insufficiently studied figures with the emphasis on their respective sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds. Approaching evidence and documentation from the CMS knowing that the authors were most certainly not British, and that furthermore they were just as much not "German" is a consideration and indeed a corrective which is central to this article's contribution to the field.

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