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CHRISTIANS AMONG MUSLIMS: THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN THE NORTHERN SUDAN*

BY HEATHER J. SHARKEY
Trinity College, Hartford

ABSTRACT: Church Missionary Society missionaries arrived in the northern Sudan in 1899 with the goal of converting Muslims. Restricted by the Anglo-Egyptian government and by local opposition to their evangelism, they gained only one Muslim convert during sixty years of work. The missionaries nevertheless provided medical and education services in urban centers and in the Nuba Mountains, and pioneered girls' schools. Yet few of their Sudanese graduates achieved functional Arabic literacy, since missionaries taught 'romanized Arabic', a form of written colloquial Arabic, in Latin print, that lacked practical applications. Thus the history of the CMS in the northern Sudan yields insights into issues of education, power and religious identity within a colonial context.

KEY WORDS: missions, Sudan, Islam, education, gender.

REPRESENTATIVES of the British Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in Khartoum in 1899, a year after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest. Anxious to convert Sudanese Muslims in spite of a colonial government ban on proselytizing among them, they evaded restrictions by opening schools and clinics through which they tried to spread their faith obliquely. Ultimately, CMS missionaries gained almost no Muslim converts, but they did provide some of the earliest educational opportunities available to girls in the region.

Given the social sanctions that discouraged conversion from Islam, the lack of northern Sudanese converts is not surprising. CMS missionaries working in other Muslim regions, such as the Afghan frontier, northern Nigeria and Iran also found societies unreceptive to Christian proselytism.[1] The story of Muslim converts to Christianity, in the words of an Anglican

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[1] Guli Francis-Dehqani, 'CMS women missionaries in Persia: perceptions of Muslim women and Islam, 1884–1934', in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999* (Richmond, UK, 2000), 91–119; Paul Inyang, 'Some mission schools in eastern Nigeria prior to independence', in Brian Holmes (ed.), *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools: Case Studies from the British Empire* (London, 1967), 279–327, but especially 322–3; G. T. Manley, 'Africa's choice: Islam or Christ', *The Church Missionary Review*, 63 (1913), 594–602; K. [sic], 'On missions in Mohammedan lands', *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record*, 10 (1885), 761–73; W. St. Clair Tisdall, 'Islam and Christian missions', *The Church Missionary Review*, April 1907, 206–10. For parallels with the Dutch Reformed Church, see Muhammad Haron, 'Three centuries of NGK mission among Cape Muslims, 1652–1952', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 19 (1999), 115–23.

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church authority, was 'a saga of the few'.[2] Nevertheless, in some regions where conversion was rare, for example, in South Asia, Christian missions gained visibility, prestige, and social acceptance through schools that gained a reputation for academic excellence and for the achievements of their graduates.[3] This, however, was not the case for the CMS schools in the northern Sudan, which produced few functionally literate Sudanese students or professional high-achievers.

Considering the existence of a Sudanese tradition of Arabic literacy and the practice of Arabic teaching in mission schools, this weak record may seem surprising. In fact, the low academic achievement of CMS students was the product of two factors. First, and largely through happenstance, the CMS found itself catering not to an educated elite-in-the-making, but to socially marginal students. These included urban Arabic-speaking girls – often of poor and humble backgrounds, whose educations stressed domestic training more than reading and writing – and later Nuba, not Arabic-speaking, boys, 'borderland pagans'[4] living in a rural periphery that officials decided to administer within an Arabophone North. Second, although CMS missionaries used Arabic rather than English in their schools, they insisted on teaching an idiosyncratic 'romanized' colloquial Arabic of their own devising – a system of reading and writing in Latin print that had no practical local applications. Graduates of CMS schools were therefore restricted not only by social expectations based upon their gender, ethnicity or social status, but also by their possession of a dysfunctional literacy.

This essay considers the history of the CMS in the northern Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian period (1898–1956) in an attempt to understand the mission's social impact in the light of, and in spite of, its lack of converts. It examines the mission's motives and goals for evangelizing among Muslims, the local response to its proselytism and the social, political and economic constraints that hampered its efforts. In the process, it traces the influence of the CMS on the development of girls' education, on religious and social identities, and on the local politics of literacy that affected access to and provision of, reading and writing skills.

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION TO MUSLIMS

Founded in 1799, the CMS was one of many evangelical Protestant missions that moved into Africa and Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when European empires were expanding. Convinced of the need to give witness to their Christian belief and to guide communities towards conversion, these missions set out to evangelize among practitioners of local religions, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists, and among members of Eastern Christian churches such as Copts and Armenians. To frame their arguments more effectively within each setting, missionary scholars studied local languages and religions, producing vernacular translations of Christian

[2] Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (ed.) (2nd ed. Maryknoll, NY, 1985), 313–5.

[3] Kevin Ward, '"Taking stock": The Church Missionary Society and its historians', in Ward and Stanley, *The Church Mission Society*, 32–3. For a brief but fascinating commentary on the controversial history of missions in South Asia and on the contemporary attitudes of non-Christians towards their schools, see 'Obituary: Alan de Lastic (Archbishop of Delhi)', in *The Economist*, 8 July 2000, 89.

[4] The phrase comes from J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Christian Approach to Islam in the Sudan* (London, 1948), 37–41.

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scriptures and treatises for targeted audiences,[5] as well as guidebooks for their peers. Works of the latter genre, bearing such titles as *Missions to Hindus*, *Christ for India*, *The Reproach of Islam*, and later *The Call of the Minaret*, aimed to foster cultural understanding, hone evangelical methods and strengthen missionary resolve in the face of apparent indifference to their message.[6]

If influence can be measured by the number of converts gained, then the CMS and other missions exerted their greatest influence on nonliterate peoples who practiced local religions. To those they offered access to a global religion, new routes to social mobility and the power of a written tradition, either through a European language or a codified local vernacular.[7] By contrast, missionaries made little headway among groups that already had scriptural traditions along with a literate clergy or scholarly class. Members of the latter could threaten potential converts with social ostracism; they could also set up alternative, non-Christian schools. Jewish leaders in the Maghrib, Muslim leaders in south-west Nigeria, coastal Kenya and Egypt, and Buddhist and Hindu leaders in Ceylon all resorted to some of these strategies to minimize the influence of British evangelism.[8] So too did church leaders among Egypt's Catholic Copts who, in the mid-nineteenth century, vowed to excommunicate those found associating with CMS missionaries.[9] Where a highly literate clergy was lacking, however, and where Christian missionaries enjoyed educational monopolies, communities that resisted evangelism risked being excluded from schools entirely. This was the case, for example, with the Muslim minority in Malawi, which remained educationally disadvantaged throughout the colonial period.[10]

Muslims were not alone in resisting Christian evangelism, and yet Islamic doctrines presented special barriers to conversion. Islam recognized Jesus as

[5] Many historians have discussed the role of missionaries in codifying local vernaculars as print languages. Examples of this codification and translation effort abound, for example, in Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, 2000). For a recent study on the wider long-term impact of missionary language studies, see V. Ravindiran, 'Discourses of empowerment: missionary orientalism in the development of Dravidian nationalism', in Timothy Brook and André Schmid (eds.), *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities* (Ann Arbor, 2000), 51–82.

[6] Louis George Mylne, *Missions to Hindus: A Contribution to the Study of Missionary Methods* (New York, 1908); Bernard Lucas, *Christ for India* (London, 1910); W. H. T. Gairdner, *The Reproach of Islam* (London, 1911); Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*.

[7] Robin Horton, 'On the rationality of conversion, Parts I and II', *Africa*, 45 (1975), 219–35, 373–99; Jack Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, D.C., 2000), especially 153; Thomas O. Beidelman, 'Contradictions between the sacred and the secular life: The Church Missionary Society in Ukaguru, Tanzania, East Africa, 1876–1914', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 23 (1981), 85–6; Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875–1935* (London, 1978), 94–5.

[8] Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 651, 653; Robert Attal, 'Les missions protestantes anglicanes en Afrique du Nord et leurs publications en judéo-arabe à l'intention des juifs', *Revue des études juives*, 132 (1973), 95–118, especially 100–2; Ranjit Ruberu, 'Missionary education in Ceylon', in Holmes, *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools*, 77–118; Jack Sislian, 'Missionary work in Egypt during the nineteenth century', in Holmes, *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools*, 175–240.

[9] Sislian, 'Missionary work in Egypt', 188.

[10] David S. Bone, 'Islam in Malawi', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 13 (1982), 126–38, especially 135–6.

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a prophet, but not divinity and maintained that Qur'anic revelation not only encompassed but superseded the Christian message. Moreover, while Muslim authorities generally welcomed converts into the faith, they condemned conversion out as apostasy, a crime theoretically punishable by death but in practice generally by and within the community through censure, intimidation or assault.[11] Stories circulated, for example, of Muslims like Haji Yahya Bakir, who, a few days after his conversion in India in 1856, 'was found covered in blood at the foot of the garden of the mission house …'[12] In short, Muslim converts were vulnerable, and it did not help that British authorities in Muslim-majority areas, unlike their French counterparts, did not guarantee their safety.[13] In the face of these obstacles, conversion, for a Muslim, required enormous courage.[14]

As the nineteenth century ended, CMS missionaries were nevertheless becoming increasingly committed to, and aggressive about, work in Muslim regions. Emboldened by, and proud of, the spread of the British Empire, they felt confident that work among Muslims was feasible as never before. As Britons, they knew that they would be able to operate with at least the protection, if not the enthusiastic support, of European colonial rulers.[15] Optimists in Britain believed, moreover, that European conquests of Islamic regions, for example, in Algeria, Senegambia and northern Nigeria, indicated that Christianity might vanquish Islam, as well.[16] At the same time, CMS missionaries on the ground in Africa were growing alarmed at Islam's rapid expansion, notably in the east African interior and the coastal fringes of West Africa.[17] Some advocated evangelism among Muslims as part of an effort to contain Islam.

In the 1880s, CMS missionaries began to discuss Christian rivalry with Islam in terms of a contest for African souls.[18] In 1885, for example, an article in *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record* asserted that 'Mohammedanism is not a dubious ally, but an avowed antagonist' and warned that work against it was imperative but would require years of toil. This rhetoric of conflict persisted and occasionally resurfaced. For example, more than 25 years later, in 1913, another CMS journalist asserted that it would be 'Africa's Choice: Islam or Christ'.

This mood of conflict and battle-readiness infused the CMS missionaries who came to the Sudan in 1899, on the heels of colonial conquest. For their

[11] Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Morocco often used the same sanctions against converts. See W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908* (London, 1908), 173, 176–7, 195, 470, 489.

[12] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707–1858* (Cambridge, 1985), 340.

[13] Sislian, 'Missionary work in Egypt', 224.

[14] Francis-Dehqani, 'CMS women missionaries in Persia', 115–8; Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 316–9.

[15] T. O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots* (Bloomington, 1982), especially 83–98. While considering CMS missionaries in Tanzania, Beidelman discusses their relationship to the colonial enterprise and attitudes towards Islam.

[16] Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 646–7.

[17] James D. Holway, 'CMS contact with Islam in East Africa before 1914', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 4 (1972), 200–12.

[18] Thomas Prasch, 'Which God for Africa? The Islamic–Christian missionary debate in late-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1989), 51–73.

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headquarters, they chose Omdurman on the White Nile across from Khartoum; the city was an unlikely place for a Christian group to operate, but that was precisely its appeal. From 1885 until the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of 1898, Omdurman had been the capital of the Mahdist state, which had ruled the northern Sudan under strict Islamic principles. The Mahdists had signalled their opposition to foreigners from the early days of their movement. They had not only declared jihad in 1881 on the Turco-Egyptians (representatives of the Muhammad Ali dynasty of Egypt who conquered and governed the region after 1820), but they also captured and imprisoned several Christians, including European priests and nuns.[19] Mahdists were adamant that Christian proselytizers had no place within a Muslim society. By staking their mission in Omdurman, CMS missionaries asserted otherwise.

CMS authorities had been envisioning a mission to Sudanese Muslims since the death of Charles Gordon in 1885. Sent in 1884 to withdraw forces from Khartoum, the Turco-Egyptian capital, General Gordon disobeyed orders and tried to hold the city against advancing Mahdist troops. When he died in 1885 at the fall of Khartoum, Gordon became a hero and Christian martyr to a British public influenced by the popular press. His memory ensured that Britain enjoyed strong support at home when its armies invaded the Sudan years later, claiming a reconquest for the sake of Egypt while justifying the seizure of territory. Gordon's death also galvanized the CMS, which, drawing from its support among the British lower and middle classes, began to raise money for a future Sudan mission that would restore British honor and 'perpetuate Gordon's memory … through the direct proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the races inhabiting the upper basin of the Nile'.[20] As an interim measure, the CMS renewed efforts in neighboring Egypt, which Britain had occupied in 1882.[21] Whereas the CMS in the mid-nineteenth century had focused primarily on the reform of Copts, hoping that they would in turn convert Muslims, it now began in the 1880s to seek conversion among Copts and Muslims directly. This measure signalled the society's determination to press Christianity into the service of empire and to prepare its wider message to Muslims.[22]

In 1898, as Anglo-Egyptian forces stood poised to complete their 're-conquest' of the Sudan, the CMS sensed that the opportunity for their Gordon memorial mission was imminent and advertised for new missionaries. By the time its first two representatives descended upon Omdurman

[19] One of these priests later wrote a memoir: Father Joseph Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, 1882–1892,* trans. F. R. Wingate (London, 1893). Regarding the captured nuns (among them Sister Fortunata Quasce, a Nuba-born, Italian-educated woman who had been freed from slavery in childhood), see Maria Teresa Ratti, 'Comboni Sisters: missionary women in the evangelization of the Sudan', in Francesco Pierli, Maria Teresa Ratti and Andrew C. Wheeler (eds.), *Gateway to the Heart of Africa: Missionary Pioneers in Sudan* (Nairobi, 1998), 72–85.

[20] Church Missionary Society Archives, Birmingham University (henceforth cited CMS), G3/E/P1/1900: General Committee Resolution, 13 Dec. 1899.

[21] Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910–1942*. (London, 1971), I: 300–18.

[22] CMS G3/E/L2/1899: Letter from F. Baylis to D. M. Thornton on the policy of missions to Muslims and Coptic Christians, 19 May 1899; Hewitt, *The Problems of Success*, 303, 306; Kenneth Cragg, 'Being made disciples – The Middle East', in Ward and Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society*, 120–43.

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late in 1899, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was taking shape as the largest colonial territory in Africa and a region of immense diversity.

THE CMS AND MISSIONARY POLICY IN THE NORTHERN SUDAN

In the Sudan, as in other parts of British colonial Africa, missionaries were partners in empire. Initially, they helped to rationalize conquest by offering a Christian, ethical content to the 'civilizing mission' that was colonialism's *raison d'être*. Drawing from private reserves, they went on to establish schools, clinics and hospitals, thereby helping to develop the social service system. In return, they gained access to potential converts, along with the protection and support of the colonial state.

But access to converts had limits. In the Sudan, British officials were happy for Christian missionaries to work among practitioners of local religions, where their efforts might promote political stability across vast areas and acculturate rural peoples to central state control. Matters were different, however, in Muslim regions, where strong traditions of statehood and military organization made coordinated anti-colonial resistance possible. British authorities feared that Christian missionaries pressing their faith on Sudanese Muslims, might cause offense and spark revolts, and possibly even revive the type of millennarian, anti-imperial jihad that had roiled the region in the 1880s in the form of the Mahdist movement.[23]

Unwilling to offend the Sudanese Muslim populace in the aftermath of conquest, Lord Cromer, the High Commissioner of Egypt, and Kitchener, the Sirdar, denied permission for Christian missionaries to work among Muslims, or even discuss their faith with them. At the same time, they assured local Muslim religious leaders of their intention to protect and respect Islamic practices and institutions. Over the years, the government maintained this policy by teaching Arabic and Islam in government schools, training and hiring *qadis* for Shar'ia family courts and facilitating the pilgrimage to Mecca.[24]

Meanwhile, to mollify the missionaries, with whom their relations were strained, Cromer and Kitchener made two concessions.[25] First, missions could work in the southern regions, below the tenth parallel, where Islam had not spread.[26] They pointed particularly to Fashoda, where France and Britain had recently collided in their scramble for African territory. (The

[23] The Mahdist movement was part of a larger African trend. From Senegambia and Guinea in the west to Somalia in the east, and across North Africa (notably in Algeria and Libya), jihad served as a vehicle for anti-colonial protest. For a sampling of the literature on the African jihad movements in the context of European imperialism, see B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976); Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague, 1979); and David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: the Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1985). For a survey of these jihads in the context of modern Islamic history, see John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Boulder, 1982).

[24] Gabriel Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate: Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899–1916* (London, 1971), 95–123.

[25] See Richard Hill, 'Government and Christian missions in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899–1914', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1 (1964), 113.

[26] Robert O. Collins, *The Waters of the Nile* (Princeton, 1966), 66–102; Robert O. Collins, 'Africa begins at Malakal', paper presented at the conference on 'Religion and Politics in the Sudan', Centre des Recherches Africaines, Paris, 22–24 June 1988.

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CMS eventually accepted this offer by starting its first southern mission, at Malek, late in 1905.) Second, Christian missionaries could stay in the north by opening schools or clinics for Christian expatriates, such as Copts, Syrians and Greeks, many of whom had come to work for the new regime or to start businesses.

Most British authorities in the Sudan were wary of Christian zeal and ambivalent about Christianization in general.[27] Nevertheless, the regime used missionaries to its advantage by directing them to remote southern regions where they could consolidate the British presence by proxy. To reduce competition among missionary organizations while ensuring their even dispersal, the regime allotted each a sphere of operation. At the same time, to minimize costs to the government of southern educational development, the regime encouraged missions to start schools, and gave a *carte blanche* for proselytism with them.[28] Missionaries thereby complied with, and benefited from, colonial policies that helped to reify the north and south, and divide northern and southern peoples.

The long-term results were significant. By the late Anglo-Egyptian period, educational work among the South's 'pagan tribes' had led to some conversions, producing a small but influential Christian intelligentsia from whose ranks southern spokesmen and civil war leaders later came. Because of the missionaries' deep involvement in the twentieth-century south, histories commonly discuss the missionary impact on southern development, the north–south conflict and the Sudanese civil war (1955–72, 1983–present).[29]

In the Muslim north, by contrast, the Anglo-Egyptian government first banned and later tightly restricted proselytism so that Christian missionaries could win few converts. Moreover, since the government increasingly developed northern social services, Christian missions in the north never became the sole or even major providers of modern schools and hospitals, nor did their graduates go on to achieve political prominence.[30] Instead, the

[27] Hill, 'Government and Christian missions', 113–5; M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898–1934* (Cambridge, 1986), 249–59. One official reportedly criticized government grants to mission schools as a form of 'subsidized soul-snatching'. This was Sir James Currie, who served as the Sudan's Director of Education form 1900 to 1914 and years later as a member of the Colonial Office Advisory Committee. Clive Whitehead, 'Education policy in British tropical Africa: the 1925 White Paper in retrospect', *History of Education*, 10 (1981), 197.

[28] Lilian Passmore Sanderson and Neville Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics in Southern Sudan, 1899–1914* (London, 1981); David Sconyers, 'British policy and mission education in the southern Sudan, 1928–1946' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1978). In 1928, for example, the governors of Mongalla and Bahr el Ghazal provinces invited CMS missionaries to open schools in Kajo-Kaji and Rumbek to meet their local needs for petty clerks. CMS G3/E/O/1928/60: Letters from J. G. Matthew, Secretary for Education and Health, to Archdeacon Shaw and W. Wilson Cash.

[29] One of the most thought-provoking accounts of southern history (including an assessment of the missionary legacy) is by a former SPLA fighter: Deng D. Akol Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans: The South and North, 1821–1969* (Uppsala, 1994).

[30] Mohamed Omer Beshir, *Educational Development in the Sudan, 1898–1956* (Oxford, 1969). The northern Sudan also had a traditional system of Islamic schools, or *khalwas*, concentrating on Qur'anic study; many of these *khalwas*, over the course of the Anglo-Egyptian period, were incorporated into the primary-school system. On Islamic education in the Sudan, see Yahya Muhammad Ibrahim, *Tarikh al-ta'lim al-dini fi al-Sudan* (Beirut, 1987).

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region's future nationalists and power-brokers, all sons of Muslim landowners, merchants or scholars who represented an elite, went to government, not missionary, schools, where the funding was better, the coursework more rigorous and access to government jobs guaranteed.[31] Mission schools in the north catered, by contrast, for expatriate Muslims, Christians and Jews and more significantly, for humble Sudanese Muslim Arabic-speakers. Many of the latter were descendants of slaves, who according to one estimate, had represented one-third of the northern Sudanese population in the late nineteenth century.[32] In the early twentieth century, the freed and assimilated descendants of these slaves were contributing to the substantial heterogeneity of the north's Arab-Islamic culture, as they blended into the lower or middle echelons of its society.

SCHOOL WORK AND WOMEN'S WORK

Despite the restrictions under which they worked, CMS missionaries played a pioneering role in formal schooling for girls. CMS missionaries enrolled humble Sudanese Muslim females years before girls' education was widely accepted among Muslim elites and years before the government devoted resources to its development.

It was initially by accident not intent that CMS missionaries found themselves running girls' schools. Determined from the start that work among Sudanese Muslims should be their priority, and convinced that the government would relax its ban on evangelizing among Muslims, their first measure had been to open a clinic in Omdurman in 1900. Meanwhile, the Austrian Catholics and American Presbyterians opened schools in Khartoum, the former appealing to the children of European Christian expatriates, the latter to Sudanese ex-slave boys.[33] Feeling that their peers and rivals were outstripping them, the CMS decided to enter the race by beginning a school in Khartoum in 1902. Since the Presbyterians had already claimed boys' education, the CMS looked, by default, to girls' schooling.[34]

In fact, the timing was right for girls' schools within the global CMS enterprise. Since the late nineteenth century, growing numbers of British women were embarking on mission careers.[35] Taught by experiences in India

[31] Above all, sons of the Muslim elite went to Khartoum's Gordon Memorial College. On Gordon College and its role in the formation of early northern Sudanese nationalists, see Heather J. Sharkey, 'Colonialism, character-building and the culture of nationalism in the Sudan, 1898–1956', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (1998) 1–26.

[32] J. L. Spaulding, 'Slavery, land tenure, and social class in the northern Turkish Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (1980), 1–20. See also Yoshiko Kurita, 'The role of the "negroid but detribalized" people in Sudanese society, 1920s–1940s', in *Papers of the Second International Sudan Studies Conference* (Durham, 1991), III, 107–20.

[33] Sudan Archive, Durham University (henceforth cited SAD) G//S 1048: Lilian Sanderson Papers, folder 4: 'Some historical details on the part played by the Catholic church in girls' education [1871–1959]', Khartoum, 1 Nov. 1959; Ried F. Shields, *Behind the Garden of Allah* (Philadelphia, 1937), 77–106.

[34] CMS G3/E/P1/1899/92: W. W. Barr [of the American Presbyterians, Philadelphia] to the CMS, 24 July 1899.

[35] Jocelyn Murray, 'The role of women in the Church Missionary Society, 1799–1917', in Ward and Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society*, 66–90; Fiona Bowie, 'Introduction: reclaiming women's presence', in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and

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that female missionaries could best make contact with local women, particularly in Muslim communities where the segregation of sexes was common, the CMS increasingly welcomed female recruits as evangelists, medics and teachers.[36] Within the northern Sudan, where many women led secluded lives as an index of their respectability and of their family's ability to maintain them, the establishment and maintenance of girls' schools therefore seemed worthy and practical at this juncture.[37]

According to Llewellyn Gwynne, a CMS missionary who later became Anglican bishop of the Sudan and Egypt, the first northern CMS school was a short-lived, makeshift affair catering for thirteen Abyssinian ex-slave girls who had been born Christian but were forced to renounce their faith and embrace Islam during the Mahdist period. Their ambiguous religious status made them acceptable mission targets.[38] 'The teacher,' wrote Gwynne at the time, 'is a lady of colour, once a slave sold in the open market in Alexandria, but thanks to God and the American missionaries now a most earnest Christian and a very good teacher'.[39] He was apparently referring to Sitt Nur Dusta, an Abyssinian woman initially hired as the missionaries' cook,[40] who was later mentioned as the school's first 'mistress' in the log-book of the CMS Khartoum girls' school.[41]

The silence of the records suggests that the program for Abyssinian girls had already lapsed by 1903, when the CMS accepted control of a fledgling

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Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present, Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence 1993), 1–19; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, 'Introduction: gendered missions at home and abroad', in *idem* (eds.) *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 1–38.

[36] Francis-Dehqani, 'CMS women missionaries in Persia'; S. Z. Ahmed, 'The Church Missionary Society in Kashmir', in Holmes (ed.), *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools*, 151–74, especially 169.

[37] 'Broadly summed up,' wrote Ina Beasley, the British official who supervised girls' education in the 1940s '… only the very poor were free to come and go … The customs in the towns … was that, as soon as the girl approached puberty she should not be seen by other men and it was better therefore that she should be married early. For the first three months after marriage she must stay in the house, for the rest of the year in the yard. Thereafter she might attend family ceremonies, if closely veiled and remaining in the women's quarters, or she might go to gossip with a friend if, again closely veiled, she did not go out until after sunset'. Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 10–11.

[38] Some Jews and Christians who had been forced to embrace Islam reverted to their previous faiths after the conquest, while others remained Muslims. On the Masalma, as this community was known, see Robert S. Kramer, 'The death of Basiyouni: A meditation on race, religion, and identity in the Sudan', Paper presented at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Sudan Studies Association, Alexandria, Virginia, May 10–12, 1996; and Kramer, 'Holy city on the Nile: Omdurman, 1885–1898' (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1991).

[39] H. C. Jackson, *Pastor on the Nile: Being Some Account of the Life and Letters of Llewellyn H. Gwynne*. Foreword by Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1960), 47–8.

[40] CMS G3/E/O/1901/141: Letter from Eva Hall to Mr. Stock, Omdurman, 10 Jan. 1901.

[41] SAD G//S 1118: Treagust Papers, Unity High School, Khartoum, Sudan: Log Book no. 1, 1903–42 (CMS School, 1903–27). This log-book is a rare document from the northern Sudan mission surviving outside the CMS central archives.

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Coptic girls' school for daughters of Egyptian officials.[42] Still deeming Sudanese conditions 'premature for ladies', meaning single British women,[43] mission authorities recruited Sitt Saada Haddad, a woman who travelled from Syria to become its teacher. The Khartoum log-book recorded that 'Sitt Saada Haddad taught, & worked up the school single handed, & almost quite destitute of apparatus, with girls of all ages from about 5 to 15 years old'.[44]

The government welcomed this school in Khartoum, the colonial capital, which was becoming the favored home of expatriates. Before the year had ended, the Director of Education was assuring doubtful CMS missionaries that they had 'a clear field for education of girls'.[45] Authorities hoped that the school would channel CMS zeal towards expatriates and away from local Muslims at a time when the Sudanese public voiced no demand for girls' education. In later years, however, and especially after the First World War, eminent, Muslim men such as Babikr Bedri, a Mahdist army veteran and merchant turned educator, promoted and legitimized education for girls.[46] Demand grew too as parents perceived that some schooling in fancy needlework, modern baby care and other domestic skills, enhanced their daughters' marriageability.[47] The result was a steady rise in the number of Sudanese Muslim girls attending Christian mission schools.

[42] Sources usually refer to this program for Egyptians as the 'first' CMS school. Two photographs survive from this period: one, a snapshot taken inside the CMS school, shows girls wearing European dresses; the other, a formal group photograph, presumably taken outdoors, shows girls dressed in solid black cloaks with veils drawn across their faces to maintain decorum and propriety when they ventured outdoors. SAD 420/4/113: G. F. P. Blythe Papers, photograph of the first CMS Khartoum girls' school, *c.* 1905; Unity High School [for Girls, Khartoum], *Twenty-one Years of Progress, 1928–1949* (Khartoum [1949]), centerpiece photograph of the class of 1911.

[43] CMS G3/S/O1/1906/29: Letter from Archdeacon Gwynne, Khartoum, 12 June 1906. Housing was one of the problems: married women with husbands could hope to find suitable lodgings, but single respectable women, if lacking family connections, could not .

[44] SAD G//S 1118: Treagust Papers, Unity High School, Khartoum, Sudan: Log Book no. 1, 1903–1942, first entry. Sitt Saada submitted a report on the school, in English, in 1903; her's may be the only report by a non-British teacher preserved in CMS archives of the northern Sudan mission. CMS G3/E/O/1903/116: Report on the Girls' School at Khartoum, by Sitt Saada Haddad, submitted to Revd. W. E. Taylor in Khartoum on 21 Sept. 1903. Eliding the contributions of the mission's non-British and female staff, Gwynne's biographer makes no mention of Sitt Saada and instead identifies Gwynne as the school's first 'head teacher'. 'I like to think', too, the Bishop himself wrote cheerfully later, 'that I was the Head Mistress of the first girls' school in the Sudan'. Jackson, *Pastor on the Nile*, 199.

[45] CMS G3/E/P2/1904/4: Report by Rev. R. MacInnes on his visit to the Soudan, Nov.–Dec. 1903.

[46] Inspired by the mission schools, Babikr Bedri opened a small girls' school for his own daughters and female relatives in 1907, in Rufa'a. In later years, he opened additional girls' schools and finally, a women's college (now Ahfad University for Women). He is often hailed as the father of girls' education in the Sudan today. Babikr Bedri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*. Vol. 2, trans. and ed. Yusuf Bedri and Peter Hogg, (London, 1980); Beasley, *Before the Wind*.

[47] Mrs. Arnold Forster, née Miss Geraldine Bewley (headmistress of the CMS Khartoum girls' school, 1904–30), 'Make my daughter like an English sitt', in Unity High School, *Twenty-one Years of Progress*, 20–1. Elaborate needlework was central to

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When the CMS took control of the 'Coptic' girls' school in 1903, several Egyptian Muslim students were already attending.[48] Easing restrictions *ex post facto*, British authorities permitted Christian missionaries to teach Muslims, but specified 'The full consent of parents or guardians must be obtained by the Director or the Head of the School before any pupil is given religious instruction, no matter of what nationality or religion the pupil may be'.[49] Called the 'conscience clause', this provision was a source of continuing frustration for missionaries.[50]

CMS missionaries had a thin line to walk in teaching religion. For while most Muslim parents tolerated general prayers and religious study,[51] they did not accept attempts to inculcate specifically Christian teachings, notably the divinity of Jesus.[52] CMS schools interpreted government orders and parental wishes by requiring Old Testament study for all students, while claiming to make New Testament study optional for Muslims.[53] In practice, however, some mission women succumbed to evangelical temptation by slipping Christian teachings, unannounced, into hymns and prayers which they had Muslim students learn, or, in a more extreme case in 1912, by subjecting Muslim students to a covert course of Christian teaching.[54]

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girls' education, in mission and government schools alike, throughout most of the Anglo-Egyptian period. Consider that when the first government girls' school opened in El Obeid in 1918, twelve out of 28 class periods were devoted to needlework, while Koran study, religion and manners had three class periods each, leaving only seven periods (or one quarter of class time) for the '3 Rs'. Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 350. (Beasley's account also contains many references to the increasing marriageability of educated girls.) On needlework in the northern Sudan mission schools, see CMS G3/E/O/1903/116, G3/E/O/1904/4, G3/E/O/1920/22, G3/SN/O/1934/6. Apparently needlework was very popular among the poor students in CMS girls' schools in Egypt in the mid-nineteenth century because it had traditionally been taught only to upper-class girls. Sislian, 'Missionary Work in Egypt', 198.

[48] CMS G3/E/O/1903/116: Report on the girls' school at Khartoum, by Sitt Saada Haddad, submitted to Revd. W. E. Taylor in Khartoum on 21 Sept. 1903.

[49] Beshir, *Educational Development*, 38. The Austrian Catholic school in Khartoum was more observant than its CMS counterparts in arranging exemptions from Christian prayer and religious study – a situation that compelled Lord Cromer to seek an explanation. Gwynne replied claiming that the Muslim parents of their students were 'perfectly contented' with their religious instruction. SAD 103/4/24: Wingate Papers, Chart, 'Mission schools visited by the Civil Secretary at Khartoum', 1907; SAD 103/4/42: Wingate Papers, Cromer to Wingate, telegram, Cairo, 30 Jan. 1907; SAD 103/4/44–49: Wingate Papers, Gwynne to Wingate, Khartoum, 2 Feb. 1907.

[50] CMS G3/E/P3/1926/45: Sudan report, including note on the Conscience Clause, 21 Oct. 1926.

[51] Islam after all recognizes Jesus as a prophet and the Bible as early scripture.

[52] In the CMS Atbara school in 1910, for example, thirteen Muslim girls participated in class prayers, while nine (by parental request) were exempted. CMS G3/E/O/1910/83: Report by Miss C. J. J. Tristram on the Atbara Girls' School, 15 June 1910. See also SAD 103/4/44–49: Wingate Papers, Gwynne to Wingate, Khartoum, 2 Feb. 1907.

[53] CMS G3/E/O/1909/39: Report on the Khartoum Girls' School, by Miss A. G. Bewley, 1909; G3/E/O/1910/83: Report by Miss C. J. J. Tristram on the Atbara Girls' School, 1910.

[54] Relating the story of this course at the Atbara school to the Cairo committee, a CMS authority advised that, while no Muslim parents had objected (or noticed), this situation

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CMS records suggest that parents seldom realized when such unwanted teaching occurred, but that those who did withdrew their daughters in protest.[55]

In 1926, Muslims responded strongly to incidents of classroom proselytism. Beginning as a protest against the American Presbyterians who rivalled or exceeded the CMS as schoolroom evangelists, the movement expanded into a protest against the Christian missions at large.[56] Concerned about mission practices that violated government codes, British authorities tightened restrictions requiring parental consent, though not before CMS enrollments 'dropped lamentably' in Omdurman.[57] Meanwhile, northern Sudanese nationalists took up the issue, by rallying support in newspapers and at fundraising events to start independent *Ahliyya* (people's) schools. Sudanese parents wanted more modern schools, but on their own terms.[58] Some nationalists, notably 'Abd Allah Khalil, a future prime minister of the country,[59] even led demonstrations against the missionaries.

CMS missionaries had intended their schools, like their clinics, to be centers for evangelism.[60] Yet government restrictions and, more importantly, local social pressures, including private threats and public protests,[61] made conversion from Islam nearly impossible, despite the fact that many adults attended Christian instructional sessions as 'inquirers' over the years.[62]

'must not be reported publicly'. CMS G3/E/O/1912/17: MacInnes to Baylis, Cairo, 30 March 1912.

[55] On incidents of withdrawals in 1903 and 1916, for example, see CMS G3/E/O/1903/26; G3/E/P3/1916/78.

[56] SAD 57/1/56, 59: Storrar papers, Album entry for 8–14 Oct. 1926; and Su'ad Abd al-Aziz Ahmad, *Qadaya al-ta'lim al-ahli fi al-Sudan, Vol. 1: 1898–1956* (Khartoum, 1991), 92.

[57] CMS G3/E/P4/1927/19: Report on Church Missionary Society girls' schools in the northern Sudan by Mabel C. Warburton, Wad Medani, Feb. 1927.

[58] Mohammed K. Osman, 'The rise and decline of the people's (*Ahlia*) education in the northern Sudan (1927–1957)', *Paedagogica Historica* 18 (1979), 355–71; Su'ad Abd al-Aziz Ahmad, *Qadaya al-ta'lim al-ahli fi al-Sudan*.

[59] Mahmud Abu al-'Aza'im, *Kuntu qariban minhum* (Khartoum, 1993), 1: 1–8.

[60] Just as missionaries hoped to insinuate Christian ethics within the schools, so they hoped to do within their medical centers. Indeed, they urged Muslim patients and workers to join in regular 'Christian prayer'. See, for example, CMS G3/E/O/1910/80; G3/E/P2/1916/78; G3/E/O/1927/30–32; G3/SN/O/1934/8; AF35/49, G3/SN, m1, sub-file 3: Omdurman Medical Mission: Trimingham to Anderson, Omdurman, 13 May 1942; and Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, 20, 63.

[61] One mission woman wrote in 1910, 'I attribute many of the difficulties connected with religious teaching here to the fact that the Moslems learn our plan of campaign from our own publications, and therefore know how best to baffle us'. CMS G3/E/O/1910/83: Report by Miss C. J. J. Tristram on the Atbara Girls' School, 15 June 1910. In 1936, a Sudanese Muslim converted; a report noted a year later that 'other orderlies were showing interest, but had received threats'. SAD 795/3/7–14: R. C. Stevenson Papers, Minutes of the CMS Northern Sudan Mission, Annual Conference 1937, held in Omdurman on 18 Jan. 1937. For Sudanese points of view, see Hasan Najila, *Malamih min al-mujtama' al-sudani* (3rd edn.) (Beirut, 1964), 294–300 (on the 1926 protest); Bashir Muhammad Sa'id, *al-Sudan min al-hukm al-thuna'i ila intifadat Rajab* (Khartoum, 1986), 1:3,45 (on a protest in 1945); Beshir, *Educational Development*, 151 (on a 1931 incident).

[62] For example, early in 1933, the CMS offered classes for Muslim 'inquirers' who wanted to learn more about Christianity. The minutes state, 'A number of men and boys

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Lacking converts, desperate for funds and periodically suffering from low morale, CMS missionaries nevertheless stuck to and expanded their northern programs, ever hoping for success.[63] They opened additional girls' schools at Omdurman (1905), Atbara (1908) and Wad Medani (1912), for the training of 'better wives and mothers'. Next came a hospital in Omdurman (1912), which grew in the 1920s to include special facilities for lepers, the indigent and the blind. Increasingly determined that Sudanese Muslims and not expatriates should be the focus of their mission, they chose to concentrate, above all, on Omdurman, and later gave up their Khartoum school.[64] In 1919, they opened small 'outstation' schools in Omdurman's Mawrada and Abu Rawf districts; in 1926, they added a clinic for mothers and children to the Abu Rawf site.[65] Where possible, they accepted girls as boarders, in one case accommodating twenty freed slave girls who had originally come from near Raga, in the southern Sudan.[66] Finally, in the 1930s, to bolster their medical centers at a time when Sudanese attendance was growing,[67] they began to train nurses formally, looking to older students for recruits.[68] Thus their educational and medical work converged.

By making girls' schools more prevalent and socially acceptable, CMS missionaries helped to pave the way for future advances in the education of

were now taking regular instruction in the Christian religion, and some had expressed a definite desire for baptism'. Six months later, however, the mission reported, 'Most of the enquirers have dropped off lately, owing to Moslem anti-Christian activities'. (CMS G3/SN/O/1933/8; G3/SN/O/1933/16.) The CMS mission in Iran experienced a similar situation with inquirers; see Francis-Dehqani, 'CMS women missionaries in Persia', 115–8.

[63] CMS records in Birmingham show that the northern Sudan mission was always on the verge of bankruptcy, to the extent that some missionary women took reduced salaries or contributed their own funds to keep schools open and running.

[64] The mission clarified this stance in a 1918 policy report: CMS G3/E/L4/1918, 196–8. See also G3/E/O/1920/22 and G3/E/O/1925/10. They gave up the Khartoum girls' school in 1927, making way for the interdenominational Unity High School for Girls.

[65] Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, 20–1; CMS G3/E/P3/1919/57.

[66] These freed slave girls may have converted to Islam before their rescue, since the relevant CMS record does not portray them as material for Christian conversion but describes their caretaking as part of a financial deal with the government. CMS G3/E/P3/1920/29: notes on April 30, 1920 meeting on 'Freed slave girls'; and SAD 8/33/1–3: Crowfoot Papers, two photographs labelled 'Raga girls, Miss Hall's School, Abu Rof' [*c.* 1920].

[67] Compare attendance rates listed, for example, in CMS G3/E/O/1910/84 and G3/SN/O/1931/4.

[68] In their schools, missionaries often trained older girls informally to work in the dispensaries and clinics for women or in the classrooms as teaching assistants. (See, for example, CMS G3/E/O/1927/19: Report on Church Missionary Society girls' schools in the Northern Sudan, Feb. 1927, by Mabel C. Warburton; and CMS AF 35.39, G3/SN/m1, sub-file 4 on Omdurman schools: Letter from Helen A. Norton to Mr. Hooper, Omdurman, Aug. 1941). Formal and systematic training of nurses appears to have started in the 1930s – see CMS AF35/49, G3/SN/m1, sub-file 4: Omdurman Medical Mission, C. F. L. Bertram to Revd. H. D. Hooper, Omdurman 24 Mar. 1936. By 1948, a missionary declared that at the Omdurman hospital, 'a highly trained Muslim staff has been produced, sustained in the service by common daily worship'. Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, 20.

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girls and women. Yet work among females imposed special restrictions on CMS missionaries and thwarted their evangelical impact. Married young and largely secluded as a mark of prestige, most Sudanese Muslim females in northern cities lacked the liberty to make radical choices about their lives and their futures. As an American Presbyterian missionary noted, if a Muslim girl did wish to convert, she had first to secure her father's permission,[69] a virtually insurmountable barrier.[70] It is no accident that the small roster of Muslims in Africa and Asia who converted to Christianity under the CMS aegis, as isolated cases across the decades, was almost exclusively male.[71]

From the historian's point of view, the female-centeredness of the CMS northern Sudan mission also contributed to its obscurity by making information about its deeds and doers less accessible. For while many British women served as missionaries in the northern Sudan,[72] few left records. Disqualified from the clergy, and hence from clerical leadership, they did not write mission histories and treatises that describe their experiences as teachers and care-givers.[73] Nor did male missionaries write much about them, possibly because their activities among girls did not build the 'virile' muscular Christianity that mission authorities wanted to emphasize.[74] Even less is known about the Christian Arabic-speaking women from greater

[69] Shields, *Behind the Garden of Allah*, 101–2. The American Presbyterians faced a public outcry in 1931 when they converted a nominally Muslim Sudanese woman, the daughter of an Abyssinian Christian slave mother and Sudanese Muslim father, whom the missionaries had taken in as a foundling and raised since childhood. Sitt Faith ('Lady Faith'), as she was known, faced legal obstacles in her conversion and had to secure the approval of a British official and two Muslim judges before her baptism could proceed. Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 692. This may be the case that the journalist Hasan Najila referred to when he discussed Christian evangelism disapprovingly; if so, the girl was not technically an orphan but had been abandoned by her Muslim father, who tried to regain custody or guardianship years later when her case gained notoriety. Najila, *Malamih min al-mujtama' al-sudani*, 294. Other references to this case appear in Su'ad Abd al-Aziz Ahmad, *Qadaya al-ta'lim al-ahli fi al-Sudan*, 92, and Shields, *Behind the Garden of Allah*, 92–5.

[70] For an Egyptian case, see Gairdner, *The Reproach of Islam*, 187–8.

[71] See, for example, Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 314–5.

[72] CMS documents classified as 'Original Papers, Northern Sudan mission, 1931–34' include the most references to missionary women and suggest most stayed for brief stints of a few years, not for whole careers. These documents also suggest that poor health (caused, for example, by recurrent malaria) may have been as common as marriage in prompting resignations.

[73] For comparative studies and methodological reflections on the lack of information about women missionaries and on the dearth of mission records in general, see Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener, *Women and Missions*; Huber and Lutkehaus, *Gendered Missions*; and Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Richmond, UK, 1996).

[74] In the reckoning of one of these men, it was precisely because the Sudan's ancient Christianity had been 'non-virile' that it had yielded to Islam, disappearing entirely in past centuries. Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, preface. So fleeting are the references in CMS treatises to British women missionaries, that telephone directories for the Sudan's English-speaking residents may be a more lucrative source for their names. See, for example, McCorquodale and Co., *The British Directory: A Directory of British Residents in the Sudan* (Khartoum [1936]); McCorquodale and Co., *The British Directory: 1937* (Khartoum, 1937).

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Syria, Egypt and Palestine who served as mission-school teachers,[75] and about the local Sudanese Muslim women who served as teachers and assistants.

This dearth of information extends, finally, to the young women who attended CMS schools. Unlike the region's male educated elites, who published Arabic poems, essays and in some cases autobiographies, northern Sudanese CMS school graduates did not, and apparently in most cases could not, leave written records of their own. Proportionally few Sudanese women attended schools, mission or government, in the Anglo-Egyptian period and still fewer developed a basic grasp of Arabic literacy.[76] While many female CMS school graduates may indeed have learned to read and write, they were ill-equipped to apply their literacy because it was based on a romanized Arabic. By considering more closely how romanized Arabic developed, who learned it and why, one can understand more clearly the political and economic factors that constrained CMS schools, and ultimately their students as well.

ROMANIZED ARABIC AND THE POLITICS OF LITERACY IN THE NORTH AND NUBA MOUNTAINS

Historians know about the romanized Arabic of Christian missionaries because scattered references in British sources, including CMS records, attest to its teaching in the early twentieth century. Evidence for its actual use among northern Sudanese mission-school graduates is, however, absent, aside from a cache of seven letters preserved in a British archive. These letters were the work of a Sudanese Muslim midwife named Kathira Abdullahi, who wrote in 1935 to the director of the Omdurman Midwifery Training School, her British supervisor *in absentia*, conveying news about ante-natal clinics and staff.[77] Midwifery School records confirm that this midwife had studied with CMS missionaries in Omdurman, but her letters bear their educational imprint anyway. For rather than using the vocabulary, syntax and script of literary Arabic, she wrote Sudanese colloquial Arabic in a Latin print of mixed upper and lower cases. She was not, in other words, demonstrating literacy by the region's common standards.

[75] An intriguing photograph of one Syrian CMS school teacher, a young woman wearing short bobbed hair and a sleeveless dress, identified as the daughter of an Aleppine merchant in Wad Medani, appears in Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860–1950* (London, 1988), 209.

[76] According to 1956 estimates (which represented the rapid and substantial expansion of government girls' schools in the previous decade), only 4 per cent of Sudanese females were literate, relative to 30 per cent of males. Literacy was defined according to those aged ten and over who had attended elementary school. Lilian Sanderson, 'The development of girls' education in the northern Sudan, 1898–1960', *Paedagogica Historica*, 8 (1968), 120–1. The first government girls' secondary school had only opened in 1949 with 67 students. Sudan Government, *Report by the Governor-General on the Administration, Finance, and Conditions of the Sudan in 1949*, 141.

[77] SAD 582/5/11–13, 17–22: Wolff Papers, Letters from Kathira Abdullahi to Mabel Wolff, Sept, 1935. Miss Wolff labelled the first in the series, 'Letter rec/. from one of our staff midwives written in "Roman" characters'. On Mabel Wolff and modern Sudanese midwifery, see Heather Bell, 'Midwifery training and female circumcision in the inter-war Anglo-Egyptian Sudan', *Journal of African History*, 39 (1998), 293–312.

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British missionaries propagated romanized Arabic in their northern Sudanese schools for two major reasons. They taught it, first, because it was all they knew. Unable to read the Arabic script and standard literary Arabic, they could teach only the colloquial language that they had picked up in the field, spelling words 'in the phonetic script' as they heard them.[78] Students were trained to do the same, perhaps explaining the idiosyncratic spellings and vowel markings in Kathira Abdullahi's letters.[79] Second, missionaries supported romanized Arabic because of the belief, common among Protestant missionaries, that people should learn the Bible in their vernacular.[80] Missionaries knew that a gulf separated literary or *fusha* Arabic – the language of learned discourse that all educated Arabs shared – from colloquial Arabic, which consisted of variable regional dialects. But they underestimated the cultural prestige of the *fusha*, which derived from its relationship to the language of Qur'anic revelation. Moreover, while colloquial Arabic in Arabic script had some applications in twentieth-century writing, its uses remained very limited – appearing, for example, in Egyptian satirical verse, or in literary dialogues to convey ethnic stereotyping.[81] Romanized Arabic was doubly marginal, as a colloquial Arabic in Latin script. Unlike romanized Hausa in northern Nigeria (the development of which had the support of both CMS missionaries and British colonial authorities),[82] it was doomed to fail as a print language.

Mission schoolgirls in the northern Sudan did not have textbooks for learning to read and write romanized Arabic, but that was not unusual; few Sudanese children in the early twentieth century had access to printed books. Commercial Arabic publishing was still young in the region, and catered for adults alone, while educational publishing for children only began to develop in the late 1930s and 1940s under government auspices.[83] CMS girls' schools

[78] They may have also adapted spellings and phrases from the standard missionary textbook intended for English-speaking adults, W. H. T. Gairdner's *Egyptian Colloquial Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1926). This work was later modified for the Omdurman dialect in R. S. Macdonald and Mary Wright, '*Da Kitab' : A Sudanese Colloquial Grammar,* ed. J. Spencer Trimingham (Cairo, 1939). The phrase quoted here comes from the preface of the latter.

[79] Sharing news of a colleague, for example, Kathira wrote, '*Hea ahsan EL HamDoW LiL ElaHy*' – 'she is better, thank God' – while as for the others, they are all '*Be KHer'* – 'fine'. SAD 582/5/12–13: Wolff Papers, Letter from Kathira Abdullahi to Mabel Wolff, Omdurman, 16 Sept. 1935. Kathira's vowel markings appear randomly, particularly over the letter 'a', indicating a long vowel or proximity to the consonants *hamza* or '*ayn* (which she did not otherwise transcribe).

[80] Brian Holmes, 'British imperial policy and the mission schools', in Holmes, *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools*, 27. See also, for example, the view of a Sudan United Mission (SUM) missionary, D. N. MacDiarmid, *Tales of the Sudan* (Melbourne, 1934), 22.

[81] Marilyn Booth, 'Colloquial Arabic poetry, politics, and the press in modern Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24 (1992), 419–40.

[82] Sonia F. Graham, *Government and Mission Education in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1919* (Ibadan, 1966), 18–19, 27, 50.

[83] Books were lacking even in government-sponsored boys' primary schools, which, relative to the missions, had better and more reliable funding. On conditions in the 1930s and 1940s, see V. L. Griffiths, *An Experiment in Education : An Account of the Attempts to Improve the Lower Stages of Boys' Education in the Moslem Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1930–1950* (London, 1953), 4–5, 36; and Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 355. On the

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made up for the lack of books by relying heavily on oral modes of learning, such as Bible storytelling and hymn-singing, and on activities, such as needlework, so that reading and writing received only a fraction of class time.[84]

Writing in 1931, a far-sighted CMS missionary had addressed the lack of books by urging the mission to publish colloquial Arabic literature – in Arabic, not Roman script – to serve the needs not only of children but also of adults who could 'only just read'.[85] By recognizing the need for a simplified literature, suitable for the partially literate, he anticipated calls made by government educators years later.[86] But his suggestion went unheeded. The mission was so short of funds that it reported a few months later: 'The Omdurman schools can't see their way to pay the teachers and their salaries each month, and are in debt to nearly all their teachers'. Obliged to eliminate top-level classes in order to cut costs, the CMS could not afford to publish primers.[87]

However, not all CMS schoolgirls learned to read and write colloquial Arabic; in practice, a two-tier system operated. In schools with many expatriates (Khartoum, and Atbara, Omdurman Central, and Wad Medani until the mid-1920s), academic standards were higher, and so were parental expectations and fees. The affluent girls in these programs studied standard Arabic with expatriate teachers from Egypt and the Levant, as well as some English with British women. Missionaries apparently saved their romanized Arabic for the daughters of humble or poor Sudanese Muslims who may have had lower expectations for girls' literacy in a period when it was so rare, and little sense for its utility for girls.[88] Such girls would have attended the CMS *kuttabs* or 'vernacular schools', like those in Omdurman where colloquial Arabic would have been not only the language of spoken instruction – as it was in government *kuttabs* – but of written instruction, too.

Missionary Arabic gained wider currency during the interwar period. Following a spate of anti-British activities in 1924,[89] the British rulers of the Sudan struck out against *effendis* (Egyptian and Sudanese educated petty officials) whom they mistrusted as nationalist troublemakers. Thus they expelled many Egyptians from the country and moved closer to Indirect

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development of Sudanese publishing, see Heather J. Sharkey, 'A century in print: Arabic journalism and nationalism in the Sudan, 1899–1999', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31 (1999), 531–49.

[84] See reports in CMS G3/E/O/1903/116; G3/E/O/1904/4; G3/E/O/1910/82–83; G3/E/O/1920/22; G3/E/O/1921/46; G3/E/O/1927/19; and Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 350.

[85] CMS G3/SN/O/1931/3: Notes on CMS Work in the Northern Sudan, by Mr. S. A. Morrison.

[86] Griffiths (1953), 134–43, regarding strategies for the retention of literacy; and Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 354–5.

[87] CMS G3/SN/O/1931/38: Letter from Morden H. Wright to Mr. Hooper, Omdurman, 4 Nov. 1931; G3/SN/O/1932/3: Letter to Mr. Hooper, Omdurman, 17 Feb. 1932.

[88] Female literacy was rare in the Anglo-Egyptian period, even among wives of young educated elites. See, for example, Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 24.

[89] These included demonstrations and mutinies in the Sudan and, most gravely, the assassination of the Sudan's Governor-General in Cairo.

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Rule by favoring traditional notables over the modern educated classes in allocating local authority.[90] Both moves affected CMS girls' education. Egyptian expulsions left CMS schools with fewer expatriate Arabic teachers and proportionally higher Sudanese enrollments, and they placed greater responsibility on British women missionaries for teaching students to read and write.[91] The mood of Indirect Rule meanwhile prompted mission educators to place more emphasis on Sudanese authenticity and less on modern British-style education.

It was along these lines, when reflecting on the 1924 troubles, that a CMS authority called again for focusing on the 'real Sudanese', not on Egyptians or on 'semi-foreign' children of mixed Egyptian–Sudanese background. Aside from the vernacular schools in Mawrada and Abu Rawf, which were exemplary and should be 'multiplied', he argued that CMS education was 'of too advanced a type for most Sudanese girls'.[92] A mission report, issued soon afterwards, concurred. It noted approvingly the government's new training college for female teachers, where 'everything is native – [even students'] dress is native', and conveyed the opinion of its British director that 'the CMS Girls' School syllabus is 200 years ahead of the Sudan!'[93]

The midwife Kathira Abdullahi, whose remarkable letters survive, would have attended CMS Omdurman schools in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as political and financial motives were leading the mission to downgrade programs by 'simplifying' them 'specially for Sudanese girls,[94] and as colloquial Arabic stood to gain greater favor among missionaries over the literary Arabic of *effendis*.[95] But the climate in which she learned romanized Arabic was also influenced by a contest for converts occurring hundreds of miles away in Kordofan's Nuba Mountains, a region with peoples speaking scores of local languages. In 1933, the government invited CMS missionaries to enter the Nuba region by opening schools for young men, particularly sons of Nuba *meks* or chiefs, whom they would train as clerks for the government.[96]

[90] Useful surveys of these events include Hasan Abdin, *Early Sudanese Nationalism, 1919–1925* (Khartoum, 1985); and M.W. Daly, *British Administration and the Northern Sudan, 1917–1924: The Governor-Generalship of Sir Lee Stack in the Sudan* (Istanbul, 1980).

[91] Evidence for the disappearance of Egyptian teachers is indirect. The names of all non-British teachers disappear from the CMS Khartoum school log-book, while a chart showing pay-scales suggests the routinization of Sudanese hirings. Of course, there were economic as well as political incentives for hiring Sudanese women: they earned a fraction of an expatriate's salary. SAD G//S 1118: Treagust Papers, Unity High School, Khartoum, Sudan: Log Book No. 1, 1903–42 (CMS School, 1903–1927); CMS G3/E/O/1925/8: Minutes of the Northern Sudan Sub-Conference, 29 Dec. 1924.

[92] CMS G3/E/O/1925/8: Minutes of the Northern Sudan Sub-Conference, 29 Dec. 1924.

[93] CMS G3/E/O/1925/72: Notes on Government Medical and Educational Development in the Sudan, received 11 July 1925.

[94] CMS G3/E/O/1925/10: Lasbrey to Manley, Cairo, 11 Feb. 1925.

[95] In learning their Arabic, missionaries, too, were cautioned to 'remember that Sudan Arabic is a rich and expressive living language and [to] avoid that strange office Arabic used unfortunately by so many of the effendiyya'. Trimingham in the preface of Macdonald and Wright '*Da Kitab*'.

[96] W. Wilson Cash, *The Nubas Calling: A Challenge to Pioneer Missionary Adventure among Sudan Hill Tribes* (London, 1933).

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By this time a debate over language and teaching policy had been stirring for several years. Should the government in the Nuba Mountains apply the northern Sudanese model by promoting Arabic in schools, or the southern model by promoting local vernaculars and English? Since Arabic was the official language of northern administration and since the Nuba region was an enclave in Kordofan (a province officially classified as northern), some British officials argued that Arabic was the logical choice for instruction. Others argued that as a predominantly non-Muslim region that Muslims had targetted for slave raids in the nineteenth century the Nuba Mountains bore cultural and historical resemblances to the south and should have kindred protectionist policies that promoted local vernaculars and English as educational languages.[97]

Shortly before the CMS arrived in the Nuba Mountains, the government had reached a decision, declaring that Arabic – not English or a Nuba vernacular – would be the *lingua franca* for Nuba schools because Arabic would facilitate trade and simplify administration within the larger province of Kordofan. But at the same time, to protect indigenous Nuba culture from Muslim Arab interference, the government would promote Christian mission schools in predominantly non-Muslim areas. The sons of those who had already converted to Islam would attend government, not mission, schools instead and learn standard, not romanized Arabic. In the view of some officials, the latter were already lost to Islam, so that their isolation would be no remedy.[98]

Opinions clashed in deciding the form of Arabic that mission schools should teach. Some favored romanized colloquial, arguing that the use of standard Arabic, in Arabic script, would enable the Nuba to read Arabic literature, engage with Arab culture and thereby 'disintegrate their tribal life'.[99] Others warned that romanized Arabic was useless and would leave the Nuba educationally 'humbugged';[100] an outside consultant agreed that it was

[97] In other words, Nuba education should follow guidelines for the South set at the Rejaf Language Conference of 1928. The Rejaf conferees, who included British officials and Christian missionaries, targetted six languages (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Bari, Latuko and Zande) as lingua francas for literary development in schools, and encouraged first, the setting of orthographic conventions and second, the production of textbooks. Implicitly acknowledging the ethnically mixed soldier communities in the south whose members spoke an Arabic patois and practiced Islam, they advised that 'Colloquial Arabic in Roman script will also be required in certain communities where the use of no other vernacular is practicable'. The new southern language policy that emerged at Rejaf endorsed the use of local vernaculars or 'tribal languages' in lower schools; 'lingua francas' in middle schools; and English in the 'upper standards' which were the training ground for clerks. Sudan Government, *Report of the Rejaf Language Conference, 1928* (London, 1928).

[98] A useful survey of Nuba educational policy in this period is found in Lilian Sanderson, 'Educational development and administrative control in the Nuba Mountains region of the Sudan', *Journal of African History*, 4 (1963), 233–47.

[99] J. G. Mathews, *Memorandum of Educational Policy in the Nuba Pagan Area* (Khartoum, 1930), cited in Sanderson, 'Educational development ... Nuba', 239.

[100] Kamal el-Din Osman Salih, 'The British administration in the Nuba Mountains region of the Sudan, 1900–1956' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1982), 198. The critic cited here was S. Hillelson, the government Arabist, who, as a rare Jew in the Sudan government, did not take the pro-Christian-mission line.

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'a definitely bad plan'.[101] Nevertheless, the advocates of romanized Arabic prevailed, giving CMS missionaries official endorsement for the writing system that they had been teaching in their northern girls' schools. Within the next few years, the government provided funds and technical assistance for the printing of romanized Arabic readers, in Kordofan (not Omdurman) dialect, for explicit Nuba use.[102]

CMS missionaries were pleased by the government's endorsement. Regarding Muslim proselytizers as their adversaries in a region where Islam was spreading, they hailed the Latin alphabet as a cultural barrier to Muslim influence.[103] Privately, some officials thought the same. J. G. Matthew, Director of Education (who retired from the Sudan government a few years later and became a CMS secretary in Jerusalem), explained in retrospect that he and others had supported the use of 'Arabic in Roman script and not in Arabic script in order to cut them off from the Koran'.[104] This choice contributed to a policy that a French woman traveller caustically summarized as an attempt to save the Nuba from 'Trousers and Islam'.[105]

Government support for romanized Arabic in Nuba mission schools began in 1930 and ended in 1935, when Douglas Newbold, an influential, less Islamophobic Briton, became governor of Kordofan province and stressed its impracticality.[106] From then on, standard literary Arabic, in Arabic script, became the order of the day. But though official policy changed abruptly, the teaching of romanized Arabic may not have; Christian missionaries, in the Nuba Mountains as in Omdurman, lacked the skills for teaching standard Arabic.[107]

Meanwhile, missionaries remained convinced of romanized Arabic's relevance and apparently blind to its limitations. In 1939, J. S. Trimingham (who reportedly had little or no knowledge of colloquial Arabic[108]) declared

[101] Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London: PRO FO 371/17028: Transcript of a meeting with Mr. Evans, University Lecturer in Economics at St. John's College, Cambridge, re his 3-month trip to the Sudan, by W. H. B. Mack, dated Foreign Office 31 Mar. 1933.

[102] On the printing of colloquial texts, see Salih, 'British Administration', 200–1; and CMS SN/O/1934/19: 'The Nuba Mountains': Report of a visit and notes by the Revd. C. F. L. Bertram, 1934.

[103] CMS G3/SN/O/1934/19: 'The Nuba Mountains': Report of a visit and notes by the Revd. C. F. L. Bertram, 1934.

[104] CMS G3/SN/O/1934/19: Letter from J. G. Matthew to Sir Edward Midwinter, 6 Oct. 1934. Matthew's letterhead identifies him as 'Secretary of the Jerusalem and East Mission' for the CMS.

[105] Odette Keun, *A Foreigner Looks at the British Sudan* (London, 1930), 38.

[106] Salih, 'British Administration', 200–1, 208, 213–14; Sanderson, 'Educational Development … Nuba', 240.

[107] An exception to the pattern was Wadie Effendi, a native Arabic speaker and CMS missionary who, as headmaster of CMS Delami school in 1934, translated St. Mark's Gospel into a romanized Kordofanian colloquial Arabic. CMS G3/SN/O/1934/19: Church Missionary Society, Northern Sudan Mission, 'The Nuba Mountains': Report of a Visit and Notes by the Revd. C. F. L. Bertram, 1934. Note that government education inspectors rarely passed through Nuba mission schools in the years ahead, but one inspector who did visit expressed dismay over their low educational standards. Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 114–20.

[108] CMS AF 35.39, G3/SN/m1, sub-file 4: Omdurman Schools: Extract from letter from Bishop Gwynne to the Revd. H. D. Hooper, Khartoum, 1 Jan. 1942.

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to an audience of peers, 'Experience has shown that the use of Arabic characters presents great inconveniences for rendering the sounds of the living language'.[109] This specious rationale probably insured the continued use of romanized Arabic in the urban girls' schools.

How common, then, was missionary Arabic in CMS Nuba and northern schools, and how widely was it used by those who learned it? Historians cannot know for certain. CMS sources yield only basic information on classroom policies and practices, and in any case, grow thinner in the archives after 1937.[110] At the same time, since missionary Arabic produced for the most part a dysfunctional literacy, lacking applications and audiences, its learners were ill-equipped to leave records of their own. Thus romanized Arabic fades from the record, with no clear end-date for its use in sight.

The official experiment of romanized Arabic may have been brief in the Nuba Mountains, but for many Sudanese, its memory rankles even now, as published works suggest.[111] Some resent it as a linguistic device of underdevelopment, a dead-end endeavor that confirmed the marginalization of the Nubas relative to the Arabic-speaking peoples of the riverain north. Others regard it as another episode in the annals of colonial divide-and-rule, one that used language and writing to erect internal barriers. Still others object to its use as a tool to halt Islam's expansion.

Although missionary Arabic was probably more pervasive in CMS northern girls' schools, history books are quiet on that issue. No controversy stirs for a start because government restrictions on classroom evangelism insured that the education of Muslim females did not become a contest for converts. Then, too, there were lower expectations for female education and few assumptions that skills for women would lead to competitive, wage-paying jobs within the new economy. Among Sudanese historians, this female underdevelopment has not been a cause for dismay, though national literacy rates still show sharp gender discrepancies.[112]

Regarding missionary Arabic in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, two points stand out. First, its teaching confirmed wider patterns of power. Those who learned it lacked access to better schooling and gained educations that perpetuated their marginality relative to the educated, Arabic-literate mainstream. Second, its use proved that the power inherent in writing varied according to the form of literacy one learned. While all forms of literacy confer power (e.g. in the ability to leave personal records or to communicate and comprehend through fixed symbols), standard Arabic literacy was much more potent than its missionary Arabic counterpart. Standard Arabic could reach wide audiences of Arabic-speakers in north Africa, western Asia and

[109] Macdonald and Wright, '*Da Kitab*', preface by J. S. Trimingham.

[110] CMS archives in Birmingham contain some northern Sudan mission records (original papers) for the 1940s, but these are spotty in their organization and sequence.

[111] Salih, 'British administration'; Atta H. El-Battahani, 'Nationalism and peasant politics in the Nuba Mountains region of Sudan, 1924–1966' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1986); Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahim Nasr, *al-Idara al-baritaniyya wa-al-tabshir al-islami wa-al-masihi fi al-Sudan* (Khartoum, 1979), 1–22; Ahmed Uthman Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Dilemma of British Rule in the Nuba Mountains, 1898–1947* (London, 1985).

[112] According to an estimate based on 1995 figures, 46·1 per cent of the Sudanese population age fifteen and over, can read and write, including 57·7 per cent of males and 34·6 per cent of females. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook 2000*.

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the Arabian peninsula. It was also the medium for an ever-growing body of printed books and newspapers. Missionary Arabic, by contrast, had few applications, and would have made more sense to a British expatriate than to a learned Sudanese. Moreover, since missionary Arabic represented colloquial Arabic, and since dialects vary by region, its forms were inherently local.

In the Anglo-Egyptian period, literacy politics were embroiled in larger issues of the day, especially as they related to the religious and linguistic underpinnings of the developing colonial state. Literacy and language remained political in the post-colonial period as Sudanese debated the proper role of Arabic, English and other local languages within the national government and educational system.

These post-colonial debates even extended to orthographies. Reversing colonial government policies, which Christian missions had supported, northern politicians in the 1950s and 1960s advocated the Arabic alphabet as 'the national script'[113] for rendering southern vernaculars. Whereas Christian missionaries had once supported romanized Arabic to blunt Islamic influence, northern politicians now promoted Arabized vernaculars in primary schools as an acculturative step towards the study of standard Arabic and, perhaps, towards Islam. Hence they promoted experiments, for example, with Shilluk rendered in Arabic script within some Upper Nile province elementary schools instead of the romanized Shilluk that Christian mission schools had used.[114] In the words of a northern educator, the central government hoped through such policies 'that a unification of the alphabet would tend to reduce linguistic diversity and consequently bring south and north socially close together.[115]

CONCLUSION: THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY LEGACY IN THE MUSLIM NORTHERN SUDAN

Faced with government and social restrictions in the Anglo-Egyptian period, CMS missionaries tried to evangelize obliquely in their northern schools and clinics, for example, by leading prayers and initiating discussions in which they encouraged students, patients, and workers to join. 'No hymn, no drug' may have been a byword in the south, [116] but in the north missionaries could not afford to be choosy. At the same time they tried to make their own lives of service – to children and to the poor, sick and abandoned – into examples for others to follow. First by chance but increasingly by conviction, females became the focus of their efforts, as missionaries worked in schools towards 'influencing the future women of the Sudan for Christ' (in the words of Bishop Gwynne), believing that 'when that is done the men will not be long

[113] Sayyid H. Hurreiz and Herman Bell (eds.), *Directions in Sudanese Linguistics and Folklore* (Khartoum, 1975), 31.

[114] Yves Le Clézio, 'Writing Shilluk with an Arabic script', in Hurreiz and Bell, *Directions in Sudanese Linguistics*, 33–57.

[115] Yusuf al-Khalifa Abu Bakr, 'Language and education in the southern Sudan', in Hurreiz and Bell, *Directions in Sudanese Linguistics*, 13–18.

[116] C. A. Willis (compiler), *The Upper Nile Province Handbook: A Report on Peoples and Government in the Southern Sudan, 1931* ed. Douglas H. Johnson (Oxford, 1995), 109.

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following'.[117] Their goal throughout was simple: to make Christians out of Muslims.

But for all their efforts, the CMS gained few converts in the northern Sudan, and none from the ranks of Sudanese Muslim schoolgirls.[118] In 1933, CMS missionaries presided over the first confirmation of a northern Sudanese man – an orderly at the CMS Omdurman hospital who had converted to Christianity from Islam during a sojourn in Cairo, as well as the 'conversion' of two Coptic schoolgirls to Anglicanism. In 1936, missionaries celebrated the first local Omdurman conversion, again of a Muslim male orderly, who later went to serve in the Nuba Mountains.[119] These were isolated cases.

Meanwhile, the CMS in the south (running schools as local monopolies) had begun to baptize by the score. One missionary recalled her time at Yei, when in one afternoon, 200 sought conversion. 'By the end of 1932', she wrote, 'we realized that we were in the midst of a 'mass movement' of great magnitude. Huge crowds surged round the car demanding books, baptism, confirmation and more teachers.'[120] This trend continued apace, until in an act of historical revisionism that reflected the south's growing importance to the CMS cause, Bishop Gelsthorpe of the Sudan diocese claimed in 1946 that southern missions 'to people who knew not God' – not northern work among Muslims – had been the central aim of the CMS since 1899.[121]

Once the focus of its Sudan operations, the CMS northern mission became a sideshow to, and increasingly an adjunct of, the south and Nuba Mountains. When southern and Nuba men, 'some of whom were Christians or had been in touch with missions', began to migrate to northern cities during the Second World War, CMS missionaries opened social centers in Khartoum and Omdurman to attract such lonely and 'detribalized' migrants and to save them from 'debauchery and Islam'.[122] Inspired by the conversion of four of these men in Omdurman in 1943, J. S. Trimingham wrote to a colleague about hopes for a new church in the north, 'a church composed, not of converts of Islam at first [sic] but of converts from paganism'.[123]

Northern Sudanese Muslims in the late 1940s were proving no more

[117] CMS G3 E P3: Précis book, Bishop Gwynne's note on education work in Northern Sudan, 17 Mar. 1914.

[118] Over the years, missionaries saw signs of interest among students and workers, but little came of these displays. Consider a log-book entry for Nov. 1913: 'Zehideh Riad who wishes to be a Christian is asking for Baptism. She is not returning to School, but her sisters hope to do so when their father returns from Cairo, in December'. SAD G//S 1118: Treagust Papers, Unity High School, Khartoum, Sudan: Log Book no. 1, 1903–42.

[119] CMS G3/SN/O/1931/11: Letter from Raymond Whitwell to Mr. Hooper, Omdurman, 17 Mar. 1931; G3/SN/O/1931/15: Letter from Raymond Whitwell to Mrs. Cash, Omdurman, 12 Mar. 1931; G3/SN/O/1934/8: CMS Northern Sudan Mission, Abstract of Annual Conference held at Omdurman on 12 Jan. 1934; SAD 795/3/1–6: R. C. Stevenson Papers, C. F. L. Bertram to Shareholders of the CMS Mission Share Plan, typescript newssheet, 1936.

[120] Grace Riley, *No Drums at Dawn: A Biography of the Reverend Canon A. B. H. Riley, Pioneer Missionary in the Sudan* (Victoria, Australia, 1972), 21.

[121] Bishop the Rt. Revd. A. Morris Gelsthorpe, *Introducing the Diocese of the Sudan* (n.p., n.d. [1946]), 4.

[122] Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, 57–8.

[123] CMS AF 35.39, G3/SN/m1, sub-file 4: Omdurman Schools: Letter from J. S. Trimingham to M. A. C. W., 21 Sept. 1945. This focus on migrant communities in the Khartoum area continued in years ahead.

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receptive to Christian missionaries than their grandparents fifty years before, and yet the CMS still had hopes to nurture. In 1948, Trimingham exhorted his colleagues in the North to keep up the 'perpetual call to witness [even] in areas where there is little result'. He added,

We have no certainty that Muslims will accept Christ in the next hundred years or even in the next hundred thousand years, but, as Pascal says, "if we were to do nothing except for a certainty, we would do nothing for religion, for it is not certain". Let us then venture and leave the issue to God.[124]

On 1 January 1956, the Sudan gained independence and Christian missions lost their privileges. As scions of northern Muslim elites, the country's new rulers resented the missionaries for having collaborated with and benefited from colonial policies that had tried to isolate the south and Nuba Mountains from northern cultural influences. Believing that Arabic and Islam were the only possible vehicles for national unity, policy-setters gave Islamic organizations the benefits that Christians had enjoyed, made standard Arabic the country-wide language of school instruction, and later, in 1957, nationalized southern mission schools. By this time, of course, the south had developed a local Christian intelligentsia whose members resented the division of power that was tilted heavily towards the north. Upon the outbreak of civil war in 1955, this Christian, mission-educated minority took up leading positions in the southern resistance.[125]

In the aftermath of colonialism, and in light of civil war, many northern Muslims have censured Christian missionaries for fostering cultural discord. By potentially giving southern and Nuba peoples an additional sense of distinction founded on a non-Arab and non-Muslim corporate identity, they argue, missionaries complicated the formidable challenges of Sudanese nation-building,[126] even more so in the context of the second civil war, when so many refugees embraced Christianity.[127]

[124] Trimingham, *The Christian Approach*, 43.

[125] A useful survey of these developments appears in Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington, 1998), 1–44.

[126] One writer, supporting the dream of Arab unity for the Sudan, describes the outbreak of the first civil war (1955–72) as 'a bloody expression of the sentiments of hatred which the English administration and the Christian missionary societies had planted in the souls of Southerners towards all that was Arab'. Muhammad Fawzi Mustafa 'Abd al-Rahman, *al-Thaqafa al-'arabiyya wa-athruha fi tamasuk al-wihda al-qawmiyya fi al-Sudan al-mu'asir* (Khartoum, 1972), 109. Some mission supporters have issued rejoinders – arguing, for example, against the context of the Sudan's current Islamist rule, that missionaries in the south sought the 'revitalisation of African ethnic identity and confidence' in the face of an implicitly Arab 'sustained assault', and offered 'cultural pluralism' as an alternative to harsh 'monolithic values'. Andrew Wheeler, 'Gateway to the heart of Africa: Sudan's missionary story', in Pierli *et al*. *Gateway*, 24–5. At least one CMS historian soberly acknowledges the divisive policies: Jocelyn Murray, *Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society* (London, 1985), 256–58.

[127] Marc R. Nikkel, 'Aspects of contemporary religious change among the Dinka', in *The Second International Sudan Studies Conference*, 1: 90–100; Wheeler, *Gateway*, 24–5; Roland Marchal, 'Remarques sur le développement de l'église catholique et la "vernacularisation" du christianisme au Soudan,' in Hervé Bleuchot, Christian Delmet, and Derek Hopwood (eds.), *Sudan: History Identity, Ideology/Histoire, identités, ideologies*, (Reading, 1991), 181–94.

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By contrast, Muslim northern Sudanese have seldom discussed the long-term missionary impact on the north, where conversions were so rare. However, after the 1989 coup, which brought an Islamist military regime to power, some Muslims voiced criticism of greater Khartoum's few surviving private Christian schools, relics of the colonial period, which had once catered to expatriates. (One of these, Unity High School, had roots in a CMS enterprise.[128]) Beginning in the 1960s, these schools, with their high educational standards and bilingual English–Arabic education, had increasingly attracted the children of the Sudanese Muslim elite. In a published tract, one critic argued that by disconnecting Muslim children from their Islamic heritage and tolerating the easy mixing of sexes, these schools were promoting a dubious western, if not openly Christian, culture. He therefore urged the government to supervise these schools more closely and to force them to provide stronger Islamic teaching.[129] His argument is another reminder that the perception of religious conflict and of Muslim–Christian enmity clearly persists as a negative missionary and colonial legacy.

Meanwhile, the social benefits that accrued from missionary activity are largely forgotten in the historical chronicles of the elites. CMS missionaries labored for decades to provide educations to humble Sudanese Muslim and expatriate females and Nuba boys, as well as medical care to the poor, indigent and sick. They also trained many women and some men to serve as teachers, nurses and orderlies. Those who benefited from these encounters rarely left accounts of their lives. Nevertheless, the few traces that surface suggest that CMS missionaries enriched the lives of many Muslim individuals, as they later pursued careers or raised families.[130]

[128] Unity High School was founded as an interdenominational girls' school in 1928 and emerged out of the CMS Khartoum girls' school.

[129] Hasan Makki, *Ab'ad al-tabshir al-masihi fi al-'asima al-qawmiyya* (Omdurman, 1990), 56–62.

[130] For a few examples of these Muslim individuals, see SAD 580/2/5: Wolff Papers, Confidential reports of the staff midwife, Sitt Hawa Senoussi, Omdurman, 31 Aug. 1937, on a CMS girls' school graduate and government midwife; Beasley, *Before the Wind*, 94, on a happily married woman who once taught needlework in a mission school; and Mirghani Hasan 'Ali, *Shakhsiyyat 'amma min al-Mawrada* (Omdurman, n.d.), 35–40, on a male CMS-trained nurse who went on to have a distinguished career as a professor of nursing.

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