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Rebellious schooling in a violent (post)colony: Expanding the field of education history in South Sudan, c. 1905-1972

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Educational pathways in colonial and postcolonial spaces often range far beyond the classroom. Reconstructing histories of this wider terrain of education reveals long-running arguments over what types of new knowledge might be most useful for living well within fast-changing colonial and postcolonial states and wars. These debates over useful knowledge—including military, mechanical, linguistic and religious training—are a window into how people discussed changing ideas of authority, class mobility, and the future. We trace a wider terrain of education in southern (now South) Sudan, where education histories have generally either focused on a handful of mission-founded formal schools or hagiographies of powerful military men with PhDs. Drawing on archival evidence and interviews gathered in South Sudan since 2019, we argue that histories of education in colonial and postcolonial Africa are crucial to understanding intellectual histories in everyday life.

Keywords: military education, colonialism, Sudan, rebel movements

Rebellious schooling in a violent (post)colony: Expanding the field of education history in South Sudan, c. 1905 -1972*

We need histories of post/colonial education beyond the classroom. Colonial and postcolonial spaces hosted multiple forms of education even after the arrival of schools. A wide field of intellectual possibilities opens up if we avoid categorising education as either informal or formal; we can also evade the automatic centering of formal school education against a surrounding pedagogic informality. This also offers new chronologies of change: histories written from the arrival of formal school education can struggle to place themselves within a much wider terrain of learning systems and standards of useful knowledge. But in practice, these multiple forms and values of education overlaid each other, creating choices over possible pathways to different forms of power, based on parental and personal assessments of what was most valuable knowledge. By exploring this wider terrain of education, historians can decentre colonial governments' and missionary educationalists' theories, practices and mutual fights. We can also reject a deficit or absence model of education before formal schooling—there is always a lot of learning going on. Instead of an occupier's (or headmaster's) perspective, we suggest rebuilding the field of colonial and postcolonial education studies from the ground up.²

This approach allows us a wider view of historical debates over education. For many colonial (and even postcolonial) subjects, classroom-style forms of written education were only one type of potentially valuable knowledge and qualification, providing pathways to emerging forms of power and models of adulthood alongside many others. This wider view allows us to explore the plurality of standards and definitions of good knowledge within what Jess Auerbach calls 'educational journeying.'³ We can thus explore arguments over the most

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² See A. J. Angulo and Jack Schneider, "Between the Global and the Local," *History of Education Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2023), 151; for these trends, see also Parimala V. Rao, "The Historiography of Indian Education 1920-2020: The Socio-Political Influences on the Growth of the Discipline," *History of Education* 52, no. 3 (2022), 20.

³ Jess Auerbach, "Expanding Available Futures: Ideological Contestation in Angola's Emerging Higher Education Sector," *Comparative Education Review* 66, no. 1 (2022), 144.

useful forms of education for navigating and living well within modern histories of colonial conquest, religious authorities' expansions, and (post) colonial state-building projects across the world.

We argue that histories of this wider field of education are central to building histories of political thought from below. We test these possibilities here by exploring the continuities and connections within a pantheon of educational spaces and systems that evolved throughout colonial occupation—including forms of classroom-based schools and seminaries—and which continued to evolve in tension with formal school education systems, to date. Here, through new empirical oral and archival research in South Sudan over 2019-2022, we find people investing in or rejecting different kinds of formal schooling systems and practical modern education. Their choices reflected debates over the use of new forms of knowledgeable authority accessible via literacy, religious study, and employment in new colonial institutions (in schools, offices, and more commonly, in military work). People's decisions about what to invest in, especially regarding the education options and careers of their children, demonstrate their analysis of the hierarchies and opportunities within shifting colonial systems. Decisions over where to send your growing sons and daughters – into the army, the mechanic's workshop, the cattle camp, the seminary or the mission school – reflected ideas about changing class, gender, and wealth systems, and what types of education might provide security and prosperity in the future.⁴ Broader histories of education allow us to explore these evolving ideas through everyday terminology and conversations, what we call vernacular theory, which lies at the heart of new colonial and postcolonial intellectual histories.⁵ We test this approach here by exploring how parents and students argued over the utility and potential power of multiple different forms of education in the colonial and early postcolonial world. What was worth knowing?

Diffuse educational pathways in southern Sudan

These arguments are most visible in places where there was very little systemisation of

⁴ Here we are working alongside Hilary Falb Kalisman, "The Historiography of Education in the Modern Middle East", *History of Education* 52, no. 2-3 (2023), 311-329; Rebecca Swartz, "Histories of Empire and Histories of Education", *History of Education* 52, no. 2-3 (2023), 442-461; Auerbach, "Expanding Available Futures"; Jacob and Ensign, "A Brief Social History of Education in Nigeria."

⁵ Emma Hunter, "Dialogues between Past and Present in Intellectual Histories of Mid-Twentieth-Century Africa," *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 2 (2023), 637; see also George Hamandishe Karekwaivanane, "'Tapanduka Zvamuchese': Facebook, 'Unruly Publics', and Zimbabwean Politics," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019), 55.

formal school education through the colonial period.⁶ We focus here on southern Sudan (now South Sudan after independence in 2011). Before, during and after colonial conquest of Sudan by the British and its rule under an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium from the capital Khartoum from 1898 to 1956, people sought out a variety of forms of training and schooling, in various places, taking up a variety of different skillsets and powerful knowledge for rapidly changing times.

This lack of systematised educational provision means that most histories of education of southern Sudan focus on the (under)development of missionary and then state school provision. This developmental critique rightly exposes a history of colonial and postcolonial education that has been characterised by strategic neglect and deliberate disruption. This created piecemeal and unfair educational provisions that were uncoordinated and dispersed, and which have truly aimed to create discipline and fear of authority rather than empowerment or development.⁷ But this focus on formal educational systems means that histories of education in southern Sudan are centred either on tensions between missionary and administrator during colonial rule; or on the (re)construction of educational systems after repeated civil wars from the 1960s to present.⁸ This developmental critique is often driven by the idea that universal basic education is fundamentally peace-making, and that a collective curriculum could build societal cohesion and peaceful development. This deficit model still drives most education research in South Sudan today, highlighting the impacts on a lack of human capital, failures in provision, curriculum development, and policy, and the personal

⁶ Here we use the definition of ‘formal education’ to mean specifically mission-run schools, which became state schools in the 1960s.

⁷ Peter Adwok Nyaba, *South Sudan: Elites, Ethnicity, Endless Wars and the Stunted State* (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota, 2019), 18; see also Leben Nelson Moro and Nikita Tolani, “Education in South Sudan: Focusing on Inequality of Provision and Implications for National Cohesion,” *South Sudan Studies Association* (2021), 6.

⁸ Lilian Sanderson, “A Survey of Material Available for the Study of Educational Development in the Modern Sudan, 1900-1963”, *Sudan Notes and Records* 44 (1963), 69-81; Lilian Sanderson, “Educational Development in the Southern Sudan 1900-1948”, *Sudan Notes and Records* 43 (1962), 105-17; Sanderson, Lilian Passmore. “Education in the Southern Sudan: The Impact of Government-Missionary-Southern Sudanese Relationships upon the Development of Education during the Condominium Period, 1898-1956”, *African Affairs* 79, no. 315 (1980), 157-69; Lilian Sanderson and Neville Sanderson, *Education, Religion & Politics in Southern Sudan 1899-1964* (London: Ithaka, 1981); Iris Seri-Hersch, “Education in Colonial Sudan, 1900-1957”, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); for the contemporary literature, see Kuyok Abol Kuyok, “‘Not yet Uhuru’: Interpreting the Education System in Post-Independence South Sudan.” *World Journal of Education* 9, no. 3 (2019), 82-93; Augustino Ting Mayai, “War and Schooling in South Sudan, 2013-2016”, *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 8, no. 1 (2021), 14-49; Yosa Wawa, “Civiness in South Sudan Secondary School Curriculum”, *South Sudan Studies Association* (2021); Breidlid, “Education and Armed Conflict in Sudan and South Sudan: The Role of Teachers in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building”, *Journal of Advances in Education Research* 4, no. 3 (2019), 122-135; Skårås and Breidlid, “Teaching the Violent Past in Secondary Schools in Newly Independent South Sudan,” *Education as Change* 20, no. 3 (2016), 98-118.

risks teachers face.⁹

The second main theme in education historiography in this war-torn ex-colony is often-biographic studies of rebellious secondary school and university students. Because education systems have been so narrowly constructed by colonial administrators and then closely restricted by wars, histories of modern education often end up being studies of the early student careers of today's mostly PhD-holding, mostly military-trained statesmen. Histories of student leadership can easily become narratives of the emergence of nationalist leaders from formal school education, as backdrops to the array of autobiographies they write themselves.¹⁰ In these autobiographies, getting access to formal school education (and often, getting expelled for political organising) is a key part of trajectories to leadership; in the famous aphorism of Dr John Garang de Mabior, rebel leader of the second Sudanese civil war over 1983-2005, using both the gun and the pen to fight for liberation.

The gun and the pen do not have equal weight in histories of post-colonies in conflict. South Sudan, like many other contexts (such as Angola, Korea, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia), has a militarised political historiography that rarely engages with educational organisation not just a civic good destroyed by war but as a tool in conflict. Here we work to re-centre histories of education in postcolonial conflicts to bridge this civil-

⁹ For human capital approaches, see Mayai, "War and Schooling in South Sudan, 2013-2016"; for discussions of provision, see Merethe Skårås, "Educational and Social Challenges in the Reintegration Process of Former Child Soldiers", in *The Power of Resistance* (Emerald Insight, 2017), 243-263; Merethe Skårås, "No Textbooks, No Peace? Historical Narratives in South Sudan" In Catherine Vanner, Spogmai Akseer, and Thursica Kovinthan Levi eds., *Teaching Peace and Conflict: The Multiple Roles of School Textbooks in Peacebuilding* (Springer Nature, 2022), 139-153; Berhane Woldemichael, "Decentralisation amidst Poverty and Disunity: The Sudan, 1969-1983" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1993), 286-331; Denise Bontrovato and Merethe Skårås, "Ruptured Imaginings amid Emerging Nationhood: The Unsettled Narrative of 'Unity in Resistance' in South Sudanese History Textbooks," *Nations and Nationalism* 29, no. 3 (2023), 1041-56; Longfield, "Educational Development in South Sudan: Conscious Design or Spontaneous Order?" *Economic Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2015), 178-96; Breidlid, "Education and Armed Conflict in Sudan and South Sudan"; Cyprian Amutabi and Martha Nyantiop Agoot, "Determinants of Disparities in Primary School Enrolment in South Sudan", *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (2021, online); HyeJin Kim, Kurt D. Moses, Bosun Jang, and Annababette Wils, "Viewing the Reconstruction of Primary Schooling in Southern Sudan through Education Data, 2006–2009," *PROSPECTS* 41, no. 2 (2011), 283-300; Clement Lado Lako, Josje van der Linden, and William Deng, *South Sudan Inclusive: Education in a War-Torn Area* (Brill, 2010); for discussions of risks, see Ursina Bentele, Malish John Peter, and Owen Ndoromo, "Strengthening Knowledge Ecosystems Annex: South Sudan Case Study", *SwissPeace* (2021); Kuyang Harriet Logo, "Gender Equality and Civicness in Higher Education in South Sudan: Debates from University of Juba Circles", *South Sudan Studies Association* (2021); Ishmael I. Munene and Paschal Wambiya, "Bridging the Gender Gap through Gender Difference: Aiding Patriarchy in South Sudan Education Reconstruction," *Africa Education Review* 16, no. 5 (2019), 86-101; Rachel Ibreck, Naomi Pendle, and Alice Robinson, "Bridging Divisions in a War-Torn State: Reflections on Education and Civicness in South Sudan," *South Sudan Studies Association* (2021).

¹⁰ There are similar historiographical trends in Sudan, as noted by Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (University of California Press, 2003); also see Falb Kalisman, "The Historiography of Education in the Modern Middle East," 3, 10.

military, pen-gun divide. This will help us avoid reproducing histories of only ‘the education of (anticolonial) elites’.¹¹

This article is part of a new wave of research since 2018 that has criticised developmentalist approaches to education studies in the Sudans.¹² This has included new work exploring the shape of inequalities created by educational access especially from the 2000s onwards, and how education access has been a tool of patronage and counter-insurgency.¹³ Exploring the history of the idea of education in post/colonial spaces, we argue, opens new ground in emerging research on post/colonial histories of class formation, patronage, civic cultures and political theory, taking up Andrew Epstein’s question of ‘what it means to be an educated person.’¹⁴ This article therefore argues for approaching histories of colonialism and modern states through new histories of political thought and praxis: how ideas of power, leadership and modernity were theorised and propagated within education systems through and after colonisation.¹⁵

Researching educational histories beyond the institution

The missing history of education beyond the schoolroom, especially during long civil wars for the second half of the twentieth century, was the initial driver of our research partnership over 2019-2022. We aimed to tackle the above theoretical questions at the same time as uncovering what we hoped would be a treasure trove of archival and oral historical evidence. Historical education research in Africa has been dominated by established mission and state archives, which focus on classrooms and textbooks. We reviewed key mission and government archives, including the Catholic mission of the Comboniani in Rome and the

¹¹ Swartz, “Histories of Empire and Histories of Education,” 16.

¹² See Gabrielle Daoust, “Education and the Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding: The Case of South Sudan” (PhD diss., University of Sussex, 2017); following the suggestion of Seri-Hersch, “Education in Colonial Sudan, 1900–1957,” 15.

¹³ Daoust, “Education and the Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding”; Tarnjeet Kaur Kang, “Community Self-Determination in South Sudan: A Return to the Subaltern” (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2018); for discussions of patronage, see Julia Duany, Rebecca Lorins, and Edward Thomas, “Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan: An Introduction,” *South Sudan Studies Association* (2021).

¹⁴ Andrew I. Epstein, “Maps of Desire: Refugee Children, Schooling, and Contemporary Dinka Pastoralism in South Sudan” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2012), 53; following Duany, Lorins, and Thomas, “Education, Conflict, and Civicness,” 6; Danielle del Vicario, “The Lives, Deaths, and Afterlives of John Garang: History-Making and Politics in Sudan and South Sudan” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2023); Majak D’Agoût, “Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan,” Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (2018).

¹⁵ Following Falb Kalisman, “The Historiography of Education in the Modern Middle East,” 4, who notes the centrality of histories of education to “histories of capitalism, the environment, time, emotions, knowledge and childhood.”

newly established South Sudan National Archives in Juba, which we use here. We then took a two-pronged methodological approach.

Firstly, we set out to conduct a wide range of oral historical interviews with both teachers and their students over 1956-2005, a period including roughly 39 years of civil war. We ran three phases of consultations that allowed us to work to a safe and ethical timeline that depended on COVID-19 vaccine access in South Sudan, and within deep crises of educational leadership and waves of university strike actions in both South Sudan and the UK. In each of these consultations, we focused on a snowball network-led method, tracing students and teachers who worked and studied through the civil wars, including within the militaries and internal 'liberated territories'. We slowly gathered photographs, memories, stories and songs from around 100 South Sudanese men and women, the oldest of whom began their educational journeys in the 1940s.

Secondly, we aimed to seek out surviving historical education paperwork from the Anya Nya rebel forces during the first civil war over c. 1955-1972, and we sought to find stashes of documentation from the Sudan People's Liberation Army and Movement (SPLA/M) rebel group from the 1983-2005 civil war that we suspected still existed. In our interviews, we asked for copies of self-made publications and textbooks. We sought to record the military education and drills integrated into rebel school life in the 1990s and 2000s. Finally, in 2022, we traced surviving archives of SPLM educational plans and draft curriculums since the late 1990s, thought lost by their authors, at the Maridi Teacher Training Institute in Western Equatoria.

In this article, we draw on interviews with those educated under colonial Condominium rule and during the rise of the Anya Nya rebellion over c. 1955-1969. Our material allows us to explore a wider history of education since roughly the 1850s through stories and work histories of these elderly people's parents and grandparents, cross-referenced with archive research in the South Sudan National Archives and the Comboni Mission Archives in Rome. The article takes up South Sudanese debates over what modern education is and what it is for since the late 19th century; and it traces these conversations through the rise of anticolonial organisation in the 1940s and into the Anya Nya guerrilla wars and refugee camps in the 1960s.

This article firstly turns back to the 1850s to 1910s, exploring the knowledge and skills needed to work within (and to challenge) the arrival of commercial slaving and trading

systems over this period that included three different armed invasions from the north and south-east in sixty years. Then with the establishment of British local administration under Condominium from the late 1920s, we trace emerging layers of governmental, military and technical education run by colonial and then southern Sudanese and Sudanese agents over the following 40 years, over and through the formal independence of Sudan in 1955 and during the start of the Anya Nya rebel insurgency in the south.¹⁶

This approach scraps the current periodisation of education history in Sudan and South Sudan. Like many postcolonial African countries, most education literature in southern Sudan has focused on the arrival of mission education as the coming of education to the south, since the creation of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium colonial government in 1898 after the British re-invasion of Sudan. In our view, this is an artificial marker of the beginning of education history here, which foreshortens the precolonial, and which draws a marked (and colonial) line around what is considered education. Our much wider chronological approach allows us to see the development of (complex, competing) definitions of useful and powerful knowledge. We start to unpick South Sudanese debates on the evolving idea of what education is, and what it can do, both to its subject and to society, through time: what is a qualified modern leader? What do you need to know to navigate postcolonial states and insurgency against them?

Getting educated during the violent establishment of colonial authority

Ottoman, Mahdiyya, British, northern and southern Sudanese powers shifted rapidly over the 1830s to 1900s, building a network of trading and raiding forts, docks and waystations that cut into both old and new political communities in the south.¹⁷ These sultanates, trading empires, kingdoms and acephalous political communities cut across today's borders; from the 1900s to the 1920s they were 'pacified' in a series of military clashes and agreements between Belgian, French and British colonial forces, including village burning campaigns

¹⁶ A note on language: while the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was not formal British colonial rule but a specific form of shared administration, we refer to it here for convenience via the usual South Sudan shorthand of colonial rule. Secondly, before South Sudan's independence in 2011, southern Sudan was an administrative region, and so we will use southern Sudan as the descriptor for pre-2011 events and actors.

¹⁷ The Mahdiyya refers to the 1881-1899 revolutionary army and government of Muhammad Ahmad bin Abdullah, the Mahdi, and his Islamist followers who overthrew Ottoman administration in Sudan, which had been established in 1821. British and Egyptian forces then re-conquered the Sudan in 1898 and established joint Condominium rule.

and aerial bombardment.¹⁸ Imperial policy in this period was to administer as little as possible, extracting porters, soldiers and training a few drivers and technicians from the population, demanding tax in labour and cattle for the police stations and road infrastructure of militarised modern rule.¹⁹ The few missionary posts opened—at the White Nile trading ports of Gondokoro, Kaka and Holy Cross in the 1850s and 60s—mostly did not have schools, and the mission stations barely functioned until the mid-1920s.²⁰ But navigating this rapidly changing political landscape required all sorts of new education and expertise.

Various forms of military, linguistic and technical skills and knowledge were needed by African and foreign commercial and military authorities, and by their armies and private offices. Most visible throughout the 1800s is the work of translators and interpreters, trained and hired on between the authorities and traders of the Bari, Zande, and Shilluk and their Ottoman and British counterparts.²¹ More widely, specialists including hunters, iron-workers, medics and midwives, rainmakers and various spiritual authorities, had of course long genealogies of training and apprenticeship, and worked widely.²² Military and diplomatic skills were acquired by on the job training and apprenticeship, often for prisoners of war. In 1905 a ‘technical school’ for carpentry, reading and writing was set up in Wau. Its first 47 pupils were mostly Zande and ‘Jebelawi’ (Equatorial refugees from Mahdiyya and Condominium wars further south), and some ‘tokens of submission’ such as Rumba, the son of Zande chief Rikita and government hostage after Yambio’s defeat.²³ By 1911 the Catholic Brother Consolaro nicknamed it the “princes’ college” because the technical school had about eighteen such tribute sons as students. At around the same time, Rok Rec, the famous chief of the Aliam Toc section of the Agar Dinka, was captured at about eight years old by a British patrol in a retributive village-burning campaign on the River Naam, and was traded between

¹⁸ For a survey of this history, see Douglas H. Johnson, *South Sudan: A New History for a New Nation* (Ohio University Press, 2016), chapter 3.

¹⁹ Sanderson, “Educational Development in the Southern Sudan.”

²⁰ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion & Politics*, 59; Seri-Hersch, “Education in Colonial Sudan, 1900-1957,” 3.

²¹ See Cherry Leonardi, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community & State*. (London: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2013), 5-6; Leonardi, “South Sudanese Arabic and the Negotiation of the Local State, c. 1840-2011,” *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 3 (2013), 351-72.

²² Leonardi, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan*, 6; Poggo, “The Origins and Culture of Blacksmiths in Kuku Society of the Sudan, 1797–1955”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2006), 169-86.; Douglas H. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Leif O. Manger, “Traders, Farmers and Pastoralists: Economic Adaptations and Environmental Problems in the Southern Nuba Mountains of the Sudan,” in Douglas H. Johnson and David Anderson eds., *The Ecology Of Survival: Case studies from Northeast African History* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1988), 155-172.

²³ Comboni Archives Rome (hereafter CAR) D556/7, Santandrea, “The Story of Wau Mission Schools, 1095-1932,” 3-4.

various armed British and Sudanese commanders, through which he obtained work as a police interpreter and then prison sergeant in Wau in the first British administration systems in the 1920s.²⁴ Similar notes on early military education are scattered through colonial paperwork; Mohammed Murgan, originally from Bari lands near Juba, had obtained literacy and military experience as a ‘bulkamin’ in British armies in the 1910s and 1920s, becoming ‘quite enlightened’ in his wide reading; by 1955 he was a storekeeper and political agitator in Malakal.²⁵

This is the already existing educative context for the arrival of mission school systems from the 1920s onwards. These schools were begun at the same time as the expansion of local military training: by 1925 British officers were formally recruiting military forces locally, not just hiring ‘irregulars’.²⁶ In 1922 Wau’s technical school was competing against the “‘miserable’ army school’: the Bishop noting that ‘several pupils have deserted it to join ours’.²⁷ Histories of Sudanese education here have focused on the establishment of primary and secondary school institutions, but actually most of the schools set up were ‘bush’ (elementary village) schools.²⁸ These bush schools were generally co-educational and much more numerous. Politician Kosti Manibe remembers people of all ages, men and women and young children, attending bush schools, depending on their interest in literacy and their working time.²⁹ Bush schools were often far from mission stations, and some were not much more than vernacular literacy instruction; ‘If one passes from writing on the ground, that is when one is given a book and paper and a pencil.’³⁰ In some bush schools, though, local histories and geographies were taught, and these schools replicated quickly.³¹ Stanislaus Paysama, from southern Darfur and captured by slavers in around 1904, was freed to Wau where he obtained literacy in a bush school and then taught in turn in bush schools around Wau from 1921 to 1926.³² While there were only about 400 pupils in ‘formal’ schools by 1920, there was a much wider circuit of bush schooling.³³

²⁴ Beer, “Note on Chief Rok Rec (Bakhit Reihan) Senior Chief of the Aliam Toc Section of the Agar Dinka, Rumbek District.” South Sudan National Archives (hereafter SSNA) Torit District 67.

²⁵ Abdalla to Commandant of Police, Upper Nile Province, “Mohammed Murgan,” October 5, 1955. SSNA Upper Nile Province 67.B.3.

²⁶ Johnson, *South Sudan*, 108.

²⁷ Santandrea, “The Story of Wau Mission Schools, 1095-1932,” 9. CAR D556/7.

²⁸ Feeding only 22 boys’ and eight girls’ elementary schools, two boys’ intermediate schools and one boys’ trade school in southern Sudan by 1926. Sanderson, “Educational Development in the Southern Sudan,” 43.

²⁹ Kosti Manibe, interview in Juba, 24 June 2019.

³⁰ David Tombe, interview in Juba, 26 June 2019.

³¹ Fuli Boki Tombe Ga’le, *Free Southern Sudan*, 80.

³² Stanislaus Paysama, *Autobiography: How a Slave Became a Minister* (Khartoum, 1990), 48.

³³ Sanderson, “Education in the Southern Sudan,” 163.

The first primary schools were constructed in the 1920s within this much wider world of trade education and modern technical expertise—of waged interpreters, medical dressers, dockworkers and sawmill workers, truck mechanics—and much older Sudanese systems of medical education, blacksmithing, cattle herding and veterinary medicine. Students who fell out of classes at the Wau technical school went on to teach spoken English in army barracks.³⁴ Brendan Tuttle has recently biographed Solomon Col Adol, the first game ranger at Bor in 1941, who had an early education herding in cattle camps in eastern Bor before attending the mission school at Malek from 1926 and then teaching at the Bor bush school that opened in 1933, serving mostly families of retired soldiers and ex-slaves in the small town.³⁵ Janet Lo Liyong’s parents also received this early 1920s education; her mother Christina Kamala worked as a teacher after bush schooling in Yei, and her father became a medical assistant.³⁶

This colonial world of wealth in military, linguistic, administrative, and mechanical knowledge created colourful careers before the real growth of British colonial administration in the 1930s. Abuol Nhial, from the Parak clan of the Dinka Athoic section, went to school in the first years of the Malek and then Yoanyang missions, then left to work as a timekeeper in the administrative office in Malakal in 1934, where he allegedly embezzled funds and headed to Khartoum. He then left Sudan via Kassala into Abyssinia where he apparently worked for the Italians in Eritrea before enlisting with the King’s African Rifles. He was discharged in 1942, after which he volunteered as a gaffer (foreman) at Tel el Kebir in Egypt, probably in its massive wartime depots and workshops, and then joined the Royal Navy as an English, Italian, Swahili, Arabic and Dinka grade 2 interpreter, ending up in Palestine and the Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force. According to a British security document in the South Sudan National Archives tracing Abuol’s career, he was discharged in 1948, and headed back to Bor, ‘where he arrived broke wearing a fashionable lounge suit on 14/5/48.’³⁷

Getting education and defining authority in the late colonial period

Like many rural and peripheral areas of empire in Africa, colonial administration in southern

³⁴ Santandrea, “The Story of Wau Mission Schools, 1095-1932,” 13. CAR D556/7.

³⁵ Brendan Tuttle, “Solomon Col Adol (1909-1971), Game Ranger and Animal Collector in Bor, South Sudan,” *Archives of Natural History* 50, no. 1 (2023), 49-66.

³⁶ Janet lo Liyong, interview in Juba, 18 April 2022.

³⁷ Cumming to Governor, Upper Nile Province, Malakal, “Abuol Nhial - Repatriation Of,” May 28, 1948. SSNA Upper Nile Province 67.B.1.

Sudan was shoestring and highly militarised until the 1930s, aimed primarily at the extraction of sufficient revenues and food supplies from residents to sustain its control of the region. By the late 1930s British colonial policy in southern Sudan still sharply restricted access to English-language and post-primary education. But by the early 1940s the demand for cheap local administrative labour forced a reversal.³⁸ Attempts at increasing taxation from 1929 onwards, and organising the new authorities built to organise this tax in labour, cash and food, all needed literate imperial workers.

Histories of formal state schooling really focus on this period, with the opening of three intermediate schools fed by 33 boys' and 11 girls' elementary schools by 1933, still only a student body of around 3000 among roughly two million people in the south. Classroom buildings were only erected permanently in the late 1930s (and in the late 1940s in Bahr el Ghazal).³⁹ The first southern secondary school opened at Atar in 1948, eight years before the independence of Sudan from British rule.⁴⁰ Bush schools steadily grew; existing statistics record 263 bush schools attended by at least 7500 people in 1932, growing to over 11,500 bush school-goers by 1948. From interviews we know that these were taught by their own graduates in dozens of local languages and reflected their teachers' own didactic interests in literacy and local history.

Oral histories of this period are still possible with elderly graduates of these bush schools in South Sudan, and the narratives we collected show how engagement with these systems of formal modern education and literacy involved conversations over the purpose of this worldly, governmental education and what it could be for. These discussions shaped, and were shaped by, wider dynamics in southern Sudanese anti-colonial and political thought and organising over this period. Literacy and governmental knowledge from colonial employment and schooling provided the tools for an industry of petition- and letter-writing to try to bend and access colonial administrative power. In the South Sudan National Archives holdings, these letters are written and passed on by court clerks, port workers, soldiers and police at army stations, and mission groundskeepers from the 1930s onwards.⁴¹

³⁸ Johnson, *South Sudan*, 114.

³⁹ Sanderson, "Education in the Southern Sudan."

⁴⁰ Severino Fuli Boki Tombe Ga'le, *Shaping a Free Southern Sudan: Memoirs of our struggle, 1934-1985* (Limuru: Loa Catholic Parish Council, 2002), 117; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion & Politics in Southern Sudan 1899-1964*.

⁴¹ Cherry Leonardi and Chris Vaughan, "'We Are Oppressed and Our Only Way Is to Write to Higher Authority': The Politics of Claim and Complaint in the Peripheries of Condominium Sudan," in Emma Hunter ed., *Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Community in Africa: Dialogues between Past and Present* (Ohio

Education under early colonial rule therefore required a wide array of learning of various technologies of colonial governance alongside core southern Sudanese knowledge and skills. Edward Momo remembered being taken to learn from ‘some prominent people who were good at certain skills in the village’ as ‘part of education’, particularly enjoying learning from the blacksmith.⁴² Southern Sudan has many stories from the 1930s onwards about when different communities realised the possibilities of new skills. For example, Serafino Fuli’s autobiography of his life as a political activist recounts how when in 1934 a woman called Kide killed her husband in a fit of madness, her paternal uncle was put on trial in her place and sentenced to imprisonment; however, when the British District Commissioner came to Opari in January 1935 to review cases, one of Kide’s brothers Sosipatro Kenyi—who was studying at Okuru Intermediate School—appealed to him specifically in English (translated to the crowd by a colonial staff interpreter). The English DC immediately acquitted the uncle. In February, school enrolment boomed; an English-language administrative education was suddenly a valuable item to get in Opari.⁴³ It also depended what education was on offer, and whether it was what parents wanted their children to know; in Catholic-run primary schools, for example, the curriculum included extensive labour on digging ditches, making bricks and tiles, and timber-cutting, which extended and matched domestic education on how to make nets, dig fields, build granaries, build hunting traps and so on.⁴⁴ For lazy children, the school was a useful way of disciplining them into very similar knowledge.⁴⁵ In Yei, where colonial administrative systems had been relatively well-established since the 1920s, bush schools were actively built by residents in a similar model to the self-help systems among the Luo and Kikuyu, specifically to provide the useful tool of literacy.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, especially where colonial administration was still pursuing punitive armed campaigns into the late 1920s, this formal education in general was a waste of important time; in Nuer and Dinka communities, this necessitated a quota system where each chief had to provide twelve children at the District Commissioner’s order each school year.⁴⁷

This is fertile ground for histories not just of education and anti-colonial organising, but also of political thought. The process of navigating and choosing educational options in this

University Press, 2016), 74-100.

⁴² Edward Momo, interview in Juba, 21 June 2019.

⁴³ Fuli Boki Tombe Ga’le, *Free Southern Sudan*, 39-40.

⁴⁴ Fuli Boki Tombe Ga’le, 71.

⁴⁵ Edward Momo, interview in Juba, 21 June 2019.

⁴⁶ King, “Nationalism, Education and Imperialism in the Southern Sudan (1920-70),” in Mervyn Hiskett and Godfrey N. Brown eds., *Conflict and Harmony in Education in Tropical Africa* (London: Routledge, 1975), 299.

⁴⁷ King, 298.

increasingly wide terrain fostered a conversation about what (literary, administrative, religious, medical, military) skills might be required to master the modern future, and what new forms of authority were being created by these new skills. Ideas of how best to resist and mitigate the diverse impacts of conquest and colonialism shaped discussions about the purpose of different types of learning. David Tombe's parents' debate over what form of colonial education to give him summarises the spiritual, secular, and military pathways to authority opened up in this period of colonialism. David wanted to pursue a job in the colonial administration or agricultural project office, but his father wanted him to go to the military college to gain the skills needed to continue the family struggle against the successor to the Ottoman and Mahdiyya regimes.

My mother said they're letting me go to the [mission] seminary. My father said [no,] all these things are not correct. If I were to go to the military college, I could have gone, because he wanted me to be in the army. Then my mother said, "No, you don't have to go to the—this boy does not have to go to the army. Because it has lost so many children, what is the use of going to the army? Let this fellow go to the Kenisa [Ar. church]." Then my father said "No, there is nothing [there]... If he goes to the army, he will fight for the land, he will fight for the country. And that is what was started long ago, by here, by the ancestors." When they fought the Arabs [Ottoman and Mahdiyya invasions] in southern Bari, in Kelang, at a place called Tarlobah, my great-grandfather Lanyong [also known as Yekisu] was killed there in the battle, west of Karpeto River... there are war songs about him.⁴⁸

David's mother, however, eventually won this battle over the most useful (and safest) specialism, and so David Tombe went to the seminary for his education, becoming a Catholic priest.

This much wider array of educative pathways—including (where it was accessible) boys' formal, civil schooling in English, but also regional seminaries, military schools, technical training in sawmills, at river ports, in hospitals and clinics—also arrived at the same time as other colonial buildings and institutions, not least its prisons and taxations. For colonial administrators and some of their subjects, all of these various new colonial sites were useful primarily for discipline; in 1938 the Equatoria governor noted that 'the true object of education is to enable the community to adapt its whole life in the best possible way to meet

⁴⁸ David Tombe, interview in Juba, 26 June 2019.

the conditions under which that life has inevitably to be lived.’⁴⁹ Some parents therefore saw schools and prisons as roughly similar options for recalcitrant teens. In 1948 one Stephen Bilal wrote to the Equatoria governor asking for his ‘uneducated’ son Michael to be sent to Kober Prison in Khartoum, where ‘boys are trained well as prisoners but after several years he can come out an artisan who can maintain himself and respect people whom are higher and older than himself.’ Unfortunately for Stephen, he was told Kober was ‘already full and there is a long waiting list of young persons for admission,’ and that he should apprentice Michael ‘to a strong master’.⁵⁰ School administrative files in the archives in Juba record many teachers’ often violent punishments of students for infractions via beatings or detention; after strikes over teachers’ racism and a lack of food in 1960, several students were sentenced to multiple years imprisonment.⁵¹

The rise of school protests and strikes over poor conditions and the racist maltreatment of students in the 1940s and 50s must also be put within wider and longer histories of civil disobedience, including strikes and tax evasion, since the arrival of direct colonial administration from the 1900s.⁵² We have reconstructed a longer timeline of strikes and protests from the South Sudan National Archive and Comboni Mission archives, which has started to document a wider spread of strikes beyond well-known incidents at Rumbek Senior Secondary School in 1951 and across many schools in 1960-61.⁵³ With formal senior boys’ school education focused on gaining the skills for book-keeping and clerking for the colonial authority, it is not surprising that these tools were tested in waves of petitions, strikes and protests at elite schools like Rumbek. Less well documented are similar strikes at vocational and technical training centres. In 1943 ten young men from Isoke left Palotaka Teachers Training School on strike after sustained disciplinary problems and punishments that academic year—‘an apparently frivolous reason’, according to their teachers.⁵⁴ At Torit Technical School in July 1954, students organised against what they saw as the futility of their educational pathway: they ‘did not see any scope in the five years’ study done at the school since they were not automatically employed by the Government at the end of the

⁴⁹ Governor Equatoria to Secretary, CMS, Prefect Apostolic Juba and Vicar Apostolic, Juba, November 28, 1938. SSNA Torit District 30.E.1.

⁵⁰ Sadig Bilal to Governor Equatoria, “Directors Source Yubu Mission School Attached,” April 17, 1948; Daniell to Saddig Bilal, “Stephen Saddig Bilal’s Son,” April 22, 1948. Both SSNA Zande District 17.H.1.

⁵¹ Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples: Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan* (Duke University Press, 2021), 248.

⁵² See Kang, “Community Self-Determination in South Sudan”; Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*.

⁵³ See for example SSNA TD 17.A.1.1 on the 1951 strike at Rumbek. For this archival reconstruction work we are also grateful to Ellie Gosley, Cardiff University.

⁵⁴ Liuth, “Palotaka Teachers Training School: Visited 7th and 8th October 1943.” SSNA Torit District 17.B.1.

course and they did not go to Khartoum' for further study. On a visit of the Vicar Apostolic, a group of students asked him 'whom did the school belong to'; they petitioned the bishop to dismiss the headmaster, who had apparently been 'calling them pygmies and people of the bush'. The bishop refused, after which students began a sustained strike.⁵⁵ School education was one of the main places where people were brought into sustained close contact with the explicit racisms and exploitations of state authorities, and therefore where protest and resistance were articulated through the same modern means of petition, appeal, complaint and direct action.

Education systems within the Anya-Nya rebellion

Taking this wider view of education from the 1800s to the 1950s therefore highlights two main dynamics. Firstly, it provides a holistic view of the multitude of modern civil, technical and military educational options that grew under colonial rule, and which became part of family conversations (like David Tombe's) about children's future careers and leadership paths in this modern world. Here we can see changing ideas about what southern Sudanese leadership and authority was needed, and the skillsets it would require. Secondly, this wider view allows us to put schoolboy protests into context among a wide wave of resistance by a range of skilled and graduate workers in agricultural projects, the civil service, technical training sites and the military, not least at the Nzara Agricultural Extension site in 1954 and with the mutiny of Equatoria Corps soldiers at Torit in 1955. These strikes and uprisings were repeatedly squashed by civil and military means, but they are the start of southern Sudan's slip into war.

The Sudanese officials who inherited the levers of government when Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule ended in 1956 increasingly used counter-insurgency style military policing and collective punishment for these strikes and uprisings over the following decade, at the same time as paternalistic and often racist attempts to educate and (in their view) modernise southern citizens into their new nation. These processes—documented elsewhere in detail—created escalating disorder over the following decade.⁵⁶ This also created slippage between the

⁵⁵ Education Secretary VFM Juba, "Torit Technical School Strike." SSNA Torit District 17.B.1.

⁵⁶ See Øystein H. Rolandsen and Cherry Leonardi, "Discourses of Violence in the Transition from Colonialism to Independence in Southern Sudan, 1955–1960," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 4 (2014), 609-25; Øystein H. Rolandsen and Nicki Kindersley, "The Nasty War: Organised Violence during the Anya-Nya Insurgency in South Sudan, 1963-72," *The Journal of African History* 60, no. 1 (2019), 87-107.

categories of school student and rebel outlaw. In waves of school strikes across seminaries, primary and secondary schools over 1960 to 1963, students were detained for months and strike leaders sentenced to imprisonment for up to five years, and subjected to lashings and beatings.⁵⁷

These years are remembered—mostly in autobiographies or personal stories—as a time of crucial political education. By the early 1950s the process of Sudanisation (replacing colonial with Sudanese staff, mostly from the much more extensive education systems in the north) had begun to make national racial, social and religious hierarchies explicit and immediate. The late politician Clement Janda recalled the paternalism of new northern Sudanese teachers: ‘saying “we have come to help you people”—we said go back, we don’t want your help.’ Janda remembered the nationalisation of Christian mission education in the late 1950s also as a process of radicalisation. In December 1959 Loka school students, including Clement, returned from their vacation to find European mission teachers replaced with northern Sudanese teachers; this was swiftly followed by the Sudan military government changing the national day of rest to Friday, sparking the Sunday strikes in 1960.⁵⁸ The switch to education in Arabic from English was seen as a further undermining of the purpose of education as a tool of power—if Kenyi of Okaru (above) had been taught in Madi or Arabic he would not have been able to rescue his uncle from prison. Striking at schools was increasingly seen explicitly as anti-government action, and networks were built between schools; two weeks before the December 1962 exams at Nugent Intermediate School in Loka, Juba Commercial Secondary School students circulated a letter to all Loka students asking students to leave for Uganda to take up arms to liberate themselves from the northern ‘Arabs.’ Being a school prefect, Janda was arrested in these 1962 strikes after around three days of organised striking, which involved a scout system for spotting teachers, and students assembling in a defensive circle in the basketball ground in front of the chapel to confront the headmaster and the police. On the fourth day students were loaded into trucks, ostensibly to take them home; one of Janda’s schoolmates Jones Lukadi remembered how the truck driver took them straight to the police station in Yei, where fifteen students were arrested and taken straight to the prison.⁵⁹ Girls’ schools were also mobilising. Agnes Lokudu recalled swearing oaths of loyalty to the rebel movement on the Bible as part of waves of strikes over 1963 and

⁵⁷ Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*, 250-51.

⁵⁸ Clement Janda, interviewed in Arua, 5 April 2017.

⁵⁹ Jones Lukadi Yosepa, interviewed in Juba, 18 March 2020.

1964. She was arrested (while head girl) for leading a strike, but continued to distribute letters against the government given to her by southern teachers and scouts. Agnes escaped to Uganda with Margaret Nyuon in 1964.⁶⁰

The growing civil war therefore directly involved (and broke) the limited formal educational provisions in the south by the time the war began in earnest in 1963. With missionary teachers expelled from the country in 1962, state attacks on school children and graduates escalated over 1963-1965. Formal education was seen as a weapon of insurgency, and closing schools was therefore a counter-insurgency method.⁶¹ By 1963 regional armed groups started to organise under the collective name Anya-Nya, building an uprising that would only end with a peace deal in 1972. In most historical literature, formal educational institutions are understood to have either closed or been ‘removed’ to Khartoum by 1964-5, with most school students fleeing home or to Uganda or Congo. But dispensing with a false binary of informal versus formal education and an over-focus on school sites means we can see a much wider range of education that continues in this period, for both these dispersed students—whose educational journeys are only documented to date in a few autobiographies—and in bush schools within rebel-held territories. By 1973 the World Bank documented about 200 bush schools serving 25,000 children in Anya-Nya areas.⁶²

Students are therefore not a category of separate agents: here, the label describes a part-time or potential role and also acts as an honorific, to describe an individual’s potentiality for modern authority. The war forced many people not just into refugee camps but into lives on the road for the next eight years. After briefly studying at a relocated school in Khartoum, Joseph Abuk decided not to return after a school holiday at home in Juba, and instead joined an Anya-Nya camp before deciding to make a run for Uganda with four friends.⁶³ Kosti Manibe was two years into Rumbek Senior Secondary School when it closed, and was stuck in Lui until 1966, ‘totally lost in terms of what next’, until he managed to get a lift into Uganda from Anya-Nya soldiers travelling to get medical supplies.⁶⁴ Many graduates of bush schools, both men and women, from before and within the war, went on to both teach and rally others into action—including fighting or running supplies for the rebels. Agnes Lokudu

⁶⁰ Agnes Lokudu, interviewed in Juba, 17 April 2022.

⁶¹ Duany, Lorins, and Thomas, “Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan,” 11; Yosa Wawa, *The Southern Sudanese Pursuits of Self-Determination: Documents in Political History* (Kampala: Marianum Press, 2005), 230-31.

⁶² Duany, Lorins, and Thomas, “Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan,” 12.

⁶³ Joseph Abuk, interviewed in Juba, 23 June 2019.

⁶⁴ Kosti Manibe, interview in Juba, 24 June 2019.

wrote extensively about the southern political situation while at secondary school and then as a teacher in Uganda. Alongside studying, mostly in Ugandan refugee schools (including at Bombo, then-famous as a central refugee site for finding school places), students worked as scouts, supply-runners, fundraisers and recruiters. Some were recruited as soldiers, including through threats and abductions.⁶⁵ Sudan Government intelligence paperwork in the Juba archives records tracking students crossing into southern Sudan to fight in the school holidays. The first police post to fall to the rebel army was reportedly captured by schoolboys on the Ethiopian border.⁶⁶ Anya-Nya organisers and recruiters like David Dada, a former prison warden, Philip Yengeji Yangazi Loro, and Simon Jada, a soldier and Torit mutineer, visited schools across Uganda. Many students also ran to Congo and around sporadic schooling in camps organised supply lines into the south. While at school in Agoro in Uganda in 1969, Victor Wurda Tombe helped to provide salt and maize flour to visiting Anya-Nya fighters, taking wounded men to Kitgum hospital ('interfering with my studies'); by 1970 Victor was in Kampala for secondary school and ran medicine, supplies and visiting foreign agents north to Arua, Kaya and Morta, in coordination with Philip Yengeji at Arua.⁶⁷ Petrobus Sebit was in the second year of primary school in Ombasi (learning to write on the soil) when the war arrived, and after fleeing to Aba in Congo in 1964 he worked as a supply runner. '[The message leaders gave] was that there was gross injustice, and that therefore [the] people whose eyes were "open" or enlightened, had to go to the bush.'⁶⁸ Petrobus also helped to organise camp meetings where Anya-Nya politicians would give speeches and collect money and food.

This is where we can begin to reconstruct the organisation of the Anya-Nya territories bush schools. By 1966, some students who fled to Uganda and Congo were beginning to return to liberated areas to set up bush schools and teach in them. Ndole Ndoromo went to Congo in 1964 after Gulumbi elementary school was burned, but he returned to Yei in 1967 and started a school under Anya-Nya administration.⁶⁹ The war precipitated the idea of school education for some residents: Tom Ohia Joseph, born in Bor and growing up in Lopit near Torit, 'began to think about going to school' when his family cattle were stolen by the Anya-Nya, and

⁶⁵ Edward Momo, *Resilience of the Human Spirit: The Story of Edward Momo* (Kampala, 2015), 16.

⁶⁶ Mom Kou Nhial Arou, "Regional Devolution in the Southern Sudan, 1972-1981" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1982), 51-52; Scopas Poggo, "Ethnicity and Race in Modern Sudan," in Scopas Poggo ed., *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs, and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 96-99; Edward Thomas, *South Sudan: A Slow Liberation* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 78.

⁶⁷ Victor Wurda Lotombe, interviewed in Juba, 20 April 2022.

⁶⁸ Frazer Ayamba and Petrobus Sebit, interviewed in Arua, 8 April 2017.

⁶⁹ Ndole Ndoromo, interviewed in Juba, 23 June 2019.

attended Imegeje Primary School run by Anya-Nya teachers ‘who had been taught during the missionaries’ time’, although ‘they were not so fast in teaching.’⁷⁰ By early 1970, when Anya-Nya forces finally consolidated under Joseph Lagu’s leadership, the large rebel base at Owiny Ki Bul apparently had not just a primary school with curriculum supplies but visiting lecturers from Makerere University in Kampala teaching management studies and administration courses.⁷¹

Starting to reconstruct this history of education within a postcolonial civil war allows us to explore emerging ideas of what knowledge was needed for rebellion and for a post-liberation future. Interviewees reflected on what education people thought they needed to gain—in schools, in rebel camps, in refugee spaces—for different aspirations: to survive and live safely, or (for some) to become leaders in the near future. Several interviewees, like David Tombe above, remember their parents expecting sons to take up arms in a long familial tradition of armed resistance to colonialism, as family leaders and good men. A combination of some education and military experience became a clear pathway to leadership and authority: Edward Momo recalled how he wanted to join the Anya-Nya because he didn’t want to be seen as a coward, and also because he was ‘convinced beyond doubt that, if I joined the movement... we were going to become officers.’ These ideas were encouraged by Anya-Nya recruiters who told Edward—at that time, a graduate of elementary school—that ‘we want people like you who are educated. When you go there, you’ll be promoted, you’ll be the officers. And you’ll be driving, you know, in Jeeps and so forth.’ Instead, Edward’s mother and aunt gathered money to send him to Uganda to school, and Edward recalls deliberating over whether education ‘outside’, or experience ‘inside’, was more important.⁷² Talking about education gained and lost is thus a way to explore shifting ideas of what skills and knowledge are needed for new forms of authority.

Conclusion

This brief survey of a wide educative terrain emphasises the real possibilities of African modern educational histories beyond the school, within and across colonial and postcolonial conflicts and borders. We have tried not just to challenge the dominant definition of education

⁷⁰ Tom Ohia Joseph, interviewed in Juba, 21 June 2019.

⁷¹ David Ben-Uziel, *A Mossad Agent In Southern Sudan: 1969-1971. An Operation Log* (TevaHadvarim, 2017), 92-93.

⁷² Edward Momo, interview in Juba, 21 June 2019.

as formal schooling, but also to challenge the standard chronologies of modern (colonially-derived) education and to integrate a wider Ottoman-onwards world of knowledge systems.⁷³ Looking beyond what university students, for example, get up to in anti-colonial movements allows us to explore wider ideas of what education and powerful knowledge can help their owners both navigate and lead in violent, dangerous times and places. Here we have tried to demonstrate how tracing this history of diverse educational systems and useful knowledge can illustrate evolving ideas of what knowledge was (or was deemed) most potentially valuable, by young people and their parents and kin, for shaping anti-colonial wars, building new societies, and bringing personal and collective wealth and security.

Educational histories are also crucial in colonial and post-colonial contexts for exploring evolving class systems and forms of authority. Our case study illustrates how older and newer forms of education continue together to produce a diverse array of forms and standards of South Sudanese leadership—including prophets and practical spiritual authorities over land and water alongside new Christian catechists and priests-in-training, vets and medics using both vernacular and clinical knowledge and resources, military authorities with variously practical and formal training in generations of colonial and anti-colonial armies, and civil administrative assistants, interpreters and clerks using a mix of oral and written political skills. Modern education here has always entangled in military systems. This provides ways of looking at generational ideas of power and leadership, and supports new arguments for a more complex understanding of emerging class systems in colonial and postcolonial space.⁷⁴

Our study supports the argument for histories of education that can help us understand ‘power, colonialism, race relations, foreign policy, and environmental education’.⁷⁵ We follow Parimala Rao in pushing for a turn towards ordinary people’s perspectives on education as a response to mostly elite histories of intellectual life: here we have tried to demonstrate the wide possibilities of educational and intellectual histories that have been left unstudied in any depth.⁷⁶ We argue that histories of education can help to ground new scholarship on everyday intellectual history within people’s everyday lives, jobs and plans for changing futures. We see new directions in the history of education for a way towards

⁷³ Falb Kalisman, “The Historiography of Education in the Modern Middle East,” 4.

⁷⁴ For South Sudan, for example, see: D’Agoût, “Taming the Dominant Gun Class”; Joseph Diing Majok, “War, Migration and Work: Changing Social Relations in the South Sudan Borderlands”, Rift Valley Institute (2019); Nicki Kindersley and Joseph Diing Majok, “Class, Cash and Control in the South Sudan and Darfur Borderlands,” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 7 nos. 4-6 (2022), 283-306.

⁷⁵ Angulo and Schneider, “Between the Global and the Local,” 153.

⁷⁶ Rao, “The Historiography of Indian Education,” 21.

studying political thought in the everyday.

Figure 1: Wurda Tombe and General Emilio Tafeng's secretary at Morta, 1969. Reproduced with permissions from Wurda Tombe.

Interviews

Agnes Lokudu, interviewed in Juba, 17 April 2022

Clement Janda, interviewed in Arua, 5 April 2017

David Tombe, interview in Juba, 26 June 2019

Edward Momo, interview in Juba, 21 June 2019

Frazer Ayamba and Patrobus Sebit, interviewed in Arua, 8 April 2017

Janet lo Liyong, interview in Juba, 18 April 2022

Jones Lukadi Yosepa, interviewed in Juba, 18 March 2020

Joseph Abuk, interviewed in Juba, 23 June 2019

Kosti Manibe, interview in Juba, 24 June 2019

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