Arabization and Islamization in the Making of the Sudanese 'Postcolonial' State (1946-1964): Cultural Representations, Political Strategies and School Practices

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The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Sudan and South Sudan is an established fact, although the contours of "legitimate" ethnolinguistic categorizations have been disputed in the region since the early 20th century by administrators, missionaries, local leaders, intellectuals, politicians, social activists, anthropologists and linguists. Censuses and statistics have played a pivotal role in the construction of taxonomies of "Arab groups" subdivided along tribal lines, e.g. Jaʿālī, Juhayna, Shaygiyya, and so-called "non-Arab groups" defined by language, e.g. Nubian, Beja, Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Bari, Lotuko, Zande (Miller 2018). Beyond their historical plasticity and social relativeness, such categories and broader ones like "Arab" or "African" are politically sensitive. Indeed, they have contributed to ethnicize the wars plaguing Sudan since the middle of the 20th century (Johnson 2016).

Recent developments have again brought to the fore conflicting social identities and unequal access to political, economic and symbolic resources. These issues largely underpin Sudan's scission into two states in 2011, the civil war that broke out in South Sudan in 2013 and the ongoing conflicts and tensions in Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Red Sea states. They are also crucial in the revolutionary process that has unfolded in Sudan since December 2018, toppling the "salvation" *(ingādh)* regime in April 2019 (see Deshayes in this issue). Dynamics of power and ethnocultural belonging are not new in the region; they have shaped the construction of Sudan as a modern territory at least since the 19th century, be it through exogenous regimes (Ottoman-Egyptian rule 1820-1885; Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1899-1955) or endogenous polities (the Mahdist state 1885-1898; postcolonial Sudan 1956-2011). Yet the 2010s have stirred a sense of historical acceleration (Koselleck 2011) in the Sudans, which is not unrelated to the various Arab uprisings of 2011 (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen) and 2019 (Algeria, Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq). The overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir's thirty-year long authoritarian rule, the setting up of a mixed civilian-military council and the appointment of a transitional government under the economist Abdalla Hamdok have opened up opportunities for redefining political ideologies in Sudan. For certain Sudanese actors, this process entails rethinking the meaning of

categories such as "Arab," "Islamic," "African" and "Sudanese," as well as reaffirming or contesting connections between them (Jāmiʿ 2019).[1]

This article offers historical depth to this debate by examining how such (auto)identifications were formulated and used in another "accelerating time," namely the decolonization era. The transformation of Sudan from an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium into a postcolonial state was all but a linear, predetermined or complete process. Rather, the period stretching from the 1946 British decision to lead Sudan towards self-government through the 1956 proclamation of independence and until the 1964 popular uprising that ended Ibrahim Abboud's military regime was full of political hopes, doubts and disillusions (Seri-Hersch 2018: 45-63). An equally important aim of this article is to contribute to the study of concrete articulations between Arabization (*taʿrīb* in Arabic) and Islamization *(aslama)* in historically situated Sudanese contexts. Indeed, the two phenomena have been very often closely—but rather uncritically—associated in a wide array of academic texts referring either to the long-term historical process that has made Sudan into a largely Arabic-speaking and Muslim society in the modern era (MacMichael 1967 [1922]; Hasan 1967; Abd al-Rahim 1970; Grandin 1997) or to a specific set of Sudanese state policies meant to Arabize and Islamize Southern populations after 1956 (Nyombe 1997; Poggo 2002; Sharkey 2012). The taken-for-granted conflation between language, ethnicity and religion not only relies on long-lived "Orientalist" readings of Sudanese history (Spaulding & Kapteijns 1991); it has also influenced political and media discourses on Sudan, while strengthening the ideological tools of al-Bashir's "Islamist" regime from 1989 until 2019 (Abdelhay *et al*. 2011: 479-480; Salomon 2016).

Over the last twenty years, several sociolinguists, anthropologists and historians have engaged in empirically-based studies that unpack the enmeshment of linguistic practices, religious affiliations, state policies, economic processes and ethnic claims in colonial and postcolonial Sudan. These works significantly contribute to our understanding of Sudanese societies and politics because they denaturalize the relations between Arabic, Arabness and Islamness, demonstrating how social practices vary according to specific contexts and issues. For instance, it has been shown that Juba Arabic has been historically and is still used by non-Muslim Southern Sudanese people in South Sudan and Khartoum. This pidgincreole served not only as a *lingua franca* in certain multilingual areas and towns from the late 19th century

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[1]   See also "Ṣirāʿ ʿalā hawiyyat al-Sūdān," *Arabī Post,* 23 May 2019, <https://arabicpost.shorthandstories.com/sudan-islamic-liberal/index.html>; Sudania 24 TV, "Lughat al-ḍāḍ wa-l-thaqāfa wa-l-hawiyya wa-taḥaddī al-ʿawlama", *Ṣabāḥāt sūdāniyya,* 21 December 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7FPamoVB7E>.

onwards; it became the mother tongue of part of Juba's population from the 1940s and the marker of a Southern, non-Arab supratribal identity from the 1970s (Mahmud 1983; Leonardi 2013; Miller 2014; Manfredi & Tosco 2018). Other studies have highlighted the actual role of European and North American Christian missionaries in promoting Arabic varieties in Southern Sudan, although these same missions officially fought against the spread of Arabic—seen as an Islamization factor—by cultivating English and "indigenous" Southern Sudanese languages such as Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk (Miller 2009; Sharkey 2011). After independence in 1956, Arabization policies carried out by the successive Khartoum governments were unsuccessful in fostering a broadly shared Arab identity in Sudanese society; on the contrary, they triggered the development of "African" (implying culturally pluralistic) identities among populations in Southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and Darfur, even if Arabic as a spoken language progressed in these areas (Sharkey 2008). Ethnographic work has also shown that identification with Islam and the adoption of "Arab" practices among Lafofa people in the Nuba Mountains in the 1980s were part of economic strategies rather than strictly religious processes of conversion (Manger 2002).

The following study contributes to this scholarship in two ways: first, by reappraising the chronology of Arabization and Islamization policies in Southern Sudan, locating their inception in late colonial times rather than in the post-independence era. Second, it examines to what extent, how and why the Arabic language and the Islamic religion were enmeshed in cultural discourses, political strategies and school practices at the critical time of British imperial retreat and Northern Sudanese empowerment (1946-1964). In this regard, the attainment of independence in 1956 was not a clear-cut rupture, but rather one stage in the larger process of political and cultural "Northernization" at work from the 1940s. The analysis draws on Sudanese and British intellectual/scholarly writings, political speeches, administrative proceedings, educational plans and reports, schoolbooks for elementary teachers and Southern Sudanese press articles, coupled with a wealth of academic studies. It will bring to light a set of actors, dynamics and social experience that resulted in a strong conflation of language, ethnicity and religion in the making of "postcolonial" Sudan.

The Late Colonial Drive Towards an Arab and Islamic Sudan

During most of the colonial era (1899-1955), the British-dominated government of Sudan ruled separately the Northern and Southern parts of the country. This well-studied "Southern

Policy" (Abd al-Rahim 1966; Sanderson & Sanderson 1981; Collins 1983; Mayo 1994) was rooted in British attempts to prevent the spread of the North's predominantly Arabic and Islamic culture into the South, "protect" the Southerners from Northern slave traders and concentrate the government's limited financial resources in the North, which was perceived as more "civilized" than the South. The separation policy was formalized through three ordinances in 1922 and 1925 that considerably restricted the movement of goods and people between Northern and Southern Sudan. It also affected how the British authorities in Khartoum and Juba dealt with language and religion. Whereas Arabic was selected as the main administrative language in Northern Sudan, English was preferred for the South. This dichotomy was in part reproduced in the distinct educational systems that were established in the colonial era (Seri-Hersch 2017): Arabic and English were used as teaching languages in the Northern government school system, while local languages (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Bari, Lotuko, Zande) and English dominated the Southern missionary school system. The 1928 Rejaf Conference was a landmark in the history of linguistic policies in Southern Sudan, insofar as it selected "indigenous" languages (labelled as such from that time) as media of instruction rather than Arabic or English (Abdelhay *et al.* 2016).[2] Christian missionaries, who included British Anglicans, American Presbyterians and Italian Catholics, were allowed to develop their activities only in the South, being barred from proselytizing among the predominantly Muslim Northern Sudanese (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981).

The British policy of separate administration was abandoned in 1946, at a time of growing Anglo-Egyptian rivalries over the control of Sudan. By "reuniting" the Northern and Southern Sudan—two regions that had been formally integrated into the "Anglo-Egyptian Sudan" in 1899 but had hitherto never existed as one administrative unit—the British sought to coopt Northern Sudanese elites and weaken the Sudanese partisans of the "unity of the Nile valley" project, namely an Egyptian-Sudanese political union under Egyptian leadership. The British strategy to win over Northern Sudanese opinion against Britain's Egyptian ideological rival was twofold. First, British authorities in Khartoum and London officially defined Sudanese self-determination as their goal, stressing the ultimate aim of Sudanese independence. Second, they proceeded with the administrative and educational unification of Northern and Southern Sudan, answering an old Northern claim that had been voiced increasingly loudly since the early 1940s. The new institutions set up in 1948 reflected these policy changes: the Executive

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[2] Some Christian missionaries did use Arabic but in the Roman script, as was the case of the Catholic mission in Wau in 1929. That Arabic was different from both Juba Arabic and Northern Sudanese Arabic (MILLER 2009).

Council (EC) and the Legislative Assembly (LA) were meant to represent the whole country,[3] although their prerogatives were seriously limited by the British Governor-General, who appointed the EC and kept the right to veto the laws designed by the LA. In the same year, a Ministry of Education was created with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAlī Ṭāhā, a Northern Sudanese educator and Umma party-affiliated politician, as its first head. It was under his tenure as Minister of Education (1948-1953) that the "unification" of school curricula and educational systems in Sudan was launched (Seri-Hersch 2018: 56-61, 93-94).

In practice, unification did not entail the blending of existing Northern and Southern educational structures and methods. Rather, it meant the Northernization of Southern teaching via the introduction of the Arabic language and the adoption of Northern curricula and textbooks in Southern schools.[4] This is not surprising given the nature of the Sudanization process—namely the gradual replacement of British with Sudanese officials—, which was accelerated from 1946 onwards: the overwhelming majority of posts were taken up by Northern Sudanese men, as exemplified in 1954, when only 6 out of 800 Sudanized posts went to Southern Sudanese (Collins 2008: 65), although the Southerners represented one third of Sudan's total population of ca. 10 million people at the time.[5] Hence, the Arabic-speaking, Muslim elites that came to dominate state institutions sought to shape Sudan as an Arab and Islamic nation-state almost a decade before the attainment of political independence in 1956.

Arabizing and Islamizing the South

Several concrete measures were implemented to carry out the Arabization of Southern Sudanese people in the late colonial era. In August 1949, the EC passed a resolution defining Arabic as the vehicular language of Sudan (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 298). A few months later, ʿAlī Ṭāhā announced before the LA that Arabic as a main subject matter would be introduced in all schools in the South (Beshir 1968: 68). By 1954, Arabic was used as a teaching language in the 22 government elementary schools operating in the South (which were still fewer than the 62 mission schools) and as a subject matter in all types of

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[3] The LA was composed of 75 members: 10 nominated by the Governor-General, 52 Northerners (10 directly elected in Khartoum and Omdurman and 42 indirectly elected by Northern provincial electoral colleges), and 13 Southerners (nominated by the three Southern provincial councils). See COLLINS (2008: 58).

[4] The Republic of the Sudan, 1957, *This is Our Way to Build a Strong Nation: Education* (Khartoum: Information Centre of the Ministry of Social Affairs).

[5] For more details on educational gaps between the Northern and Southern Sudan, which had been broadened by the British "Southern Policy," and which partly account for Northern over-representation in the Sudanization process, see BESHIR (1969) and SERI-HERSCH (2017).

elementary, intermediate and secondary schools (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 304, 310). The entrance exam to Rumbek secondary school included an Arabic exam as from 1953 (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 310; Sandell 1982: 70).

The quick pace of Arabization owed much to the efforts of Sirr al-Khatm al-Khalīfa, the Province Education Officer of Equatoria Province in Juba (1950-1955), who was later appointed Chief Inspector (1956) and Assistant Director of Education in Southern Sudan (1957-1960), before serving as Prime Minister of Sudan (1964-1965) in the aftermath of the October Revolution that overthrew Abboud's military regime. In spite of some difficulties caused by the historical legacy of slavery, which tainted Northern-Southern relationships with arrogance and distrust,[6] Arabization policies made significant progress in the first half of the 1950s. This was also due to the fact that the missionary societies all accepted to cooperate with the Ministry of Education in introducing Arabic into the schools under their supervision (Sandell 1982: 67).[7] Indeed, the Ministry turned to a surprising variety of actors in order to implement Arabization in Southern Sudan. In 1952, some American Christian missionaries, who had previous experience in translating the Bible into Sudanese Arabic, were asked to prepare two simple textbooks to help teach Southern pupils colloquial Arabic. Northern Sudanese educators may have then envisaged written colloquial Arabic as a step towards learning standard Arabic, although this view was not undisputed among missionaries and Southern Sudanese students (Sharkey 2011: 42). Following another line of action, the Ministry of Education hired an Egyptian linguist from Cairo University, Khalīl Muḥammad ʿAsākir, to transcribe the main Southern Sudanese languages in the Arabic script. This operation was thought as a first step towards the spread of Arabic in the South. Readers in Dinka, Bari, Zande, Lotuko and Moro written in the Roman script were transliterated into Arabic (Abdelhay *et al.* 2015: 267). Yet ʿAsākir was confronted with two major obstacles, namely the difficulty to adapt the Arabic alphabet to sounds that did not exist in Arabic—a difficulty that had also arisen when transcribing Southern vernaculars in the Latin script—and the lack of teachers able to teach vernacular languages in that alphabet (al-Sayyid 1990: 55-56; Sharkey 2008: 34).

Arabization policies largely benefited from the resources of the state-sponsored Publications Bureau in Juba (founded in 1948), whose Arabic Section was set up in 1950 under the supervision of ʿAwaḍ Sātī, a teacher who was at the time the Chief Editor of the

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[6] As recalled by al-Khalīfa himself in a 1981 interview with the scholar Liza Sandell (Sandell 1982: 66).
[7] See also Ministry of Education, Sudan, 1950, *Proposals for the Expansion and Improvement of the Educational System in the Southern Provinces, 1951-56* (Khartoum: McCorquodale & Co).

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Publications Bureau in Khartoum and would later be appointed Director of Education (1954-1956) before becoming the first Sudanese ambassador in the United Kingdom in June 1956. The Arabic Section in Juba published Arabic readers, textbooks in Arabic (some of which were translated works), a weekly magazine called *Sambala* after a village near Juba, as well as an illustrated Arabic encyclopedia (Cookson *et al.* 1964: 196; Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 336; ʿAlī Ṭāhā 2004: 233). Among the 24 textbooks published by the Juba Bureau during the 1956-1957 school year, 19 were in Arabic. Four were in English and one in Moro. Their printed quantity ranged from 50 to 2,550 copies, reaching much higher numbers in the case of two Arabic books printed by the Khartoum Bureau (15,900 and 17,000 copies), which helped the Juba Bureau when most of the team temporarily relocated in the capital (August 1955-September 1956) because of the eruption of the civil war in the South.[8]

The Northernization of Southern education was taken a step further with the nationalization of missionary and private schools in 1957, one year after independence. Northern Sudanese civil servants replaced missionaries as heads of elementary schools, introducing state curricula as early as 1958 in the Upper Nile province, later in more distant Equatoria (Seri-Hersch 2017). Amidst the first Sudanese civil war (1955-1972), two educational models coexisted—or rather strove to survive—in Southern Sudan until the mid-1970s. Some schools, notably those in Anyanya-controlled areas, continued using vernacular languages and English as teaching media while teaching Arabic as a subject. Other schools conformed to governmental directives, offering a totally Arabized curriculum and relegating English to a mere subject. The state model prevailed over time: from 1966 onwards, no government school used Southern "indigenous" languages as media of instruction anymore. Hence, Khartoum's Northern Sudanese elites succeeded in imposing Arabic as a teaching language in numerous schools, especially in Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal provinces (Sandell 1982: 79-80).[9]

Islamization measures were undertaken as soon as the Southern Policy was abrogated. After travel restrictions between the two regions were lifted in 1947, many Southerners sought to work in the North; they were often forced to convert to Islam to find a job (ʿAlī Ṭāhā 2004: 243). The decade preceding independence witnessed a significant flow of Northern merchants into the South, where Quranic schools and mosques were quickly opened

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[8] Ministry of Education, Sudan, 1958, *Annual Report, 1956-57* (Khartoum: n.p.): 67-68.

[9] The 1964 October Revolution, which was mainly led by Northern protagonists, initially offered some hopes for Northern-Southern reconciliation; the al-Khalīfa government included two Southern representatives, among whom Clement Mboro, who was appointed Minister of Interior (BERRIDGE 2015: 169-171). Yet the return to parliamentary politics (1964-1969) did not imply any significant change in the state's Arabization policies in Southern Sudan.

(Nyombe 1997: 107). Despite a 1952 law limiting religious education to pupils that had been officially registered as Christians or Muslims, it was found that some government schools in the South automatically taught the Islamic religion to "animist" pupils (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 327; Aḥmad 1983: 23). At the same time, a virulent anti-missionary campaign was voiced by Northern Sudanese politicians and the Arabic-speaking press in Khartoum. In a speech at the LA in March 1950, Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb (Umma) asserted that Christian missionaries spread a hostile vision of Islam and stirred feelings of hate between Northerners and Southerners, working against Sudanese unification. He enjoined the Minister of Education to stop cooperating with them in the South (ʿAlī Ṭāhā 2004: 242-243). Returning from a trip to Southern Sudan, Northern journalists wrote newspaper pieces containing similar accusations against Christian missionaries. In January 1953, ʿAlī Ṭāhā decided to inspect all schoolbooks and materials "used, seen or read" by pupils in missionary schools in order to check their contents (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 328).[10]

The Islamization of Sudanese society and state was also pursued by political and legal means. The Sudanese declaration of independence (January 1st, 1956) mentioned Arabic as the sole official language and Islam as the state religion (Sharkey 2008: 34-35). In September 1956, the Umma-People's Democratic Party coalition government appointed a committee to draft a new Constitution, which was to replace the "secular" temporary Constitution derived from the 1953 Self-Government Statute (Bin Matt 2006: 6). Two months later, the Chief Judge *(qāḍī)* of Sudan, Ḥasan Muddathir, addressed a memorandum to the Constituent Assembly, in which he recommended the adoption of an Islamic Constitution:

> In an Islamic country like the Sudan, the social organization of which has been built upon Arab customs and Islamic ways and of which the majority are Moslems, it is essential that the general principles of the Constitution of such a country should be derived from the principles of Islam (Deng 1995: 518, n. 4).

At the same time, the Umma party and the Khatmiyya order issued a joint statement on the necessity of making Sudan into an Islamic parliamentary republic, with the *sharīʿa* as its exclusive source of legislation. Yet the political vision of an Islamic state, which would be further elaborated by Sudanese "Islamists" under the leadership of Hasan al-Turabi from the 1960s up to the 1990s (Berridge 2017), did not go beyond rhetoric at this stage: the

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[10] The hostility of Northern Sudanese elites towards Christian missionaries was not new (KING 1975: 300), but it was expressed more vigorously after the country's unification. The limited human and financial resources of the Ministry of Education explain the ongoing collaboration between the state and missionaries in the South (SANDERSON & SANDERSON 1981: 298-299), until all Christian missionaries were expelled from Sudan in 1964.

constitutional process was brutally interrupted by the military coup of General Ibrahim Abboud in November 1958 (Fluehr-Lobban 1990: 617).[11]

Bringing important nuances to the existing literature (Nyombe 1997; Poggo 2002; Sharkey 2012), the above development demonstrates that Arabization and Islamization policies began to be implemented as early as one decade before the Abboud era (1958-1964), when Sudan was still under British rule and amid many uncertainties about its political future. Indeed, the unification of the North and the South in 1947 had not meant the end of the ideological struggle between Sudanese independentists and unionists, supported by their respective British and Egyptian allies. The 1952 revolution by the Free Officers in Egypt brought to power a regime that for the first time recognized the Sudanese right to self-determination, opening the way to a new Anglo-Egyptian agreement (1953) on Sudanese self-government and the grant of self-determination after a three-year transitional period. Yet, until 1955, no one knew whether Sudan would become an independent state or a mere province within a broader Egyptian-Sudanese polity; perhaps ironically, the pro-unionist al-Azharī government eventually opted for Sudanese full independence in March 1955.[12] In the following sections, we explore how Arabization and Islamization were specifically articulated through discourses and practices at that time of British disengagement and Northern Sudanese takeover.

Cultural Representations: The Convergence of Northern Sudanese and Orientalist Discourses

Various social actors living in Sudan in the 1940s and 1950s shared a similar vision of the Arabic language and the Islamic religion as two close-knit elements. The connection was strong to the point that it entailed a seemingly mechanical or immediate association between the processes of Arabization and Islamization in political speeches and intellectual writings. A few examples will be developed to show that Northern Sudanese and Orientalist (mainly British) discourses often converged in this regard. One year after its creation in 1938, the Graduates Congress, which had been inspired by the Indian National Congress and served as an intellectual and political forum for educated Sudanese (Niblock 1987: 187), addressed a

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[11] The first Sudanese "permanent" Constitution was promulgated one year after the Addis Ababa Agreement (1973) and remained in force until the popular uprising that overthrew President Jaafar Nimeiry (1985).
[12] For a fuller discussion, see ABD AL-RAHIM (1969: 221-223) and HANES (1995: 166-167).

"Note on Education" to the (British) Sudan Government. In its general educational recommendations, the Congress wrote the following:

> In numerous aspects of our life we have much in common with the Arab countries of Islamic Orient [*sic*] which is due to our akin descent. We therefore consider that education in this country should take an Islamic Oriental character and not a pagan African one, or in other words that the Arabic Language and Religious Instructions should receive the greatest possible care in all stages of education (Beshir 1969: 237).

The almost ontological connection between Arabic and Islam was even more blatantly stated by Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb, who was an engineer, a lawyer and a nationalist activist before joining the Umma party in 1953. In a book entitled *Al-ḥaraka al-fikriyya fī al-Sūdān: ilā ayna yajibu an tattajiha?* ("The Intellectual Movement in Sudan: In What Direction Does it Have to Go?"), published in 1941, he wrote:

> In every place where Islam spread, Arabic literature and Arabic culture inevitably spread too. So did the Book of God the Bountiful, the Sunna of God's Messenger and the Noble Tradition, all these in the Arabic language. […] Sudan's fate was that the Arabic language spread in its quarters first to propagate Islam among its people, second because Arab blood is dominant among its inhabitants. […] The influence of the Islamic religion and the Arab culture in this country is most visible in the works of men of letters from the previous generation (Maḥjūb 1941: 15-16).

In Maḥjūb's outlook, there was a bidirectional interaction between Islamization and Arabization: one dynamic had historically fed the other and vice-versa, until the two were inextricably linked in the modern era.[13] Such an enmeshment was also present in the conference that ʿAwaḍ Sātī, then the Sudanese ambassador in London, gave to the Royal Empire Society on the topic of education in Sudan.[14]

Interestingly, the conflation of Arabness and Islamness was also common in the writings of British administrators, missionaries and academics who had lived in Sudan in the Condominium era. It was thus shared beyond the colonial divide. On the "orientalist" side (Spaulding & Kapteijns 1991), the foundations of such a discourse were laid by the British administrator Harold A. MacMichael, who served in the Sudan Political Service (1905-1934, as Civil Secretary 1925-1934) before obtaining high positions elsewhere in the British Empire: he was appointed Governor of Tanganyika (1934-1938), High Commissioner in Palestine (1938-1944), and Special Representative of the British Government in Malaya (1945).[15] First published in 1922, his influential book *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan* (MacMichael 1967) put at the center of the stage the medieval Islamic invasions that had

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[13] On Maḥjūb's pan-Arabist linguistic ideology in the 1950s and 1960s, see ABDELHAY ET AL. (2011: 474-477).

[14] SATTI A., 1957, "Education in the Sudan: A Talk Given by His Excellency Sayed Awad Satti, Sudanese Ambassador in London, to the Jersey Branch of the Royal Empire Society on Friday, 11th January, 1957," Durham University Library, Sudan Archive, SAD 658/4/20-33, UK.

[15] Durham University Library, n.d., "Harold Alfred MacMichael," Durham University Library Special Collections Catalogue, <http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ark/32150_s1vd66vz949.xml>.

brought to Sudan a myriad of "Arab tribes." MacMichael offered a racial reading of (predominantly Northern) Sudanese history based on tribal genealogies and, to a lesser degree, linguistic features. One of the enduring legacies of his writings was the assumption that two idealized racial types, Arab and non-Arab, had interacted over the centuries to produce modern Sudanese society. But the Arabs' adherence to Islam gave the latter "moral ascendancy over the more backward Sudanese" (MacMichael 1934, quoted in Spaulding & Kapteijns 1991: 143).

As he headed the Church Missionary Society in Sudan in the 1940s, John S. Trimingham wrote a book that echoed MacMichael's racial interpretation of Sudanese history. However, the protestant missionary elaborated more fully on the connection between Arabization and Islamization: according to him, the two processes had not only gone hand in hand from medieval times until the 20th century; they totally merged in the cultural changes that were ongoing in the White Nile regions and the Nuba Mountains: "The official tendency to regard these as two processes is misleading. It is a cultural process and every pagan area that becomes permanently arabicized becomes permanently islamized" (Trimingham 1949: 245 n. 1). Yet Trimingham simultaneously noticed a wide array of different social configurations in the Nuba Mountains. Whereas certain groups such as Nuba populations in North Kordofan had been completely Arabized without being Islamized, others were perceived as "semi-Islamized" without being Arabized. Such was the case of people living in the hills around the towns of Dilling, Kadugli, Talodi, Dalami and Rashad (*ibid.*: 245-246). These conclusions resonated with the findings of the Galicia-born British anthropologist Siegfried Nadel, who had been approached by the British authorities to conduct fieldwork in the Nuba Mountains in 1938-1941 (Nadel 1947).

Dissociating Arabness and Islamness as a Political Strategy

In spite of these dominant cultural representations, Arabness and Islamness were sometimes overtly dissociated by Northern Sudanese, Egyptian and British public figures. Disconnecting the Arabic language from Islam usually served political strategies or educational agendas. For instance, at the conference that brought together 6 British officials, 17 Southern personalities and 5 Northern politicians in Juba (12-13 June 1947) to discuss Sudanese unification, the judge—and later deputy—Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shingeitī defended the Arabization of Southern education on practical and economic grounds:

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[He] felt that the available teachers should be equally distributed between North and South, and even more generously to the South to help them catch up. […] [He] thought that [a single education policy] meant firstly that the standards of equivalent schools should be roughly equal, and secondly that a boy leaving a Southern Intermediate School should be able to go straight to a Northern Secondary School.[16]

Two years and a half later, the Minister of Education ʿAlī Ṭāhā developed similar arguments to try and convince the LA 13 Southern deputies and British officials posted in Southern Sudan (most of whom were reluctant to unification with the North) to adhere to Arabization policies. After a six-week tour in the South, during which he had visited government and missionary schools, met Southern deputies and tribal chiefs, and spoken with British and Sudanese officials, ʿAlī Ṭāhā gave a speech at the LA in November 1949. He insisted on the necessity of promoting one national language understood by all the Sudanese, stressing that only Arabic could fulfill this function. He presented the Arabization policy as an opportunity offered to all young Sudanese, boys and girls, to learn "the general/public language of the country" *(lughat al-bilād al-ʿāmma)*. Knowing how to speak, read and write in Arabic provided crucial access to the job market in both the public and the private sectors (Beshir 1968: 68; ʿAlī Ṭāhā 2004: 223, 227). Defining the mastering of Arabic primarily as a professional skill, ʿAlī Ṭāhā also attempted to reassure his interlocutors about the fate of Southern local languages. He expressed the Ministry's commitment to pursue the teaching of vernacular languages in the lower school grades provided that they would be written in the Arabic script (al-Sayyid 1990: 55).[17] This laid the ground for hiring the Egyptian linguist ʿAsākir a few years afterwards.

As the Arabization of Southern education was well under way, an international commission mandated by the Sudanese government in November 1954 to enquire on secondary education provided the Ministry's policy with additional expert legitimacy. The commission was chaired by Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain, Secretary at the Indian Ministry of Education. Its members included L. E. Charlesworth (Headmistress of Sutton High School for Girls in Britain), Muḥammad Farīd Abū Ḥadīd (Advisor to the Egyptian Ministry of Education in Cairo), Charles R. Morris (Vice-Chancellor, University of Leeds, Britain), ʿAbd al ʿAzīz al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm (Director-General of Egyptian Primary Education and Professor of

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[16] "Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan. June 1947," *Gurtong: Bringing South Sudanese Together*, 28 February 2006, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/2205/Juba-Conference-1947.aspx>: 24.

[17] The great importance attributed to the script, both in this case (Southern languages in the Arabic script) and at the Rejaf Language Conference in 1928 (which authorized the use of Arabic in Southern Sudan only in the Roman script), testifies to the highly ideological nature of alphabetical choices, which often prevailed over practical considerations.

Education, University of Ain Shams, Egypt), W. Abbott and L. C. Wilcher (Principal, University College of Khartoum).[18] After meeting in Sudan in January and February 1955, the commission prepared a 150-page report, in which its members strongly recommended the use of Arabic as a teaching language in all Sudanese schools and at all school levels. There was no reference to Islam or Arabic culture. Rather, a series of didactic and practical arguments were put forward to support Arabization in the South. A first general claim was that pupils should learn in their own language, rather than in English. The commission noted that a *lingua franca* had developed "long ago" in the South, to the effect that a "sort of corrupt Arabic"[19] was already in use there.[20] It also stressed that Arabic-speaking teachers from the North would be more skilled to teach Arabic to Southern pupils than Italian missionaries teaching them English (a common practice in Comboni schools). Moreover, various textbooks and teaching materials in Arabic already existed, which was not the case for Southern vernaculars. The Indian, British and Egyptian educators, none of whom knew any Southern language (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 337; Collins 1983: 248), discarded them by affirming that "the vocabularies of these languages are reported to be very limited, so much so that most of them do not have more than about 300 words".[21] Finally, they emphasized the need of the Southerners to communicate with their Northern compatriots and get jobs in a country where Arabic was the national official language,[22] implicitly repeating ʿAlī Ṭāhā's main argument.

Until the early 1950s, very few Southern Sudanese openly associated Arabization with an Islamizing project. Southern leaders expressing themselves in the political arena seemed to view the Arabization of Southern education rather favourably, even if some voiced some concern. At the Juba Conference in 1947, Buth Diu, a local government official who would later cofound the Southern Party in 1951-1952, called for the quick introduction of Arabic into Southern schools so that the Southerners could "catch up" with the North. The pastor Andrea Apaya did not oppose the introduction of Arabic but expressed doubts about the ability of elementary boys to assimilate English and Arabic, two "difficult" languages. The only Southern participant that raised the religious issue was Chief Lolik Lado, although

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[18] The Republic of the Sudan, 1957, *Report of the International Commission on Secondary Education in the Sudan, appointed by the Sudan Government, February 1955* (Khartoum: Publications Bureau): Foreword.

[19] This pejorative expression probably referred to Juba Arabic, which linguists have defined as a pidgincreole rather than as an Arabic variety (Manfredi & Tosco 2018).

[20] The Republic of the Sudan, 1957, *Report of the International Commission on Secondary Education in the Sudan, appointed by the Sudan Government, February 1955, op. cit.*: 51.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*: 51-52.

he did not specifically mention Islam; finding that Catholics and Protestants "did not readily co-operate," he feared that the introduction of Arabic would add "a new complication".[23]

Debates at the LA in 1949-1950 reflect more divided Southern positions on Arabization. The deputy Stanislaus Abdalla Paysama, who had cofounded the Southern Sudan Welfare Committee in 1946 and would later work with Buth Diu to establish the Southern Party (Kuyok 2015), supported the learning of Arabic by Southern people, stressing the necessary collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Christian missions to find suitable teachers. Siricio Iro, who had served as an administrator *(sub-mamur)* in several Southern districts in the second half of the 1940s *(ibid.),* voiced concern about the professional future of Southern officials who did not master the Arabic language. Buth Diu's opinion had become ambivalent compared to his position back in 1947. On the one hand, he stressed the historical role of Arabic as a *lingua franca* in the South and the interest of the Southerners in mastering the dominant language of Sudanese politics and economy. On the other hand, he mentioned the fears of some of his colleagues about the possible vanishing of local languages and an upcoming confrontation with Muslim proselytizing teachers sent from Northern Sudan (ʿAlī Ṭāhā 2004: 228).[24] Hence, the Southern deputies did not formulate a collective opposition to the Arabization of Southern education (Collins 1983: 437), even if some began to link it with Islamization.

School Practices at the Time of Educational Northernization

As Sudan was moving from an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium towards an independent state, there was an interesting discrepancy between the "profession-oriented" discourse of Northern Sudanese and foreign educators, who tended to dissociate the Arabic language from Islam, and the actual contents of teaching materials and school curricula. The examples discussed below pertain to boys' elementary education: this level affected the overwhelming majority among the small proportion of Sudanese children and youth receiving any formal education between 1946 and 1964. Despite the rapid expansion of the state school system from 1948 onwards (Seri-Hersch 2017), in 1961, the 335,089 elementary pupils represented only 24,4 % of all Sudanese children of elementary school age. Still, this school population constituted

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[23] "Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan. June 1947," *op. cit.*: 24.
[24] ʿAlī Ṭāhā relies on the proceedings of the First Legislative Assembly, Second Session, n° 10, 12 November 1950, which are conserved at the Sudanese National Records Office (NRO) in Khartoum. Diu certainly referred to Juba Arabic when speaking about the South's *lingua franca*.

80,5 % of the Sudanese population enrolled in any kind of schooling from kindergarten to higher education. Boys were 2,5 as numerous as girls in elementary education.[25]

Among the 200 schoolbooks produced by Sudan's Institute of Education in Bakht er Ruda between 1939 and 1955 (Seri-Hersch 2018: 102-103), history and geography books for elementary teachers and pupils (7-10 years old) combined the use of the Arabic language with an Islamic perspective on the world. The different actors of the educational process (textbook authors, teachers and pupils) were invariably presumed to be Muslim in the text of the three history handbooks jointly produced by British and Northern Sudanese educators between 1948 and 1950, no matter if they dealt with a "universal" history of human inventions and techniques (Shuʿbat al-Tārīkh bi-Bakht al-Ruḍā 1970), stories from various Islamic and non-Islamic lands in medieval and modern times (Haywood & Ṣāliḥ 1950), or Sudanese history (Haywood & Ṣāliḥ 1958). For instance, the stated goal of a lesson on the Muslim caliph Abu Bakr was to show third-grade pupils that "the death of the Prophet (God bless him) was a woeful tragedy meant to test the people's faith in Islam"; most of them had been successful "thanks to God" (Haywood & Ṣāliḥ 1950: 45). In relation to the Crusades, the same textbook referred to the Muslim pilgrimage *(hajj)* as a shared practice between the orator (the teacher) and his audience (the pupils):

> The cause of the war [between Muslims and Christians] is that the land that is holy for Christians, to which they go on pilgrimage in the same way as we make our pilgrimage to Mecca, was conquered and ruled by Muslims (*ibid.:* 96).

It is well attested that elementary teachers working in the government school system were Sudanese—rather than British, Egyptian or Syrian nationals—throughout the colonial era (Seri-Hersch 2018: 126). But it is equally clear that after the educational unification between the North and the South, not all of them were Muslims, nor native Arabic speakers, even if Muslim teachers largely predominated in the elementary sector.[26]

Third-grade geography teaching also targeted an Arabic-speaking and Muslim audience of Sudanese boys. The course had first been devised in 1940-1941, before the educational unification of the country. It consisted of nine imaginary visits to families living in various parts of Sudan. The Northern Sudanese pupils were taken on a long journey that started in Khartoum. Only one visit occurred in Southern Sudan, to a Zande family in Yambio

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[25] Ministry of Education, Sudan, 1962, *Educational Statistics: Academic Year 1961/1962* (Khartoum: Publications Bureau): 10.

[26] In 1955-1956, there were 458 elementary schools in Northern Sudan and only 44 in the South (Ministry of Education, Sudan, 1956, "Annual Report: from July 1955 to June 1956," Durham University Library, UK: 9). In the same year, the first population census of Sudan recorded that 39 % of the Sudanese spoke Arabic as their mother tongue and that an additional 12 % were also able to speak it, determining a total of 51 % Arabic-speaking Sudanese (AGUDA 1973: 177 n. 1).

(Equatoria). Differences between the pupils' culture, presumed to be Arab and Islamic, and the Zande culture, were emphasized. The young Zande boy Mongu Zamberi and his relatives spoke an unknown language, which the teacher offered to "translate" to his pupils.[27] They bore few clothes and engaged in strange funerary practices. The geography text reiterated the non-Muslim identity of Mongu's family to explain why "they" liked to bury their relatives near the house and made offerings to their ancestors' spirits.[28] After the abandonment of the Southern policy, this course, which was edited in Arabic as a book as early as 1941, was extended to all Sudanese elementary schools. Published in 1957, a revised version replaced the initial cultural distance with a frontal depreciation of Zande culture. The teacher was supposed to tell his pupils:

> Obviously, you cannot understand anything of what the Zande talk about, but they can communicate with you in a faulty Arabic *(lugha ʿarabiyya rakīka)*. We hope that they will soon improve so that they are able to speak with you in correct Arabic *(ʿarabiyya salīma)*" (Wizārat al-Tarbiya wa-l-Taʿlīm 1969: 119).

The idea that non-Arabic speaking Sudanese people should learn Arabic, and not the other way around, underlay the set of Arabization policies implemented from 1949 onwards. This program of cultural homogenization, which appeared to be widely shared among riverine Northern Sudanese elites (Sanderson & Sanderson 1981: 293, 297; Beasley 1992: 388),[29] also included religion. In the revised geography schoolbook, which was reprinted in 1961 and 1969, a predictive sentence was added on the expected disappearance of Zande funeral rituals "thanks to the diffusion of education and the spread of the Christian and Muslim religions" (Wizārat al-Tarbiya wa-l-Taʿlīm 1969: 123).[30]

The growing importance of the Islamic religion as a subject matter in the elementary curriculum also reflects the state's Islamization policies. In 1951, "Koran and Religion" was the third most studied subject after "Arabic" and "Arithmetic" (Table 1).

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF WEEKLY PERIODS ALLOTTED TO THE THREE MAJOR SUBJECTS IN SUDANESE BOYS' ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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[27] Sudan Government Education Department, 1940, "Ways of Living in the Sudan: An Introduction to the Geography of the Sudan for Elementary Schools," Durham University Library, Sudan Archive, SAD 666/5/1-114, UK: 54.

[28] *Ibid.*: 55.

[29] One notable exception was ʿAbd al-Khāliq Maḥjūb, the Secretary of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) from 1949 until 1971, who advocated the free development of all Sudanese languages and cultures, condemning the imposition of Arabic on minorities (ʿALĪ ṬĀHĀ 2004: 226-227). Regarding the SCP's flexible attitude towards Islam and Christianity, see ISMAEL (2012: 19, 22-23).

[30] The contribution of Christian missions to "civilizing" efforts in Southern Sudan was recognized despite widespread Northern Sudanese hostility towards missionaries in the 1950s and 1960s.

Subject	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Arabic	6	8	8	6
Arithmetic	5	6	6	6
Koran and Religion	**4**	**5**	**4**	**4**
Weekly periods (all subjects)	20	29	30	31
Percentage of religious studies	20 %	17 %	13 %	13 %

Source: Ministry of Education, Sudan, 1951, *Handbook to Elementary Education for Boys' Schools and Boys' Clubs in the Sudan,* London: Longmans, Green & Co: 3.

In 1965, the Minister of Education Al-Sayyid Badawī Muṣṭafā decided to increase the time devoted to the study of Islam at all school levels. Each of the fourth elementary grades henceforth included 6 weekly periods for religion (Al-Amīn 2007: 164-167). The connection between language and religion was also reinforced through private initiatives, such as the Arabic literacy campaigns organized in Omdurman in the late 1940s and early 1950s by the Sudanese branch of the Muslim Brothers, which especially targeted Southern converts to Islam (Berridge 2019: 592).

Southern Sudanese Experience and the Conflation of Language, Ethnicity and Religion

In the 1940s and early 1950s, Sudanese and foreign discourses on the link between Arabic and Islam were not univocal, even among Southern Sudanese leaders. However, Southern views became much more critical after experimenting fifteen years of Arabization and Islamization policies, which by 1964 resulted in the conflation of language, ethnicity and religion. Southern Sudanese wrote about their experience in *Voice of Southern Sudan,* the London-based newsletter of the Sudan African National Union (SANU), a political party established in Kampala (Uganda) in 1962 that advocated Southern autonomy in a Sudanese federal state. For instance, a student explained how conversion to Islam was necessary to access the Southern educational system. Pupils' names were central in the process: some children were right away registered under Arab names in place of their Christian name. Others had to change their name in order to pursue their studies. Such was the case of Peter Anai, a bright student at Loka Intermediate School who was also a religious Christian. The headmaster dismissed him from the school after failing to convince him to convert to Islam, "the National Religion." The solution found by Sirr al-Khatm al-Khalīfa (then

Assistant Director of Education in the South), who received a complaint from Peter Anai, was to send him to the Islamic college (*maʿhad ʿilmī*) in Juba, where he had to register under the Muslim name Sirr al-Khatm Anai. Only under this condition could he go back to Loka the following year and then continue to secondary education at Rumbek, still under his Muslim name (Atem 1964: 8). As recounted by M. A. Atem, Arabization served as a means to achieve Islamization, which was the government's ultimate aim. This logic seems indeed to have guided much of Abboud's policies in Southern Sudan (Poggo 2002).

Yet the opposite perception also existed among the Southern Sudanese. The diffusion of Muslim rituals was sometimes considered as a deliberate tool to impose "Arab" culture. Atem himself mentioned the cultural influence expected from sons of Northern Arab traders in Southern schools. By wearing a "jalabia" and an "imam," by praying to "Allah" or reciting Quranic verses, these children were supposed to set "a typical example" to "African" [Southern] children (Atem 1964: 7). Another writer insisted on the instrumental nature of Islamization as serving a large-scale social engineering project geared towards Arabness:

> The policy of successive Arab Governments since self-government towards the South was that of assimilation of the Africans in the Southern Sudan, into the Arab group. This policy is popularly known as 'one country, one language and one religion' […] If at all, Christianity and Missionaries, is now an issue in the North-South conflict, that is so, because of the Arab Government policy, which uses Islamic religion, as a means of assimilating the four million Africans" (Anonymous 1964: 24, 26).

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This article has contributed to unpack the historical process through which Arabness and Islamness came to be strongly conflated and politicized in contemporary Sudan. While being rooted in a more distant past tainted by slavery relations (Idris 2005), such dynamics owe much to late colonial politics of British imperialism in the Nile Valley and Northern Sudanese empowerment. They persisted well after independence in 1956, fuelling the North-South civil war (1955-1972; 1983-2005) and serving as a matrix for the "Islamist" policies of al-Bashir's regime after 1989. The increasingly close association between the Arabic language, a putative Arab ethnicity and the Islamic religion was constructed through intellectual discourses and school practices in the 1940s and 1950s, although it was sometimes denied or nuanced by politicians and education professionals. The everyday experience of Southern Sudanese students, workers, and officials both in the South and in Khartoum (Willis 2015; Whittaker & Hayer 2016) led them to view Arabness and Islamness as inextricably connected and associated with a politically dominant, aggressive North.

Thus, cultural homogenization as it was promoted by state agents from 1946 until 1964 was alternately perceived as a legitimate policy of national unification or as a form of Arab-Islamic imperialism that merely succeeded British Christian colonialism (King 1975: 312-313; Deng 1995: 93; O'Fahey 1996: 262). In this sense, for many politically, economically and culturally marginalized Sudanese groups and regions—including majority Muslim areas in the North (Idris 2005; El Tom 2006; De Kock 2011)—, post-1956 Sudan was not a "postcolonial" state, but rather a structural heir to the colonial state's bifurcated power (Mamdani 2018). Whereas the independence of South Sudan in 2011 reoriented Southern politics towards internal Dinka-Nuer ethnicized strife, the 2019 toppling of al-Bashir in Sudan might well invite new answers to an old problem: what should be the cultural definition of the Sudanese nation (if any), and how is it linked to questions about the nature of the Sudanese political regime, the meaning of citizenship and the distribution of educational, political and economic resources across the country?

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have depicted the Arabization and Islamization of Sudan either as two parallel, centuries-long processes or as a set of interrelated state policies in the postcolonial era. This article contributes new chronological and empirical insights into the growing conflation of Arabic, Arabness and Islam in twentieth-century Sudan. First, it locates state efforts at Arabizing and Islamizing the South one decade before independence (1956) within the context of British imperial retreat and Northern Sudanese empowerment. Second, it examines how language and religion were increasingly enmeshed in cultural representations and school practices, even if the two were strategically distinguished in political discourses. The article assesses Southern Sudanese experience of forceful Arabization and Islamization, suggesting that cultural definitions of the nation and the access to educational, political and economic resources remain at the heart of the current citizenship crisis in Sudan and South Sudan.

Keywords: Sudan, Arabization, Citizenship, Decolonization, Education, Islamization, Language, Politics, Religion, State

Arabisation et islamisation dans la fabrique de l'État « postcolonial » soudanais (1946-1964) : représentations culturelles, stratégies politiques et pratiques scolaires

RESUME

Les historiens du Soudan ont décrit l'arabisation et l'islamisation du pays comme deux processus parallèles sur la longue durée ou comme des politiques étatiques étroitement liées à l'ère postcoloniale. Cet article apporte un nouvel éclairage chronologique et empirique sur l'intrication croissante de l'arabe, de l'arabité et de l'islam dans le Soudan du XXᵉ siècle. Il situe les politiques d'arabisation et d'islamisation du Sud une décennie avant l'indépendance (1956), dans le contexte du retrait impérial britannique et de la montée en puissance des élites nord-soudanaises. L'analyse montre que si les représentations culturelles et les pratiques scolaires alimentèrent la confusion entre langue et religion, elles coexistaient avec des stratégies politiques visant à dissocier arabe et islam. L'article évalue le vécu sud-soudanais de l'arabisation et de l'islamisation imposées, suggérant que les définitions culturelles de la

nation et l'accès aux ressources éducatives, politiques et économiques demeurent au cœur de la crise actuelle de la citoyenneté au Soudan et au Soudan du Sud.

Mots-clés : Soudan, arabisation, citoyenneté, décolonisation, enseignement, État, islamisation, langue, politique, religion