

# **GEOCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN ABYEI: CONTESTED TERRITORIES, PROSELYTIZATION AND EVANGELISTS**

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## **Abstract**

*Abyei region represents Sudan and South Sudan (Map-1) in Africa respectively in the contemporary security landscape that has witnessed initial political decolonization, later on economic liberalization and the ongoing Geocultural affirmation. The holistic understanding of Abyei region reveals that existential threats for people and their habitat are not merely physical but also ideational and Geocultural in nature. Historically, the binary world-view of believers vs. non-believers lays the ideational foundation for imperial domination and colonial machination, perpetuating deeper insecurity for nature worshipping people of Africa. While proselytization remains intertwined with imperial expansion, differentiated capitalization of post-conversion belief and worship fault lines consolidates colonial grip in Africa and elsewhere in the world. However, the successive inter-imperial wars make retention of territorial possessions difficult, imposing massive costs in humane and material terms. The principle of self-determination necessarily implies independent statehood only in the context of decolonization. The projected assumption that self-determination and territorial divisions lead to peace, stability, development and democratization in post-colonies has been a mischief. Indeed, geo-cultural interventions have induced secessionist movements and protracted conflicts in post-colonial societies in Abyei region. Keeping the above concerns in perspective, one may raise these fundamental questions. First, is there any meeting point in the process of creating and projecting Abyei as 'contested territory'? Second, what is the relationship between application of Right to Self-Determination principle on the one hand and emergence of contestation in post-colonial territories with special reference to Abyei? This article attempts to respond these questions and other related issues.*

**Keywords:** Arabs, Arbitration, British, Docility, Nigrizia, Semitic, Warrior

## **Introduction**

Omdurman is an agglomeration of all races and tribes of Sudan, with numerous representative such as Egyptians, Indians, Mecca Arabs, Syrians, Greeks, Italians, Turks, Ethiopian to Niam Niam and Mombuttu

cannibals. It is a true living and curious museum of human types. About 500 ethnic groups live in Sudan. The nature of multi-polarity enshrines in the Republic of Sudan having an area of 976,750 square miles and comprises 38 million people (2021 estimate) belonging to different communities. These societies like *Hamito-Semites, the Nubians* in the northern part, *Dinka, Shilluk, Auak and Nuer, the Murle, Didinga, Boya, Toposa and Bari* in the southern and *Azande, Kreish, Bongo, Moro and Madi* in the southwest region. This research work covers the study of cultural geography through four maps, the application of the colonial influence of political and economic geography through culture (Christianity & Islam) on the national power, combination of Geocultural and political factors influencing or delineating Sudan or a region and colonial policy based on the interrelation of politics and geography. The elements of Geoculture did not justify the colonial division of Islam in north and Christianity in south problem in simple cultural, religious, ethnic or on racial terms. One cannot ignore the geopolitics of Sudan that lead to regional, national and international connectivity of provinces with the rest of world. The availability of geonics and natural resources like petroleum, gold, iron, chromium, copper, zinc, tungsten, mica, livestock, forests, fisheries, cotton, rubber, coffee, gum Arabic, sesame found disproportionately became the colonial ambitious design of Geocultural division to distribute the share in Europe. Along with it, the high levels of ethnic heterogeneity and a history of economic exploitation, under privilege of different provinces demand a research based on Geoculture within the existing state structure. It will forge a socio-political culture characterized by interpersonal interchanges and better colonial marketing relations *i.e. a move towards Geocultural distribution of natural resources.*

The geographic determinism of pre-colonial Sudan refers to the 'Saifa-run kingdoms of Kanem and *Bornu* in east-central Sudan. It began to emerge gradually after AD 900, reflected continuous ruler ship by a single group of Mai, or governors, from AD1100 until 1846' (Bashir, M. O, 1968: 1). The 15<sup>th</sup> century *Sennar*, an ancient city in northern Sudan was the capital of a very strong *Arabised-Negro* nation of the *Fung* (Calling R.O, 1962: 178) and it mentioned by David Reubenl, Jewish adventure in 1522. The *Turco-Egyptian* conquest of the Sudan in 1820 (Bashir M.O, 1968:10) started a new period in the southern Sudan and its relation with the north. It came under the control of one government, for the first time, which administered north and south, becoming part of the Egyptian empire (Douglas H. Johnson, 2003: 10). This regime in Sudan altered the political and economic balance in the country considerably (Dunslan M. Wai, 1981:

30), in terms of gold and slave raiding. The next significant phase has known as *Mahdia* and *Muhammed Ahmed Ibn Abdallah* attracted many followers because of tribal discontent with oppressive taxation (by the Egyptian) grow disruptions caused by the slave trade, and deportation of traders (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 41). Mehdi was defeated at the Battle of Tuski 1889 and faced with many rebellions, even in their own stronghold like *Darfur* and *Kardofan*, and along the white Nile (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 41). During this period, an Egyptian officer, *Colonel Ahmed Arabi* led a revolt against *Khedurie Ismael* the Egyptian ruler, which crushed with the help of British General *Wolseley Khedurie* in response to it, renounced much of his power to British and later on a British protectorate (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 45).

The colonial Sudan has seen another ambitious plan of colonizers. The geographical division or doctrine of 'Scramble of Africa' reached its high points and British initiated and successfully invaded Sudan on the name of Egyptian ruler and killed *Second Mahdi* in 1899. The British administration influenced the Geocultural sector to discourage Arab culture, names, language, clothing and customs. The Southern people were encouraged to return to tribal law, family life and custom wherever possible. English increasingly replaced Arabic as the lingua franca of the region (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 43). Along with it, the missionary English education in the south was encouraged to replace the northern administrators and clerks working in the south. The subsidized mission schools in 1926 formulated a prior condition to enter into the school as pupil in the south, had first to accept Christianity (Misddathir A. Rahim, 1968: 46) and laid the foundation of colonial Geoculture. In contrast, there were both government and religious schools in the north resulted a higher literacy their as compare to south. Sir *Harold Mac Michel* memorandum on southern policy 1930 witnessed the vigorous implementation of these principles led to the embarkation on the road to separation until the initiation of Second World War.

Prior to it, one must visualize and analyzes the historical background of pre-colonial and colonial state of Sudan to understand the nature of Geocultural conflict, its consequences and its effects on contemporary Sudan and South Sudan. The Geocultural of Post Second world war changed the power bloc on the globe and British policy reversed in 1946 that led to the association of north to south and Middle East, which tolerated decades of British isolation policy. Most fluent reason was to adopt this new policy of 'challenge to colonialism' that forced British to initiate the process of de-colonization. However, the pressure of the *Swes*

*Canal* dispute justified British colonizers changed attitude by saying that southern Sudan would not be economically and culturally viable if separated from the north. Even the British administrators in east Africa pressurized them because of having the opinion of no productive zone that resulted into not interested in a liaison with southern Sudan (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 50). Along with it, the *Suez Canal* dispute and the pressure of *Umma Party* for United Sudan, forced the British colonial administration to keep Sudan intact. The 1948 legislative assembly having sixty-five elected and ten nominated members formed for the “Interim period” in which thirteen members represented the southern Sudan (Hizkias Assefa, 1987: 50). The Anglo-Sudan Constitutional Amendment Commission started working in 1951 and drawn the stages for granting independence to Sudan (Abel Aier, 1973: 18). The Anglo-Egypt Agreement 1952 recognized the right to self-determination to Sudan (Douglas H. Johnson, 2003: 26). Following that, the Nationalist Unionist Party won the elections and Mr. *Ismail Anzari* became the first interim Prime Minister of Sudan in Jan. 1954 (Douglas H. Johnson, 2003: 29). The discontent in southern Sudan broke out in 1955 because of not getting their due share resulted into the killings of northern people living in Sudan. British colonialist enforced to speed up the process of independence and assured that a federal constitution would give serious consideration that came into effect on 1 Jan. 1956. Today, the EU and USA are worried about western Darfur region of Sudan and jeopardize American-assisted negotiations to bring peace in a separate conflict in the South Sudan.

Dajo indigenous ethnic group lived in Abyei region, migrated prior to 17<sup>th</sup> century from this region, and subsequently taken over by Ngok Dinka, an agro-pastoralist group. The largest and best-known group is the *Dinka*, and today number about 4.5 million and its (*Dinka*) share with other southern Sudanese a history of resistance against northern domination. Many of these smaller groups suffered particular devastation during the Arab slave trade, while the numerous and well-organized *Dinka* military units were able to marshal a more effective defense. For the most part, *Dinka*, Nuer, Shilluk and other southerners enjoyed cooperative political and economic relations with each other, and village leaders from different ethnic groups would frequently meet together to resolve differences.

Sudan is a multi-orient features having a population of nearly 46 million (June 2011) having the people of northern Sudan or *Hamito-Semites* descendants of Arab-migrations settled and intermarry with the original inhabitants the *Nubians*, speak Arabic and having faith on Islam. The people of southern Sudan or *Nilotic*, *Nilo-Hamites* and *Sudanic* speak

Arabic and *Dinka* followed by fourteen minor languages representing one-third of country's population residing within a quarter of its territory. The elements of this multi-diversity found in Sudan are difficult to justify the current north-south conflict in simple cultural, ethnic or racial terms. While Islamic Arabic people have dominated northern Sudan since pre-colonial times. The South Sudan populated by a large number of animist, the natural worshipper and evangelized to Christianity through White Skin Christian missionaries. The *Dinka* community of 'about 2 million known as a largest and best known group in South Sudan and has formed the history of resistance against northern domination' (Sharon E. Hutchinson, 1996: 60). Other southerners include the '*Bahr el Ghazal* and *Upper Nile* provinces, the *Shilluk*, *Auak* and *Nuer*, whose social institutions and identity reflect a complex set of relations between cattle and people; in *Equatoria* province, the *Murle*, *Didinga*, *Boya*, *Toposa*, and *Bari*; and in the south-west, the *Azande*, *Kreish*, *Bongo*, *Moro* and *Madi*' (Donald Rothchild, 1997: 215). Many of these smaller groups suffered particular devastation during the Arab slave trade, while the numerous and well-organized *Dinka* military units were able to marshal a more effective defense (Young Crawford, 1976: 492). For the most part, *Dinka*, *Nuer*, *Shilluk* and other southerners enjoyed cooperative cultural, political and economic relations with each other, and village leaders from different ethnic groups would frequently meet together to resolve differences. The pre-colonial history of Geocultural interethnic coordination against attacks from the north gave rise to prophetic traditions passed on through sacred songs and oriented toward the collective, inter-group liberation of the south from northern domination (Sharon E. Hutchinson, 2001: 326). As a result, the prime matter of Contested Territory born in the vast territory of Sudan. To understand this Contest further, I quote Sorur idea written in 1964,

"For the *Dinka* religious, this aspect makes the difference between the situation of black people in Africa (Sudan) and the Americas: The blacks of America were, however, very fortunate in their freedom given by God with the death of his son Jesus, an adverse fact of the black's situation in Africa. For this reason, invaded by the Turks, they brutalized those who inhabited Nigrizia (The Devout Mothers of Africa) and threw them into the accursed Mohammedan sect. Not satisfied, they sent more and more of their men into the deepest interior of the tribes of Africa (Sudan) to make them slaves, considering them unfaithful, unwilling to accept their religion and making the greatest trade out of them" (Sorur, 1964: 56).

Geoculture is the interaction of geography and culture, in which the physical environment and cultural behaviour form and influence one another. It accentuates the connotation of topography in shaping a state's interests, security, and foreign policy. The people and their cultural history, political stability, peace, and physical security of a nation-state deeply influenced by its geographical cum Geocultural settings. It is an interdisciplinary term that considers how the landscapes and areas in which they live, as well as how their cultural manifestations affect the locations from where they originate influence people's cultural identities, customs, and practices. Subsequently, the political aspects of geography, such as Geoculture explains the relations between distinct tribal regions, colonial supremacy in Africa, and missionaries organizations in the fields of religion and education, build the primary level of social hegemony, shaping, and orienting the society's (here the Abyei region) policy discourse. Thus, Geocultural impact refers to how cultural aspects such as traditions, beliefs, values, art, language, and social structures disseminate, change, and interact beyond geographic borders. At another level, it deals with the analysis of Geocultural relations to political power. It looks at the spatial frameworks like the physical territories, natural resources, and cultures that influence colonial power relations. Karl Haushofer explains that the 'geopolitics (refers to Geocultural) studies the new national science of the state connects the spatial determinism of all political processes based on the broad foundations of geography, especially of political geography and Geoculture in the region' (Hennig Richard, 1931: 9: emphasis mine). It underlines on the traditional elements of national power in terms of religious prophecy that provides the economic, political, and military strategy in Abyei region. This consequence is not restricted to in what manner one culture governs another, however it also shows that the cultural linkages encourages mutual growth and evolution. Geocultural effect sees on a region in multiple ways, which generally include trade, migration, colonization and interdependence on each other. H J Mackinder explains 'Geoculture as the influence of geography on culture. He argued that it was geography which made Athens a thalassocracy — a maritime empire with a dependence on the maritime realm that gave it naval supremacy (either military or commercial), whereas Sparta was a landlocked power, primarily due to its geography. Further, it was due to the geographical setting that Britain, an island state, achieved its 'great power' status, as it enjoyed the freedom of navigation on the high seas. His spatial analysis in giving the 'heartland' theory still serves as the primer to geopolitical cum cultural analysis of states and their affairs in global politics' (Mackinder H. J, 1904: 424). Such interaction between the

cultures often leads towards the progress of cross cultures, which are a replication of the assimilation of several different civilization and societies.

### **Contested Territories**

Geoculture talks about the topographical arrangement regulates the culture of Abyei region and explains the politics of interest of other colonial actors. Geoculture of Abyei region characterizes its changing nature of society since ancient to colonial, Post-Colonial to post 1990s globalization period. The regional cultural politics of Sudan has changed, which led the changing nature of response from interest articulation of erstwhile colonial actors. Geoculture of Abyei spells out the historical emergence of this region acquires a prominent position geographically. Geocultural linkages has used as a framework for understanding the contested territories right from the colonial period. However, as the dynamics of Geoculture change throughout the colonial period, which explains the conduct of statecraft based on such analysis.

The idea of Contested Territory flourished during the British colonial period in Sudan and came in the shape of legal document under the theme Divide and Rule. The Arbitration Agreement between The Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army on Delimiting Abyei Area signed in 1905 formulated the idea of Contested Territory in the future. Abyei Boundaries Commission demarcated the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905 referred to hereinafter as the Abyei Area. Today, the result of Contested Territory has demarcated formally. Abyei Protocol acts as a Special Administrative status between Sudan and South Sudan as an outcome of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) January 10, 2005. To understand the current situation in Sudan, one must clearly understand the historical background of the conflict taking into account of pre-colonial and colonial period.

Muhammad Ahmad bin Abdullah, the man known to history as Mahdi of Islam. This is Semitic side of believers (Islam and Christian both) as in 1881, Mahdi began his jihad against the "Turks" and the "Nazarenes," supported by traffickers, Sufi saints, the Shilluk, Azandes, and Dinkas, and managed to congregate around him a constellation of populations placed for the first time in a large place of power and control. This led his biographers and contemporary historiographical production to see 'Mahdiyya as a response to arbitrariness and the "bad Egyptian government". It based on military sources, as a historical and religious experience, marked by Messianism, but whose scope and importance restricted by the very limit of being an action highlighted by the religious

dimension' (Bleuchot H, 1989, and Sharkey H, 1978). This fact underlies the constitution of morality in the Mahdist state and the importance attached to the publication of the Mahdi proclamations and prayers manuals, which guided Muslims and converts to spirituality and political subordination to the Mahdist power (Dujarric G, 1901). Mahdi had important military victories against the British (proliferation of Christianity) until his death in 1885. However, the conquest of Khartoum, the death of General Gordon and the fact that he died of natural death (typhus) prompted a production of British reports with a strong spirit of revenge that introduced Mahdi for the first time in European historical studies and debates in the late nineteenth century.

The debate of Semitic and Non-Semitic; most commonly refers to the Abrahamic religions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Non-Semitic refers to the Sanatan Dharm or Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Animism and Zoroastrianism (Persian religion). The Contested Territory of Abyei region is an essential ingredient of Semitic constituency in which Islam Proselytized the tribal groups living in South Sudan with the support of Arab or Islamic armed forces. With the arrival of Christianity Evangelist in South Sudan, these missionary received the support of British armed forces. However, in case of Kashmir, British colonialism preferred Semitic constituency, supported Islamic forces through Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, and opposed Non-Semitic religion particularly Sanatan or Hindu Dharma of India. The Islamic fundamentalist slogan of *Ralib, Galib, Chalib* (Either Convert, Die or Leave) in Kashmir droved Hindu Community out of Kashmir is the forced exodus of Non-Semitic practices. Whereas in Abyei region, the Western interest made a choice in favour of Christian constituency against the Islamic counterpart. This is the juxtaposition of religious fault line and livelihood pattern and supported agro-pastoralist group of Ngok Dinka and not Nomad tribe groups believed in Islam. Here I quote Fra Massaja,

"Fra Massaja considered as an example until the conflict with the Abyssinian Negus and the English, which led him to lose his post. However, his actions immortalized in the Italian national narrative, making him an apostle of Africa, and in the twentieth century, already in the context of fascism, he became known as Abuna Messiah. For this religious, ardent enemy of Islam, the mystical closeness between Copts and Muslims were an obstacle to the Romanization process he wanted to impose on the Copts as a whole, despite there were differences and difficulties of the Negus in the governmental action on Abyssinian Muslims. Besides, another aspect that approached them was the pilgrimage practice, where the Copts went to



Jerusalem and the Muslims to Mecca, but in Egypt, for example, all preparations for this spiritual exercise were understood and shared between the faithful of both religions” (Patricia T. Santos, 2021: 94).

The idea of Believers vs. Non-Believers as far as Sudanese population is concerned, needs an analytical approach, to begin with. A rich and at the same time thorny subject, the relations of the different peoples of southern Sudan with each other having Nature worshippers, with the northern Islamic populations, and with the Europeans and Egyptians who controlled the region during Ottoman rule, deserve a much deeper analysis. British Social Anthropology studied the importance to the knowledge of their social organization and their processes of interaction with the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (Harris M, 1971) established strategies of accommodation, re-elaboration of daily life, and conflicts with several external agents that entered Sudan from 1820s onwards. Particular emphasis placed on how the population of Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Niam Niam, Nuba and Bari origin (Given the importance of the Baris in constructing a discourse of Christian ancestry from the ancient kingdom of Nubia), established tactics that allowed us to glimpse the understanding of their internal transformations in the face of the Ottoman rule and Mahdiyya. These populations important in the process of building Ottoman-Egyptian control, developing the Catholic civilization project and increasing the commercial networks of the Islamized population.

### **Proselytization and Evangelists**

The sources produced about Proselytization groups during the Ottoman period are of Austrian and British Egyptian and military missionary origin. In these accounts, mainly those of the evangelists, it permeated the idea that these peoples were simultaneously “bellicose and unreliable”, but without failing to possess an “innocence” that had been blossomed by Christianity and civilizing contact and by the “anti-slavery” military action.

The “docility” of these peoples and, in the case of the Dinkas, the “warrior character” sometimes characterized as the “innate” virtues of human beings. The Dinkas were in a situation of “inferiority”, and sometimes they were examples of a “fluid” and “volatile” character, which made the different external agents never quite sure that they had conquered these peoples from the point of view of alliances and affection.

The missionaries of the Institute for the Missions of Nigrizia reported about Dinka and other peoples in the newspaper *Chronicles of the Good*

*Shepherd* (from 1881, Nigrizia Magazine) and newsletters of the geographical societies of Paris, London, Rome and Milan and circulated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Father Daniele Comboni, then 27, described to his father the fear he felt when he had contact with Dinka population, structured on testimonials from the Egyptian commanders who campaigned against them. He remarked, “Ever since the tribe of the Dinkas we had always seen the Negroes fleeing before us either answered our greeting or fled. Many people armed with spears, shields, poisonous arrows and clubs, I must conclude that they fear us and are more afraid of us than we are of them. Which is why, when we present ourselves to the black tribes, we walk unafraid and without showing any fear, so that seeing us so firm, they flee if we do not invite them to stay with us” (Franceschini L, 2005: 82).

Further, Having to deal with traffickers (Slave traders), as the Proselytization and Evangelists mission’s greatest enemies, Comboni stresses ‘how the English and Egyptian authorities, despite the British ban on trafficking, acted without restriction on the raids, causing major problems for the Nuer, Dinkas and Nubas, who had to move to more distant regions to escape the traffickers’ (Ewald, 1900). Slave trade seen as a highly damaging activity for the Proselytization and Evangelists mission, and it condemned along with what he called the “hypocrisy” of the Egyptian and European administrators who profited from the activity and made it prosper.

The “Salvationist” discourse of Proselytization and Evangelists missionaries for trafficking purposes rendered the “civilization mission on the white man” unworthy for the religious proselytization. The diplomats believe that the purpose of this enterprise was to introduce European civilization to these tribes and to abolish and destroy slavery there. British stationed various companies of soldiers at the principal points along the White Nile, such as the confluence of the Sobat and the Bahar-el-Ghazal, among the Dinka and others. Because of this violent invasion, the majority of the Sudanese along with the White Nile withdrew westwards into the interior to flee the oppression of the conquerors. Mr. Baker’s great severity, violently snatch Sudanese children from the bosom of their families, steal their daughters, mistreat the inhabitants and barbarously practice the slave trade, as I am assured by the most reliable sources in Egypt and Mr. Baker’s private letters published recently in the German press (Franceschini H, 2005: 909).

The Dinka were much closer to the Catholic missionaries and their activities, and d. Daniele Comboni, always expected from them and the

Nuba the necessary basis for the implementation of his project 'Regeneration of Africa through Africa'. The first missionary contacts with the Dinka date back to the late 1840s, when they faced rivalries with the Nuer on the one hand and the rapprochement of many slave traders from different backgrounds, who, together the leaders of Dinka populations, conducted conflicts with other Dinka populations in order to obtain slaves on the other hand. Mark Nikkel signaled as the end of an "age of no evil" and the beginning of spoliation and said,

"The oral tradition of the Dinka recalls a time of harmony when the world was at Peace and mankind flourished with vast herds of cattle. This idyllic state of contentment and relative isolation irrevocably altered with the advent of the Turuk, a term still used to refer to light-skinned foreigners. Across Dinka land their arrival and the disruption brought, described as "the time when the Earth was spoiled" (Nikkel M. R, 2002: 49).

Spoliation refers not only to the processes of interaction with the Ottoman-Egyptian authorities but also to the insertion of these authorities into the circuit of raids for the slave trade. However, such raiding actions were not easy, according to Nikkel, because the Dinka had ties to several other ethnic groups that embodied elements of their Geoculture or even spoke their language.

Overall, since 1840, nomadic people as the Baggaras, for example, obtained Egyptian favors for raids, which led them into a series of conflicts with the Dinkas and other peoples, a fact that made Proselytization and Evangelists missionaries correlate early on the figure of the Jialaba, which encompassed many peoples, as the merchant of "human flesh." However, they also engaged in the trade of ivory and products from Egypt to supply the big traffickers' Zeribas. The confrontation that existed between the Shilluk and the Dinkas, and between the Nuer and the Dinkas, and also the possible articulations between them, let the Catholic missionaries of the late 1950s confused and before repeated questions in the history of Proselytization and Evangelization in that region: Which peoples should be welcomed and which should be rejected? How to respond to possible aggressions and what should be the position in the face of firearms?

Franceschini explained, "Five years ago, a healthy young African girl called Mahbuba came to Cairo. She had kidnapped along with many others from the Dinka tribe by the inhuman greed of the Jiallabas. Since that time, He, who alone possesses the great secret of making good from evil, was counting on the work of our African Female Institute in order to destine to eternal bliss poor Mahbuba. Indeed, to human eyes she had become one of

the most miserable creatures on earth. After being sold and resold several times to Muslim masters, God ordained that she be bought by a devout Greek Catholic lady of Cairo, from whom she learned for the first time to stammer those beloved names of Jesus and Mary in whom alone we are granted to hope for salvation. It could be said that from that moment, the Holy Spirit had decided to work in this soul, as she very soon seemed to be attracted by a few vague ideas of Christianity which almost as if by accident her mistress had let fall. This did not enough in the fight she put up against the fanatic temptations of Islam” (Franceschini H, 2005: 485).

The first Proselytization or Evangelizers came to be seen as “pathfinders of faith,” “seeds of hope,” which were unfolded by the subsequent work of d. Daniele Comboni. Thus, Knoblecher’s experience gained the meaning of a “mistaken rehearsal” of the “correct” evangelization, whose climax would be reached by Comboni. Knoblecher’s period represents a generous, but naive attempt in some aspects, to bring “Christian civilization” into an open environment, fraught with too many natural obstacles and the hostility of many concerned. Notwithstanding the numerous deaths, the apparent failure, and the missionaries’ withdrawal, during this period some exemplary Christians (such as the Dinka Pietro Kherallah and the Bari Francesco Saverio Logunt) were formed and the pupils who, educated in Europe, returned to Egypt, and contributed to Comboni’s missionary resumption’ (Bano L, 1976: 21).

Similarly, Ohrwalder’s work and Grigolini’s memoirs explained, “It is clear that not only the missionaries, but European merchants and the “British presence” as a permanent threat had an important role on the deepening of ethnic distinctions between the different populations of Sudan. It highlighted the aspects such as “fetishism” and “unruly sexuality” of the Dinkas, Nuer, Azanders and Shilluk as elements of inferiority of these peoples before the Arab Muslims of northern Sudan and the whites of European and Ottoman origin” (G. Barsella, 1998).

### **Colonial Legacy and Semitic Religious Geoculture**

The missionary expansion into Sudan entered Khartoum in the late 1840s found a structured Coptic community of Egyptian origin that entered the region along with Muhammad Ali’s expansion in the 1920s. According to Ballin C (2001), ‘the Khedive had promised the arrival of the Copts, relying on them to boost trade. It also pointed out that the Nubian Patriarchal, since the beginning of the Islam’s expansion in Sudan, was vague as a factor that would have motivated the entry of the Egyptian

Copts in order to reactivate and operate that patriarchal according to the Ottoman-Egyptian conquest projects’.

The missionaries and privileged agents had established relations with the population density of the Mahdist state through marriage, participation in commerce, mediators and narrators, perceived the population density of the Mahdist state, and achieved progressive transformations. The Missionary look at the Relations between the Mahdists and the Population of Sudan. By missionary mobilization toward the “schismatic and infidels,” Leo XIII, more than his predecessors, succeeded in uniting his faithful around the goal of saving nonwhite souls, as a passport of remission from the “European white soul” itself. Given this, the pontiff recalled that by conditioning the salvation of whites and blacks to the involvement in the missionary project, the success of colonization ensured.

## **Conclusion**

Geocultural is essentially a polity based on interactions and interrelations of a complex set of regionally grouped diversities, a Geoculture approach to its study would appear a very helpful one. The main Geocultural diversities regionally organized and are neither purely sociological, economic, nor political in nature but all together at the same time. A Geocultural approach with its emphasis on aerial integrations and regional interactions should prove a helpful tool in the study of the dynamics of cultural systems, particularly with respect to their overall origins and stability wherein the regionally grouped diversities on which ethnic systems are based become a critical factor that distinguishes this polity from other governmental systems. The Geocultural historical development of Sudan delineates the socio-culture-geographical factors that largely responsible for creating among the constituent units’ strong regional identities and the consequent desire for separate cultural existence. As the State-idea in Sudan is not easy to identify, the task may be difficult. However, the historical studies of the relevant periods in the history of Sudan has seemed possible to do so for the study of Geocultural federalism.

Overall, the Proselytization and evangelists’ action that “wash the wounds” and have “apostolic zeal”. However, Sorur points out, despite the suffering, the enslavement in the Americas by white Christians offered them the “opportunity to know the true faith” (Sorur D, 1964). In these ways, then, the issue of religious freedom remains pertinent in both North and South Sudan. “In June 1984, the SCBC joint pastoral letter “Lord Come to Our Aid” was published. Written in support of Christians

suffering from the application of the Islamic law, the bishops objected to imposing Sharia on all citizens regardless of their religion and culture” (G Barsella, 1998: 63-114). With the unambiguous header “Do not be confused in the Face of the Sharia and Forced Islamisation”, the bishops started that “we were whipped for eating during . . . Ramadan. Others are whipped, fined and imprisoned because alcohol was found in their houses... Christians are called to take the oth of allegiance to the Koran thus exposing them to the accusation of disloyalty if they refused to do so” (Monk Flogged, 1984 and Christopher Tounsel, 2020). Similarly, the Sudanese Catholic bishops published the joint pastoral letter on 16 November 1991 and mentioned, “The Truth Shall Make You Free” addressed the critical state of affairs facing the church resulted from the radical Islamization and Arabization (Christopher Tounsel, 2020). It further explained, “In spite of repeated public declarations and assurances by the Government”, the letter read, that all Sudanese citizens have equal rights; that there is no discrimination based on religion, race . . . or culture; we see clearly that the reality is different. It is very evident that present Government policies are aimed at creating one nation --- a nation that is Islamic in religion and Arab in culture, in total disregard of the large number of Sudanese citizens who are of other faiths and cultures” (G Barsella, 1998: 75, 121-122). All the residence living in Sudan having different religious faith should protect as a matter of a human right and explained, “You are Africans and Christians, and therefore have the right to live in this country according to your culture, customs and religion. They are your rights, not only as citizens, but also as human beings” (News Bulletin, 1991). Further Christopher has analyzed, “Returning to Northern Sudan, the end of the civil war and the recent toppling of the Bashir regime have not quieted domestic concerns about religious freedom. Reporting in the wake of Bashir’s fall from power, the National Catholic Reporter noted that though Sudan’s Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, Islam remains the de facto state religion and Sharia governs many civic institutions. It continued that the national intelligence service has frequently harassed church leaders, non-Muslims were banned from preaching, and Christian villages in the Nuba Mountains had experienced frequent aerial bombardment. In these ways, then, the issue of religious freedom that was paramount during the Second Sudanese Civil War remains pertinent in both Northern and Southern Sudan. With it, the strategies employed by religious minorities in both countries to persuade, encourage, and convict their respective national governments remain imperative subjects of analysis” (Christopher Tounsel, 2020: 186). With it, the strategies employed by religious minorities in both countries to

persuade, encourage, and convict their respective national governments remain imperative subjects of analysis. Today, the Abyei region has the oilfield region but the displacement of families and clans has unprecedented progress because of civil war situations. Their ancestral land has instead become a theatre of war, fueled with inputs of global player's oil interests. This is the Believers fiefdom in Abyei and injustices towards Non-Believers in Kashmir, ultimately run on the practices of Semitics by Dividing and Ruling the territories (such as Pakistan occupied Kashmir).

Over all, all ethnic elites should discard and treat alike, cherish and should recognize under the constitution of Sudan and South Sudan. The government and all the traditional chiefs should initiate the process of states autonomy to strengthen cultural unity and socio-economic development. The history of Abyei within the contested territories, proselytization and evangelists should keep away the armed civil war and develop a Geocultural understanding in the region, which will work for the welfare of common people in Sudan and South Sudan.

## Note

Prof. Suresh Kumar has worked on the UGC sponsored national project on Geopolitical Federalism of Sudan and South Sudan (2005-2008) and had participated in the Sudan and East Sudan agreement in 2007 in Eritrea. Patricia Teixeira Santos research on the interaction between Christians, mainly European missionaries and Muslims in the context of Mahdiyya, shows how the understanding of African societies depends, besides the studies of local realities, on the analysis of different religious, political, and economic connections between certain regions of the African continent and broader cultural universes. Both the authors work on the UNESCO Research Group on **African and Brazilian knowledge, practices, education and histories in a Southern Perspective, Porto University, Brazil, 2012-Continue**, which help in producing this research work.

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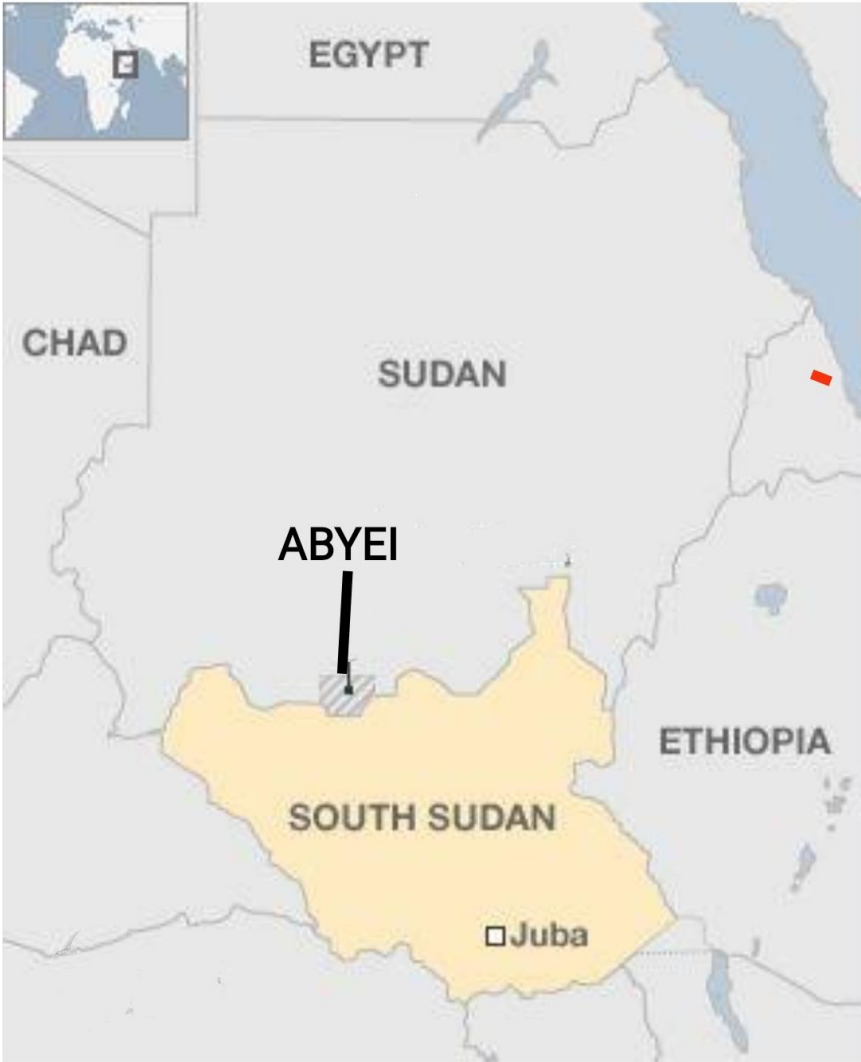
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**Map-1 Abyei Region in Sudan and South Sudan**



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