UNL Spring 2023 Digital Humanities Class One More Voice Extension Project

# Introduction

Most of the pieces for this project are geographically related as part of the African continent. There are two exceptions to this, one piece is from Turkey, another from India. These two pieces are still valuable to this research and provide clear insight into the education of women and girls. “India. Native Female Education” allows me to examine letters from girls at a missionary-run school. The foundation of these girls' education is the Bible. Several of them mention what seems to be missionary work to an in the community who has each of them relay their lessons to her. Comparatively, “Adult Sunday-Schools Among the Nestorians” allows us to examine a missionary-run Sunday School. The author had originally stated the school was held more days of the week, but the people could not attend due to their social and economic status in the community. The missionary explains to the reader they are teaching some of the younger women to read, while some of the older women they are teaching them orally, assuming they cannot learn to read. Within the text, the author discusses the missionary school for women and for men, claiming both men and women of this area to be ignorant, but the women especially so. For instance, the missionary is not teaching the older women to read, but the older men are being taught to read. This shows there is an expectation of differences across gender, which is impacting the way the native people are being treated and educated by the missionaries.

The recovered texts I am utilizing are particularly connected. There are pieces I have chosen that are written by family members. The themes of these related experiences focus on a mother, Nosutu, the Mother of Soga, who was a convert to Christianity and mother of someone who seems to be important to garnering more converts to Christianity in the region. I think there is a potential for these texts to inform two perspectives of conversion, the experience of a

mother, and the experience of her child, an evangelist, writing about the mother’s conversion.

Interestingly, the piece I assumed at first to be a perspective of the mother’s conversion was more than that. There are elements I can extract that discuss the affect of her conversion, but the main focus of the piece is grieving about the mother’s son passing away. Another piece also allows me to examine the grief and funeral process of a missionary who has passed away, “The Late Mr. James Cameron of Madagascar”. This piece is written on behalf of the Queen of the area, Ranavalona II, and how she and the community pay their respects to the missionary, including payment for his funeral and the extension of condolences to his daughter and friends.

These two pieces show the reaction to death among converts, and how they interweave their Christianity with their grief.

# Themes

Experiences of Women in Christianity under colonialism- Women’s roles are discussed in terms of Christian socialization, meaning there is an undercurrent of Christian and colonizer expected gender roles in these writings. This is the case in a few of the texts I skimmed over, when women and men were compared, it was clear the authors felt the women to be more ignorant.

Experiences of Indigenous Missionaries (and deconversion)- many of the pieces I have chosen include experts of missionary work. I am interested in what themes arise for these indigenous missionaries seeking to convert other indigenous people. It seems there are some mentions of persecution of those who have converted.

Women’s Conversions- Young girls and women converting to Christianity seems to be through education. The missionaries have schools which are teaching people to read through the use of the gospels and the Old Testament.

Melding of traditional religions into Christianity- for this I specifically want to examine if any of the writers discuss their previous religious ideals and how they have changed since converting. I want to know how traditional religions impacted their beliefs in Christianity in conversions, practices, and missionary work. From my brief reading of a few of the texts it does not seem to be the case. However, in “The late Mr. James Cameron of Madagascar” the Queen says the traditional burial rights of her subjects, the slaughtering of a bull, would not be appropriate here, which could be because it was part of the traditional religion in Madagascar that was still practiced.

Impact of Colonizers-how are the colonized portraying the colonizers? Are the authors speaking against themselves in anything that would give the impression their works were edited to make the colonizers appear more favorable to whomever the readers of these works were? In the recovered pieces, we see a great focus on praise for the colonizers, specifically regarding the death of the mother’s son. She writes gratefully about the colonizers who educated her son and brought him to Christianity.

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