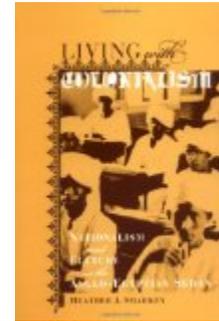


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Heather J. Sharkey. *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. xiii + 232 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-23558-8; \$25.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-23559-5.

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Colonialism's Intimate Enemies

New scholarship is changing the understanding of how modern empires worked. Older approaches emphasize the shaping of imperial policies in the metropole and concentrate on the rulers' actions in the colonies. Important, newer scholarship gives attention to how the ruled participated in imperial administration. Heather Sharkey provides a major addition to this new approach in her thorough analysis of the activities and careers of the Sudanese who worked in the British government that ruled Sudan from 1898 until 1956. The basic theme of this work is that the image of empires managed by a small group of imperial ruling prodigies is inaccurate and that empire "worked on the ground because it relied on vast support staffs ... who handled the day-to-day tasks of colonialism" (p. 1).

The extensive involvement of Sudanese in the colonial regime created a situation in which these Sudanese became "colonialism's intimate enemies, making colonial rule a reality while hoping to see it undone" (p. 1). To examine these interactions, Sharkey defined three issues as central to the book: how colonialism actually worked, how nationalism arose out of the relations of the "intimate enemies," and how the colonial state evolved into the independent nation-state (p. 2). The key element in this process is the emergence of a grouping of educated local people who came to identify themselves as "Sudanese." The imperial regime needed educated local people for the bureaucracy and created or supported educational institutions to fill this need. This newly created class began to form a new identity that could, and did,

provide the foundation for nationalism. After an introduction that sets the framework for this analysis, Sharkey starts with a discussion (chap. 2) on the development in the twentieth century of the key concepts of identity. In the discourse of the imperial rulers as well as the local people, the term "Sudanese" evolved, beginning with highly negative connotations of "detrified Blacks" but ending as the term of choice for national identity by the time of independence in 1956. The third chapter examines the educational institutions that created the new Sudanese, with special emphasis on Gordon Memorial College. Sharkey uses the term "effendi," which basically means a European-style "native," and concluded that "the British in the Sudan designed Gordon College as a virtual effendi machine" (p. 65) In chapter 5, Sharkey gets to the heart of the administrative issues with an examination of the "mechanics of colonial rule." This discussion shows the activities of both the British rulers and the Sudanese employees in the development of Sudanese governmental bureaucracy. Sharkey provides an excellent brief history of the five phases of the development of central administrative institutions, from the British-dominated rudimentary systems at the beginning of the century through the experiments with indirect rule in the 1920s to the politically complicated processes of decolonization and Sudanization from 1938 to 1956. The complex relationships between collaboration and opposition to imperial rule are examined in the fifth chapter. Sharkey highlights the new understandings of imperialism presented in recent scholarship. Older simplistic polarities of ruler and ruled, collaboration and opposi-

tion, traditional and modern, are replaced in this analysis by a nuanced awareness of the position of the modern-educated nationalists who were both ruler and ruled, both part of imperial power and part of the emerging nationalist opposition. Sharkey concludes that colonial “service was a way of life for most Northern Sudanese officials, even though nationalist agitation came from their ranks. They were as much a part of the colonial system as the Britons who ruled it” (p. 119). The impact of this complex symbiosis was that the independent state became a direct heir to the colonial rule and basically replaced it. This process of the development of “the nation after the colony” is the heart of the analysis in chapter 6 and the conclusion.

From the perspective of gender studies, it is noteworthy that this is basically an analysis of a male world. The British did not place much emphasis on women’s education, and there was no place for women either in Gordon College or in bureaucratic service. This limitation was not unique to the Sudanese employees. There were no women in the Sudan Political Service (the British ruling elite service) either. Sharkey’s study is based on a remarkably broad base of sources. She has utilized the hundreds of personnel files for the Sudanese employees of the colonial government, memoirs, official and unofficial papers in Sudanese and British archives, and a comprehensive library of Arabic and English materials. She has interviewed a wide range of people who were active in the developments that she describes. However, this immense base of information is not allowed to dominate the clearly presented and readable analysis. Sharkey’s

study can be seen as related to the important field of Subaltern Studies, but she avoids the jargon and ideological polemics that occasionally mar other studies in this field.

One hesitates to suggest that more should be added to a study that is as comprehensive as this one. However, some readers might welcome more extensive biographies of the remarkable people who are being described as a group. This study is, in many ways, a study of collective biography, but fuller biographical descriptions might help to emphasize the broader points being made. The vibrancy of the passage describing the difficulties that Khidr Hamad had with British officials, as he worked to establish a personal identity that was beyond tribe, shows the effectiveness of having more biographical information available within the narrative (pp. 32-33). Also, Sharkey tends to concentrate on the central administration. The experiences in the provincial governments support her basic hypotheses but present different issues, especially the issues of the relationships between the educated Sudanese who are central to her work and the old-style Sudanese chiefs and *shaykhs* who, at that time, represented the life of most Sudanese. This book defines issues of broad significance for understanding imperialism and its relationship to the broader dynamics of modernization and identity. While people specializing in Sudan will find it of special interest, the clarity of Sharkey’s writing style and the importance of the basic topics being discussed make this a book important for anyone interested in the relationships between ruling systems and subordinate peoples in the modern (or any) era.

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