

HANNAH KILHAM AND GENDER ISSUES: THE PLACE OF FEMALES IN THE LIBERATED AFRICAN VILLAGES OF SIERRA LEONE

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***Abstract:** This paper examines how Kilham and her educational approach for Africans contributed to redefine the place of females in the Christianisation process of Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. The paper investigates some of the Colonial Government policies for Liberated Africans in 19th century Sierra Leone to see how they served to define the place of females in the Liberated African villages. Various groups and individuals offered different forms of intervention to mitigate their challenges. Hannah Kilham, a 19th century English Quaker, was one such person who was committed to the cause of the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. She, like other agents, believed that education played a major role to introduce Christianity to Africans and to promote acceptable commerce among them. Unlike them, she maintained that for education to be meaningful to Africans, it must be offered through the medium of their own languages. Kilham's approach contributed to the work of other agencies and directed them to the significance of focusing on girls' education*

Key Words: Friend; Inward light; Liberated; Native; Indigenous; Quaker; Kilhamite.

Introduction

The British colonial settlement at Sierra Leone offers a desirable reference point to begin a discussion on Gender issues in the history of Missions in West Africa in the 19th century. Established in 1787 as a new home for freed slaves, Sierra Leone became known for three groups of emigrants: the “Black Poor”,¹ the Nova Scotians and Maroons,² and the Liberated Africans. The first group comprised about 400 people of African descent mostly freed slaves, and a few

¹ Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 20.

² Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945* (Wisconsin, Madison-London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 10.

of Caucasian race. The name *Black Poor* derives from the Committee that was formed to attend to the needs of destitute blacks roaming London streets. Key figures like William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Zachary Macaulay and the Clarkson brothers - John and Thomas, were instrumental in this arrangement. In 1792 and 1800, the Nova Scotians, and the Maroons landed respectively to begin a new life on the Settlement. What consisted of Sierra Leone at this time was a small strip of land smaller in area than present day Free-town.

When Sierra Leone became a British Colony in 1808, it also became a home for another category of freed slaves - the Liberated Africans that formed a substantial proportion of the population. For a long period afterwards, they remained essentially the main focus of the Colonial government, missionary societies, and certain individuals. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) in particular played pivotal roles in the life of this group. Among the individuals who were committed to their cause and significantly promoted their welfare, was a little known woman of remarkable character called Hannah Kilham. She belonged to the English nonconformist organisation - the Religious Society of Friends that came to be simply known as the Quakers. She went to Sierra Leone amidst many limitations, persisted in establishing learning institutions primarily for Liberated Africans and died while pursuing that goal.³

This paper focuses on the Liberated Africans with particularly attention to Kilham's attempt at using education as a tool to redefine the place of Liberated African females through leadership development, support to Native Teachers, translation work, and collaboration with other agencies. In doing so she especially influenced the work of CMS, and hence, Sierra Leone Christianity in the nineteenth century.

A Short Biography of Hannah Kilham

Hannah Kilham, missionary-educationist, philanthropist and advocate of the poor, the needy children, the disadvantaged in society,

³ This paper draws from various aspects of my PhD thesis (Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, 2017) on the role of Hannah Kilham's educational approach on West African Christianity in the nineteenth century.

and promoter of Christian unity,⁴ was born on 12th August 1774. She was the last of seven children to Peter and Hannah Spurr, an Anglican family of modest economic standing in Sheffield, England.⁵ They were members of Saint Peter's Church that became Sheffield Cathedral in 1914. As a daughter of a well-known Cutler of the Established Church, she grew up in that Church tradition⁶ but was allowed to attend John Wesley's services with her mother when Wesley made his yearly visits to Sheffield. Her young heart overflowed with compassion for the poor and the disadvantaged and was constrained to save her pocket money to support them. This selfless devotion later won the affection and endearment of notable figures like Joseph Lancaster, originator of the Monitorial System of Education. It was him who said, "I love and honor all that are friends of the poor and are advocates for giving them useful knowledge"⁷.

Kilham attended school at Broom Hall Vicarage in Sheffield under the Reverend James Wilkinson and was later admitted to a Boarding school at Chesterfield where she excelled in grammar. Her outstanding character and brilliance did not endear her to everyone. One of her early associates recalled that she "conducted herself to much satisfaction, and made so much progress in the study of grammar as to displease her master, who, in those days, when that science was not taught to girls, thought her over-stepping the bounds of the female province."⁸ This however laid the foundation for the education career she later pursued.

At age 14, she had lost both parents and was for a short period exposed to the gleeful lifestyle of youthfulness.⁹ With the assistance of an elder sister, she assumed the responsibility of managing the home

⁴ Hannah Maria Wigham, *Sketch of the Life of Hannah Kilham, Missionary to Africa*, (London: Friends' Tract Association, n.d), 3.

⁵ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham: chiefly compiled from Her Journal, and edited by her Daughter-in-Law* ed. Sarah Biller (London: Darton and Harvey, 1837), 1.

⁶ QAF Testimonies Concerning Ministers Deceased Volume 6, London 1833. See: "A Testimony of Devonshire House Monthly Meeting Concerning Hannah Kilham who departed this Life on board on her passage from Liberia for Sierra Leone."

⁷ Joseph Lancaster, *The British System of Education: Being a complete epitome of the Improvements and Inventions practiced at the Royal Free-Schools, Borough-Road, Southwark* (London: Joseph Lancaster and Longman and Co. Paternoster-Row, 1810), iv.

⁸ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham* ed. Biller, 2. Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 14-16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

after the death of her parents. This role helped to strengthen her character. It enlarged her compassionate heart, deepened her love and concern for family members, and felt a sense of responsibility towards all of them. This filial connection did not hinder Kilham to cultivate a sense of independence in determining and navigating the course of her own future. Undeterred by the changes in her family situation, she took a step towards satisfying her religious quest.

In 1794 she joined the Methodist Society of Wesley but later associated with a group of Methodist secessionists led by Mr. Alexander Kilham who was also from Sheffield. He was already with a child from a previous marriage when he met Hannah. They married on 12 April 1798, but their union was terminated eight months later by Alexander's death.¹⁰ The birth of her own daughter brought her much consolation, but this too was short-lived. After three years of motherhood, she lost her infant girl to a fever epidemic that had severely struck Sheffield.

She decided to leave the Kilhamites, when she no longer felt the congenial spiritual atmosphere, she had enjoyed among them. Her decision was obviously based on a combination of factors and not just an inability to cope any longer with "the rigidity of Methodism"¹¹ as Christopher Fyfe suggests. The mournful events of the demise of her husband and her own daughter may not have been unconnected with her decision. She left the Kilhamites and in 1803 became a convinced member of the Religious Society of Friends known as the Quakers, or Friends.

The Quaker movement arose in the 17th century out of a need to experience true communion with God, a communion that expresses the unadulterated liberty that life in Christ communicates to the believer's heart. It was a search to "give expression to a freer interpretation of the Christian faith than was not possible under the orga-

¹⁰ QAF. Testimonies Concerning Ministers.

¹¹ Christopher Fyfe, "Hannah Kilham" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography in association with The British Academy: from the earliest times to the year 2000*, Vol. 31, Kebells-Knowlys, eds., H.C.G., Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 546-548. Dickson highlighted what Kilham observed within the Kilhamite group, see: Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 55.

nized churches of the period.”¹² In other words, quest for a fresh hermeneutic of the Christ-Christian relationship that reflects the freedom and spirituality of the true Gospel, was the reason behind Quakerism. Hence, the principal doctrinal belief of the Quaker consists in what they refer to as “the nearness of God” and the inward truth or light within each heart.¹³ It is this assuring closeness that Kilham wished to experience in a bid to answer the many questions that were now plaguing her mind.

Meanwhile, she remained a curious and reflective woman, thinking of ways to address the needs that clearly signalled for assistance or attention. This very character seemed to have generated a passion to act against social injustices of her time. She became actively involved in addressing the cause of the poor at home and Ireland, and also, supported efforts of the abolitionists.¹⁴ She pioneered the formation of the Society for the Betterment of the Poor in London on the basic philosophy of enabling the poor to help themselves thereby becoming “agents of their own improvement.”¹⁵ This view primarily underpinned her move towards the Ex-slave settlement in West Africa. With little thought about the sea, a *bête noire* in her life, she persuaded the Friends to start “school-mission” work in Africa.¹⁶

Schooling or education in general was seen as a key area that presented opportunities for Quaker involvement with other countries. Quakers exposed their children to as much useful education as their abilities permitted and supported them to learn modern languages such as French and Dutch, to place them advantageously for future engagements in foreign countries.¹⁷ But their thoughts were yet to extend to Africa.

¹² George H. Norman, *Essentials of Quakerism* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1957), 3.

¹³ Norman, *Essentials of Quakerism*, 3; Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 60.

¹⁴ Fyfe, “Hannah Kilham”, 547.

¹⁵ Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 135.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷ Some of the prominent business enterprises were owned by Quakers – Barclays, Lloyds, Guinness, Cardbury, and others. See: Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Limited/Pearson education, 2001), 146. Education was to include instruction in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and imbibing Christian principles and virtues through reading and the exemplary lives

Kilham probably initially heard about the plight of the African children recaptured and deposited in Sierra Leone through William Allen, a Quaker acquaintance who doubled as member of the African Institution, and the Anti-slavery Committee.¹⁸ Undoubtedly, more information was furnished through her niece Sarah Collier, wife of Rev. John Collier of CMS in Sierra Leone (1817-1819), and also through Edward Bickersteth, Assistant Secretary of CMS.¹⁹ Although her central interest in Africa was Sierra Leone, she had to seize the opportunity that The Gambia initially offered. With the assistance of two Gambian slaves, Sandanee and Mamadee, whom she had taught English, and whose freedom she had secured in England, she learnt two African languages (Jallof and Mandingo), developed elementary lessons for schools in them, and then set out for her first mission field in West Africa.

In 1823, she left with a four-man team for The Gambia where she established a school and a farm. The following year she made a familiarization visit to Sierra Leone and then a research visit in 1827²⁰ during which she collected thirty samples of different languages spoken in Sierra Leone. These were later published as *Specimens of African Languages spoken in the Colony of Sierra Leone*; this was a work of monumental proportion and reckoned by CMS as a valuable apparatus for its Missionaries.²¹ During that visit, she helped to establish two schools for the Wesleyans, and furnished them with school supplies.²² She also served as assistant teacher to Mrs. Maria Macfoy, head of the girls' section at a Government-supported school at Wellington Village. Kilham helped train a number of girls at the school, including one who went by the name Rosanna Kilham. Rosanna was later employed as Third Grade assistant teacher under

of parents. See: "Education" in *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London, from its first Institution* (James Philips, 1783), 77-79.

¹⁸ The Anti-Slavery Committee was set in 1783, and The African Institution was a Society for the advancement of Africa. Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 95.

¹⁹ Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 98-99, 102.

²⁰ She had travelled with a number of missionaries heading for Liberia during her second visit to Sierra Leone in 1827. *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham* ed. Biller, 319.

²¹ "West Africa" in *The Missionary Register for M DCCC XXIX containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Institutions for the Propagation of the Gospel: with the proceedings, at large, of the Church Missionary Society* (London: L.B. Seeley & Sons, 1929), 5.

²² *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham now at Sierra Leone*, 21.

Maria Macfoy.²³ On each of these visits, she had opportunity to enjoy the company of the scholars at the Christian Institution where Samuel Adjai Crowther was enrolled as one of the first pupils,²⁴ and inspired his principal by her education approach.²⁵

In 1830, Kilham again visited Sierra Leone in the company of four CMS missionaries one of whom was John Raban, a mentor to Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and one of the very few missionaries who took keen interest in language study. She most certainly heard about the young Crowther from Raban at this time, and subsequently, both he and Crowther got involved in her work. This engagement with Kilham may have motivated Crowther²⁶ to work on his own native Yoruba tongue, as it later did for Raban,²⁷ W.C. Thomson,²⁸ J.F. Schön²⁹ and other CMS agents who used her materials.³⁰ Thomson, the Society's official Translator,³¹ relied solely on Kilham's little collection, and consulted her phonetic guide³² to provide foundation for his study of the Temne language. He acknowledged this in a Report and said,

²³ CMS CA 1 M4. See, "Report for Wellington," March 26, 1828 and June 25, 1828 by G.W.E. Metzger.

²⁴ Christopher Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 139-140. Kilham was well acquainted with Rev. Charles L. F. Haensel who was head of the Institution in 1827.

²⁵ CMS CA 1 M5 Reverend C.L.F. Haensel to the Secretaries dated Fourah Bay, February 16th, 1829. The "passage" he makes reference to appears in Hannah Kilham Report on a Recent Visit to the Colony of Sierra Leone (London: William Phillips, 1828), 22.

²⁶ CMS CA 1/O79/3 Letter: From Samuel Crowther to Reverend W. Jowett, dated July 3, 1840.

²⁷ CMS CA 1 M5 Report of Gloucester for Lady Day Quarter, 1831, by Rev. J. Raban dated March 22nd, 1831. The "Eyo" is another Yoruba Dialect. See: J. D. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) p. 284.

²⁸ CMS CA 1 M8 See: Mr. W.C. Thomson's Report of Timmanee Translation, 24th September 1839.

²⁹ CMS CA 1 M6 See: Reverend J.F. Schön to the Secretaries, dated Kissey, August 14, 1833.

³⁰ P.A. Matemilola, "Yoruba Writing: An examination of the Beulah's bilingual and parallel bible (Yoruba and English)" *Journal of Nigerian Language Studies*. <http://inlan.edu.ng/matemilolayoruba2012.html> 20 June 2013.

³¹ CMS CA 1 M9 See: Report on the Mission of Research to the Timmenee Country by Re. I.U. Graf.

³² In respect to this sound guide, Thomson wrote, "In reference to this faint sound of r after the letter t see Mr. Nylander's Bullom Grammar. It is not easily perceived by Europeans; and Mr. John Mc.Cormack & Mrs. Kilham invariably overlooked it; but the omission renders many words ambiguous." CMS CA 1 M8 Mr. W.C. Thomson's Report of Timmanee Translations, Sept. 1838.

The brethren are aware that when I entered on the study of the Timmanee I had to commence with the arrangement of even an alphabet to express the sounds of the language; nothing then existing that could offer my assistance beyond the few words collected by Mrs. Kilham, about sixty [with quite a few inevitable corrections in meanings and pronunciations].³³

Moreover, he used these same materials to help Crowther and George Metzger (also of CMS) in their study of the Temne language.³⁴

Kilham set up a girls' school for Liberated Africans at Charlotte Village to apply her education theory.³⁵ She felt quite at home amidst the bustling life of an African community and appeared unbothered by what other Europeans complained about; the noise, dancing, drumming, and singing at night which they associated with depraved customs.³⁶ Her aim was to provide more access to education for females and to improve their educational attainment beyond the basic so that they become very productive instruments for Africa's advancement. She saw the women as integral to this, occupying central place in the plans for Africa. As neighbours, they had visited Kilham's evening meetings,³⁷ and interacted enough with her in the community. These provided the occasion for her to observe their lives, discover their abilities as they functioned in the communities, and to conclude that the women were capable of being leaders. At the time, the attention was on training Africa's male-child. But as a visionary, Kilham was able to see the place of females in transforming the African society from the early beginnings of the 19th century Missionary enterprise. She encouraged and built them up through instruction in their mother-tongues for them to rise up to this occa-

³³ CMS CA 1 M8 Mr. W.C. Thomson's Report of Timmanee Translation 24th September 1839.

³⁴ CMS CA 1/O79/3 Letter: From Samuel Crowther to Reverend W. Jowett, dated July 3, 1840. The substance of this letter appears also in the one he wrote to the Secretary bearing the same date. Consequent upon this Timmanee Mission, Crowther hoped, as he wrote, "the Timmanee shall be enlightened from the gross darkness in which they are still groping". CMS CA 1 M9 Samuel Crowther to the Secretary dated July 3, 1840. Temne language is spoken by one of the aboriginals of Sierra Leone. See: Chapter Two – People of Sierra Leone.

³⁵ CMS CA 1 M5 Correspondence from: "Reverend Raban to the Secretaries" written from Gloucester December 27, 1830. Also see: 'Queries Proposed by the Commissioners of West African Inquiry, in February 1826, with the Answers returned by Rev. J. Raban'; his response to Query No. 2 "II".

³⁶ CMS CA 1 M2 Letter from Mrs. John Pope to the Secretary dated December 31st 1823.

³⁷ *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham now at Sierra Leone*, 8.

sion. For her to promote this in an environment that was largely male-dominant and managed by colonial masters indicated that Kilham was indeed a revolutionary both in her precepts and her practice.

Kilham introduced other education providers to the system of instructing Africans through their own tongues by supplying instructional materials for schools. She left Sierra Leone on an assessment visit to Liberia and died at sea on her return voyage on 31 June 1832.³⁸ With support from Government, and Maria Macfoy, her chief Sierra Leonean collaborator for female education, the school continued on the plan of education Kilham had adopted for the Liberated Africans.³⁹

The Liberated Africans and Colonial Government Regulations in Sierra Leone

The Liberated Africans were one of three groups of emigrants that became synonymous with the settlement at Sierra Leone in the nineteenth century. The other two earlier mentioned were the Nova Scotians and the Maroons.

The name Liberated African is used mostly in reference to those Africans who were rescued from European slave ships headed for the Americas and settled in villages established around Freetown for that purpose from 1808 onwards.⁴⁰

An agreement between Government and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1824 had left the latter fully responsible for superintending the Liberated Africans, supplying, stationing, and supporting personnel in the schools, the Churches, and the Christian Institution. Government on its part, concentrated on providing and maintaining various building facilities for schools, worship, residence, and land for farming.⁴¹ In 1826, Governor Neil Campbell's admin-

³⁸ QAF. TEMP MSS 55/12 – Charlotte Giberne MSS, Letter to Peter Bedford dated May 7th 1832.

³⁹ TEMP MSS 55/12 – Letter to Peter Bedford.

⁴⁰ (PRO) CO 267/90 “Replies to Queries purported to Major Rowan on the 16th November to 30th November 1828” 1st Query, 2.

⁴¹ Sumner, *Education in Sierra Leone*, 31.

istration overturned much of that with grievous consequences especially on the general welfare of the Liberated Africans.

He introduced a new set of regulations that dispensed with Missionary superintendence and replaced them with Managers and Sub-Managers of villages. He replaced the rations with a six months allowance at three (3) pence per day⁴² for newly registered adults in the villages. Women received the same allowance as men but only as singles. They were struck off upon marriage to “men who had dwellings and [considered] capable of maintaining wives,”⁴³ but no clear criterion was seen on how that capability was determined. The condition may have served against abuse of women, but it is doubtful the extent to which it was upheld in practice because it was instituted mainly to curb Government expenditure.⁴⁴ The period of receiving allowances was later curtailed to three months for women with an exceptional clause, “unless in extraordinary cases, approved of by the Superintendent”;⁴⁵ that may have extended it to six months.

By 1830, over 21,000 Liberated Africans had been settled in the villages and children accounted for about one-third. A system of Indentures was also adopted whereby some “respectable”⁴⁶ individuals were allowed to request for a number of Liberated African children as apprentices with a view to help such children develop some useful industry.⁴⁷ Hannah Kilham’s inquiry into the conditions of the Liberated Africans revealed some gross abuses in the system. She noted that “many of the poor natives who take the children as apprentices, imagine that the money which they pay for the indenture, constitutes a kind of purchase of the child, and that they are then at liberty to do with him or her whatever they please.”⁴⁸ Apprenticeship

⁴² CA1/04/26 See: No. 4 Rations in “Extracts from the Regulations December 18th, 1826”, p. 52.

⁴³ Sierra Leone Archives Fourah Bay College Freetown, Liberated African Department Letter Book (Henceforth, SLA/LB) 1827-28. Letter from Thomas Cole, Assistant Superintendent to James Johnson, Manager Mountain District, dated 22^d May, 1828, p. 29 JAN 79 00224.

⁴⁴ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 160.

⁴⁵ CA1/04/26 See: No. 4 Rations in “Extracts from the Regulations December 18th, 1826”, 52.

⁴⁶ SLA/LB 1827-28 Letter to Macfoy, p. 29 JAN 79 00222.

⁴⁷ SLA/LB 1827-28 Letter from Liberated African Department to Melville Esquire dated 20 June 1827, p. 29 JAN 79 00089.

⁴⁸ Hannah Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction through The Native Languages* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1830), 3-4.

of children continued alongside child labour.⁴⁹ It was pursued at the expense of education, and without the oversight of the Missionaries, girls especially became vulnerable to the immoral lifestyles of men.⁵⁰

As the fight against slave trade intensified, an influx of recaptured slaves from diverse backgrounds continued to expand the population of Sierra Leone. This posed a series of challenges for both the authorities. A correspondence from Alexander Findlay dated 4 September 1830, highlighted the presence of a “neglected population of 2,158 adults and 1,013 children”, without “any resident Clergyman”⁵¹ since 1828, and in many instances without teachers. The situation created further difficulty on girl’s education and on the entire Liberated African female population who already experienced disadvantages in education provision and other facilities. Conversely, the demography provided a unique environment so that, Walls describes the Sierra Leone of that period as “a vast language laboratory for the study of all the languages of West Africa, as well as a source for native speakers as missionaries”.⁵² It offered the right context for Hannah Kilham to introduce her theory of Native Language Education - instruction of Africans through the medium of their own languages. She shared in the hope of the founders that Sierra Leone may become a light and a blessing to the almost unexplored continent of Africa, and for her, women and girls had an important role to play.⁵³

The Status of Females in the Liberated African Villages

Women and girls constituted a significant proportion of the Liberated African population. In May 1821, for instance, the Liberated African Department (LAD) recorded a total of 122 males and 116 fe-

⁴⁹ Sumner, *Education in Sierra Leone*, 36.

⁵⁰ “Sierra Leone” in *The Missionary Register for M DCCC XXIX containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Institutions for the Propagation of the Gospel: with the proceedings, at large, of the Church Missionary Society*. (London: L.B. Seeley & Sons, 1929) 7-10.

⁵¹ SLA/LB 1830-1831 No.4, p. 29 JAN 79 00104.

⁵² A.F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (New York, Maryknoll/Edinburgh: Orbis Books/T & T Clark, 2002) 158

⁵³ D.L. Sumner, *Education in Sierra Leone* (Freetown: The Government of Sierra Leone, 1963) 3; Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1830), 1.

males recaptured from a single Spanish schooner, *Anna Maria*, while an even greater number of girls than boys, 72 and 24 respectively was entered for the French slave Brig *Le Getib Betzey* a year later.⁵⁴

Despite this stark reality, the female population received unequal attention, and they were generally under-represented in provisions and opportunities offered. This was evident in the three areas highlighted below: Educational Provision, Espousal Method and Settlement Allowances, and they clearly served to highlight the place of Women and girls in the Liberated African Villages which Kilham was set to redefine. We shall now consider the status of females in the Liberated African Villages under these parameters.

Educational Provision

Education of Liberated African children was a key strategy of the various groups that were involved with the Colony. It was seen as a fundamental means to Christianise Africa. Missionary Societies established schools to train Africans to model European civilisation which was inseparably connected with the Christianity they offered.⁵⁵ As early as 1822, the celebrated Governor of the Colony, Sir Charles MacCarthy, had emphasised the need and wisdom behind putting premium on female education. In a correspondence to the CMS Secretary he wrote, “I have attempted to explain both by letter and verbally the great importance to Africa, if possible to educate the females in order to raise them up to that rank to which they were intended.”⁵⁶ Almost fifteen years later, the main substance of that statement was re-echoed by Reverend John Weeks of CMS in what appeared to be an appeal to the Society. He emphasised that “the importance of establishing a Christian Institution for educating [and]

⁵⁴ Sierra Leone Archives FBC: Liberated African Department Statement of Disposals 1821-33”. See: Records for 7 May 1821 and 27 May 1822, -6 FEB 79 00001-2, 11-12.

⁵⁵ The ‘objects’ of the St. George’s Bay Company: “to colonize a small part of the coast of Africa, introduce civilization among the natives, and to cultivate the soil...[to abjure and abhor] traffic of human bodies...to maintain peace...to punish crimes; to govern...to open school for reading, writing, and accounts...to receive and instruct the children of the natives” Sumner, *Education in Sierra Leone* (Freetown: The Government of Sierra Leone, 1963), 4.

⁵⁶ CMS Archives: CA 1/M2 “His Excellency Sir C. MacCarthy to the Secretary”.

training suitable young women schoolmistresses [had] long been felt”⁵⁷ and that something must be done to address the need.

Up to that point, no decisive step had been taken towards female education. The state of Liberated African education on the Settlement was very unsatisfactory. The few schools in the villages that had provisions for girls and women had no female teachers for most of the time. Where instruction was given to girls, it was principally confined to reading, writing [and] needlework and that which the women received was very elementary.⁵⁸ Such education essentially prepared females only for marriage life. It did not seek to harness their full potential hence, thus denying them of educational opportunities and other attainments to become contributing members in other spheres of society. It was this lack in education provision for Liberated Africans that the Quaker School-Missionary, Hannah Kilham, sought to address by focusing on females in the method of instruction she promulgated on the Settlement.

Espousal Method

In the area of marriage, women were treated like commodities in a market place or goods awaiting delivery. The following extracts from C.L.F. Haensel’s letter to the Assistant Secretary may best illustrate how Liberated African women entered wedlock:

Government encourages marriage of Liberated Africans, of every description, with women quite newly landed from Slave Ships. As soon as a cargo arrives, the men who want wives come from all quarters, and obtain permission to go into the yard where the Liberated Africans are kept before their distribution to the Villages. There they make acquaintances with the women, and make their proposals: if accepted, they apply for a license; and nothing remains but for the minister to add the religious sanction.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ CMS Archives: CA 1/M7 “Mr. J. Weeks to the Lay Secretary”, 300.

⁵⁸ CMS Archives: CA 1/M4 “Queries proposed by the Commissioners of West African Inquiry, in February 1826, with the Answers returned by Rev. J. Raban.” See: Query 2. IV, p.317. Also see CA 1/M4 “Report of Regent Town for Michaelmas 1826, by Rev. W.K. Betts, and his letter to the Secretary dated February 9, 1829. CA 1/M5, 73

⁵⁹ CMS Archives: CA 1/M4, letter dated May 30, 1827.

It must be noted that only CMS ministers or officials of the Established Church solemnised matrimony. Like Haensel, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary, John Courties, also painted an unfavourable picture in his assessment of inhabitants in the Colony. In a letter dated 5th July 1827, he stated, “Religion is but making slow advance in the Colony, the morals of the people are exceeding depraved. The Marriage union is very little regarded, the Sabbath is very poorly observed, by thousands”.⁶⁰ Courties’ description of African morality as “extremely depraved” revealed the general European prejudice and myopic view of Africans. To them, Africa by all standards of civilization and religious development was dim – a dark continent, and its people grossly inferior, except for their physical strength, which made them worthy of the meanest and “toughest kind of labour”.⁶¹ However, few Europeans like Kilham, and Thomas Fowell Buxton who knew their own history, recognised their common origin with Africans, “members of the great human family”,⁶² and saw Africans as people with the same capacities to learn, acquire knowledge, develop, and enjoy the same blessings.⁶³

Government required Managers of Liberated African Villages to ensure that single women in their respective villages were “married to men of their own country as soon as possible.”⁶⁴ If the unmarried men of a village appeared too slow to pick a wife, or neglected to

⁶⁰ Wesleyan Methodist Society (London) Archive, West Africa Correspondence: Box no.:279 Sierra Leone 1827-1828.

⁶¹ James Stewart, Dawn in the Dark Continent or Africa and ITS missions, The Duff Missionary Lectures for 1902 (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1903), 357.

⁶² Report of the CMFAI, 7

⁶³ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade Part I* (New York: Cosimos Classics, 2005), 13-14. Perhaps what we hear from Buxton and perceive in his confession is what should constitute Africa’s main occupation in terms of its Christian engagement with the West: assisting the Church in the West to embark on a process of recovery of its past; something that Kwame Bediako gives attention to this in his discussion on ‘African theology—A relevance beyond Africa?’ There has been a period of discontinuity and Kwame Bediako points out that “Europe shares with Africa a pre-Christian primal religious heritage.” Whereas Europe essentially suppressed and in some way obliterated its primal traditions, the retention and preservation of Africa’s own has helped to bring about an understanding of the relationship and “significance” of these primal traditions to Christianity. Primal religions have become “the religious traditions most closely associated historically with the continuing Christian presence in the world”. Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Yaoundé, Cameroun - Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Editions Clé/Regnum Africa, 2000), 58-60.

⁶⁴ SLA/LB 1828-1830, Letter from Charles Cole to Mr. Pierce dated 24th September 1829, -5 FEB 79 00205-206.

marry, the women were transferred to another village where espousal was immediate. By this means the women were settled and struck off from government rations. It was also not uncommon for soldiers to kidnap or carry them off during their passage from detention centres to the villages.⁶⁵ Those placed in schools also waited for marriage. The main condition the colonial authority operated on to grant approval for marriage was whether the women were “manageable”. The Chief Superintendent, answering a Query of the Commissioners of Enquiry of 1827 said,

There is no particular age or circumstance attended to, when the Females are manageable, they have generally found husbands and been discharged from the school receiving no further support from the Government unless their husbands were receiving Rations, in which case the like allowances have been extended to such Females.⁶⁶

One serious implication from the above statement is that Liberated African females were not considered on their own merits – that as fellow recaptives with the males they were equally eligible for government supports, and employment. Their eligibility to enjoy certain privileges depended largely on the circumstances of their prospective husbands or male counterparts. The fact also, that the authorities took “no particular” cognizance of the age of females when they gave approval for marriage raises the question of abuse against women and girls. Instructions to Village Managers was for women to be disposed of “as soon as you [they] possibly can”,⁶⁷ and this urgency put some of them in situations where they even encouraged the newly arrived women to cohabit.⁶⁸ Women and girls’ disposal was tied in every way to the economic exigencies of the Colonial Government, and marriage became a means not to uphold moral sanctity of the Liberated African society, but to address fiscal deficit of government. This may have been part of the composite issues that

⁶⁵ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 138.

⁶⁶ CO 267/92 Sierra Leone Commissioners of Enquiry 1827, Volume 2 Appendix B & C. No. 10, Replies of Mr. Joseph Reffell Chief Superintendent to queries addressed to him on his arrival in the Colony similar to those Graciously answered by Mr. Cole as Stated in the foregoing document. See answer to Query 104, 68.

⁶⁷ SLA/LB 1827-28 Letter from Charles Cole, -5 FEB 00206.

⁶⁸ SLA/LB 1828-1830 Letter from Assistant Superintendent, Thomas Cole to Mr. Thomas Macfoy, Manager Wellington, -5 FEB 79 00208.

led Kilham to investigate the conditions under which the Liberated Africans lived.

Hannah Kilham's Inquiry into Liberated African Welfare

In Kilham's book *Claims of West Africa*, published in 1830, the year she took residence in the Liberated African village at Charlotte, she presented an assessment of the state of Sierra Leone with a view of highlighting things that "impeded its more rapid advancement."⁶⁹ Part of her conclusion was that the Colony in Sierra Leone was still "in a state of infancy"⁷⁰ and had not "exhibited all [the] encouraging marks of advancement, either in civil or religious knowledge, which have been anxiously desired, and which indeed [were] still hoped for by many"⁷¹. In that book, she raised questions that had to do with the general welfare and management of the Liberated Africans and the need to keep benefactors sufficiently informed of the state of affairs in the colony. She saw lapses in the adequate supervision of Liberated African children under instruction and that no proper records on their population. She wrote, "we do not learn...how many have lived, and how many have died...how many in the school [who] *can read*, and how many [who] know English as far as to *understand* what they read."⁷² The validity of that assessment is seen in a statement that appears in a letter from H.I. Ricketts, Lt. Governor of Sierra Leone, to Sir George Murray, Principal Secretary of State of the Colony, and may not have been unconnected with Kilham's assertions. It stated,

I regret exceedingly that the omission should have taken place...as well as for the delay which has occurred in transmitting the reports, but as I have now by frequent visits to the different settlements made myself more acquainted with the affairs of the Liberated African Department, I shall take care that in the future the periodical returns and reports are regularly furnished.

⁶⁹ Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷¹ The book was written after she had established the work in The Gambia. Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, 1, 11.

⁷² Kilham, Hannah, *The Claims of West Africa*, 4.

I have the honor now to transmit copies of the last Annual Returns, and half yearly Returns to 30th June 1829, accompanied by a Report, on the Liberated Africans up to that period.⁷³

Although Rickett indicated that some form of reports had been prepared, he took full responsibility for the inadequacies noticed, and undertook to prevent future occurrences.

With regards to education, Kilham reported that the means of instruction acted as an impediment to children because, “the system of using English lessons only, for children, to whom English [was] quite a foreign language...can be expected that the lessons thus learned should prove any more than mere *sound* to the pupil”.⁷⁴ For her, the crux of the matter for the advancement of Sierra Leone and a realisation of the dreams of her founders, rested in the primary acquisition of education using the native languages, where English would become a secondary door for intelligible intercourse with the people.

Her rich experience as a schoolteacher, and schoolmistress of her own boarding school for girls, coupled with the outstanding Quaker history of commitment to girls’ education, and her positive view of African women, informed her conviction and put her in a position to succeed. She was concerned that lack of a purposeful use of a people’s own language will not only affect the reception of the Christian Gospel and its transformational role in Africa, but also, progress in civilization that was hoped for. This idea of Native Language as medium of instruction was undoubtedly rooted in her knowledge of the 18th century Scottish experience with the Gaelic Highlanders and Islanders.⁷⁵ She had discovered that when the Scottish Society for

⁷³ Liberated African Letter Book 1828-1830, -5 FEB 79 00196.

⁷⁴ Kilham, Hannah, *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction through The Native Languages* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1830), 4, 5.

⁷⁵ When the Scottish Society for the promoting Christian Knowledge was founded in 1709, it established school institutions as key instruments to disseminate the Christian faith and to lift the population from ignorance. They employed Native teachers to teach in English and forbade them and the children from communicating in their own tongues. This however proved counter-productive. With the recommendation of Native teachers, the Gaelic tongue was introduced in the school system and instructional materials in the vernacular, and later the Bible, were made available to instruct the children. They adopted a “comparative method” of using the Gaelic language to teach English, and the result was phenomenal. Christianity felt at home in the Gaelic language, by becoming a potent vehicle for disseminating the faith among the vast

Promoting Christian Knowledge substituted the Gaelic tongue for English as the medium of instruction for the Gaelic speakers, it set the Gaelic community off to champion their own development. Consequently, Kilham believed nothing best assisted Africa apart from enabling Africans to be leaders who were plainly literate in their own languages and actively involved in charting their own future.

Apart from the problem of the use of “English only” medium of instruction in Liberated African schools, she observed that no uniform system of instruction was practised. William Singleton, her earlier emissary on a fact-finding mission to Sierra Leone, had noticed that some Liberated African schools were conducted on Andrew Bell’s plan or the National System of education. We can understand Singleton’s observation, himself a non-conformist, and as a Quaker he promoted a rival but similar education system, the British System or Lancasterian.⁷⁶ This latter method had contributed to the instruction of thousands of children in England and to the training of many people in foreign lands.⁷⁷ Kilham therefore saw the Lancasterian System as something that would promote African education and serve the cause of Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone and beyond.

In 1827, boys’ and girls’ population numbered 1,686 and 1, 377 respectively of a total population of 10, 637 Liberated Africans.⁷⁸ There was only one Liberated African girls’ school in the Colony in 1828, and it was run by Mrs. Davey but it was later closed down by the Colonial Administration in consequence of what was described as misconduct on the part of her husband.⁷⁹ At the end of 1829, there were in total 1,252 school children (785 boys and 467 girls) in 13

Gaelic Highland and Island population, thus, setting in what Walls rightly refers to as “a cultural revolution”. This change released the people to express themselves in various literary productions and to utilise them. Andrew F. Walls, “Three Hundred Years of Scottish Missions” in Kenneth Ross (ed.), *Roots and Fruits: retrieving Scotland’s Missionary Story* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014) 5-7.

⁷⁶ Kilham, Hannah, *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction through The Native Languages.*, (London: Harvey and Darton, 1830) 59.

⁷⁷ Mitchell, ‘Diego Thomson in the Americas, 3.

⁷⁸ CMS CA 1 M4 State of the Population, Casualties and Employment of Liberated Africans connected with the CMS 1827.

⁷⁹ CMS Archives: CA 1/M4 “Mr. John Weeks to the Secretary” dated February 1, 1828, 434; for closure of school see: CA 1/M6 “Rev. C.L.F. Haensel to the Secretaries,” 28th December 1831, 40. Rev. Thomas Davey was CMS Missionary assigned to Bathurst Village where they ran two schools.

Schools operated by the LAD and CMS.⁸⁰ The LAD operated eight of these schools solely, comprising 444 boys and 201 girls. Two Schools (80 boys and 132 girls) were under the superintendence of CMS with teachers paid by the LAD. The remaining 5 Schools, that is, 40% of the children (335 male and 266 female scholars), were directly and solely managed by CMS. In all CMS had charge over 65% of the total number of children that were enrolled in the schools. The total number of girls in the entire school system was 467 (that is, 37% of the total enrollment). Of these, 398 were under CMS superintendence or oversight, representing 81% of the total number of girls enrolled in the schools. This was quite significant for two reasons. First, it meant that CMS had greater responsibility for girls' education in the Liberated African Villages, and that they determined its future. Could they have realised this? Second, since Kilham's books were used as basic texts for CMS schools, it meant that directly and indirectly, she was able to influence over 80% of the total number of females enrolled in schools, and they accounted for one-third of the overall enrollment in the Schools.

At the end of June that same year, 1,123 people (563 males and 560 females) were reportedly newly settled in the villages and the total number of males and females under 14 years of age for that period amounted to 2,799 and 2,195 respectively.⁸¹ The education provision was therefore not only woefully inadequate it provided females with "fewer advantages in education than the boys"⁸² so that the female population remained greatly under-represented⁸³ even though they had no deficiency to imbibe instruction.⁸⁴ Her arrival in Sierra Leone in 1830, with a proposal to concentrate on education of the Liberated Africans girls could therefore, not have received anything less than

⁸⁰ SLA/LB 1830-1831 No.4, Returns for the period ending 31st December 1829, p. 29 JAN 79 00105.

⁸¹ PRO/CO 267/98 Return of the Number of Liberated Africans Under the Charge of the General Superintendent, 1st January to 30th June 1829.

⁸² QAF. TEMP MSS 101/6 Letter to John Capper dated 27 May 1830.

⁸³ Liberated African Department Letter Book 1830-1831 No. 4, p. 29 JAN 00105. Society beliefs about women's roles were firmly fixed in Britain. Females were generally given less education and prevented from pursuing professional careers. They were treated as "inferior to men", meant to marry, reproduce and be their "property". This gender stereotype was transplanted to Africa and combined with the cultural view of male to account for one main cause of the disparity between boys and girls in education and other attainments.

⁸⁴ QAF. TEMP MSS 101/6 Letter to John Capper dated 27 May 1830.

an immediate approval from Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Findlay, and a provision of every moral and logistical support she needed from them administratively.

Hannah Kilham's Response to Liberated African Education

In order to appreciate Hannah Kilham's response to the education needs of Liberated Africans, we need to understand her theory of mission and the notion of the Native Agency that underpinned her education approach for Africans.

Hannah Kilham understood mission essentially as the propagation of the Christian faith in the world, by bringing the good news of Jesus Christ as Saviour of the humankind everywhere.⁸⁵ Her desire was to share the love of God so that Africans would also experience the privileges of the gospel and through that extend the Kingdom of God.

As early as 1819, she conversed with Missionaries headed for Sierra Leone on the prospects of reducing unwritten languages of Africa.⁸⁶ For her, the discouraging reports and prevailing circumstances in Sierra Leone (diseases, deaths, lack of personnel) only confirmed her position on African agency, that training of natives was the answer to Missionary predicaments. Her trying experiences in Africa did not alter this conviction. Instead they reinforced her stance on the indispensable role of Native Agency for instructing Africans and for effectively establishing and extending the Christian faith in Africa. With this conviction, Kilham concentrated her energies to espouse Native Agency as a worthwhile investment in Africa.⁸⁷ For her, Native Agency included the African, their tongues (languages and dialects), and their indigenous resources. It meant training and employing Africans to take leading roles in the Christianisation process of their continent and helping them to recognise and use their indigenous resources to accomplish the missionary task. In a lucid and conclusive statement, she declared:

⁸⁵ See Report of the CMFAI, p. 16. Olav Guttom Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education: an inquiry into the place of world evangelisation in Western Protestant Ministerial Training with particular reference to Alexander Duff's Chair of Evangelistic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Oslo: Egede Institute, 1955), 14.

⁸⁶ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 132.

⁸⁷ Kilham, *Report of a Visit*, 22.

It is the Africans themselves that must be the Travellers, and Instructors, and Improvers of Africa: -- let Europeans aid them with Christian kindness, as senior brethren would the younger and feebler members of their Father's family—but let it be kept in mind to what perpetual interruption every purpose must be subject, that is made dependent upon European life on the African shores.

Let a full and fair opportunity be given, if by Divine favour and assistance it may be so permitted, for preparing Agents of intelligence and Christian feeling from among the Natives themselves.”⁸⁸

From the above statement, we can clearly deduce what constituted a Mission Theory for Kilham by considering four parameters. She distinguished the role of Africans from that of Europeans, described the kind of relationship that must exist between them, and suggested how to prepare Africans Process to ensure they took up their leading role.

Kilham designated Africans as the “Travellers”, the “Instructors”, and the “Improvers”⁸⁹ of their own continent. As travellers, they were the ones who should take leading responsibility to traverse Africa with the gospel by opening new frontiers and through this, serve as its true Missionaries. In terms of communication and the use of African indigenous resources for educational purposes, they understood their people better and could communicate intelligibly with them in their own languages. For Kilham, this made them effective “instructors” of their people more than any European. By their commitment to this charge and by exemplary lifestyle, they would become improvers of their own continent.

She assigned the role of helpers to Europeans. By referring to them as “senior brethren...of their Father's family”,⁹⁰ she sought to point to God or Christ, as the common denominator that brought Europeans and Africans into a filial relationship. As experienced members of the same family therefore, she urged Europeans to come alongside Africans to help them with “Christian kindness”,⁹¹ that is, to

⁸⁸ Kilham, *Report of a Recent Visit*, 22. Part of this information also appears in: Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 330.

⁸⁹ Kilham, *Report of a Recent Visit*, 22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Kilham, *Report of a Recent Visit*, 22.

serve Africans with a sense of compassion that pointed to Christ. In this, Kilham re-echoed one reason given by her Africa project committee (the Committee Managing a Fund, raised by some Friends, for the purpose of Promoting African Instruction (CMFAI), that justify their engagement with Africa. They saw the demonstration of Christian Love and Stewardship as a convincing reason for any involvement with Africa. They understood the Christian responsibility of being sensitive to the worth and needs of other persons as an underlying factor, and therefore saw such engagement as a means of sharing with Africans “some measure of the blessings and benefits”⁹² the Friends have received from the Lord, and in this way also, acting in obedience to command of Jesus Christ to love others.

Kilham was not oblivious of the destructive tendency of a relationship created on the posture of “senior brethren” mentality. She cautioned Europeans against making Africans perpetually dependent on them on African shores. Instead she advocated an approach that would empower Africans and release Europeans from leadership. To facilitate this, she called Europeans to employ every means to give Africans a “full and fair opportunity” by providing training at various levels and allowing them access, to prepare them to assume their role as agents in charting the course for Africa. This helps us understand why Kilham put premium on African education – a woman that was undeniably way ahead of her time. She set off for West Africa with well spelt out objectives of reducing African languages, and training Africans to be leading agents in the translation of their tongues and the evangelisation of Africa. She remained resolute in her belief in the primary agency of Native Africans for rooting and spreading Christianity in Africa.⁹³ I shall now consider how Kilham tried to redefine the place of Liberated African females through the education provision she made in the Colony.

Establishment of School and Translation Work

The year 1830 marked the highpoint in Kilham’s foreign mission school-education plans when she returned to Africa and established a school for Liberated African girls in Sierra Leone. Her purpose for

⁹² Report of the CMFAI, 14.

⁹³ See Report of the ‘Committee for Managing a Fund raised by some Friends for the purpose of promoting African Instruction’, 4. See, Kilham, *Claims of West Africa*, 7.

her returning to Sierra Leone was expressly stated in the preface of a book published as a collection of *Extracts* of her letters:

to promote in any way she could, the spiritual and temporal improvement of the Africans, by christian (sic) instruction, preparing translations from the various dialects, attention to their general behaviour, and by inculcating the first principles of christianity (sic) and morality thus endeavouring to improve their degraded condition.⁹⁴

Kilham intended to pursue this object by focusing on girls' education. She presented her Native Language education plan to Governor Findlay,⁹⁵ in December 1830 and received his assurance of all assistance to facilitate Friends' objectives.⁹⁶ He must have also acquainted himself with or learned about Kilham's method of education during his service in the Gambia where Kilham had first established a mission a school.

With his approval⁹⁷ she took residence in the Government House at Charlotte,⁹⁸ a Liberated African Village in the Mountain District, and set up a school with 20 Liberated African girls⁹⁹ approved by Findlay, and 6 Assistants¹⁰⁰ sent from Mrs. Macfoy's school in Wellington. She believed the Charlotte Village environment compared more favourable health wise than almost all the other villages, and unlike other Europeans, she was not disturbed by the way of life of

⁹⁴ QAF "Introduction" Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham now at Sierra Leone*, reprinted from the Friends Magazine (London-Bristol: Edmund Fry-Wright and Bagnall, 1831), 3.

⁹⁵ QAF MS Vol. 333 Journal of Richard Smith, See: Richard Smith's entry for 8th December 1823 in "Voyage to the Gambia and proceedings at Bathurst and Berkou 10th month 24th 1823 to 20th of 6th Month 1824".

⁹⁶ Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 170.

⁹⁷ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters*, 6.

⁹⁸ Sierra Leone Archives Fourah Bay College Freetown, Secretary of State Despatches (Henceforth, SLA/SoS) 11 July 1827 to 10 December 1832, No.16. See: "Commencement of Lieutenant Governor Findlay's Correspondence in 1831"

⁹⁹ CMS CA 1 M5 Correspondence from: "Reverend Raban to the Secretaries" written from Gloucester December 27, 1830. Also see: 'Queries Proposed by the Commissioners of West African Inquiry, in February 1826, with the Answers returned by Rev. J. Raban'; his response to Query No. 2 "II".

¹⁰⁰ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters*, 7, 8, 11. The girls were sent to assist Kilham and they also needed some improvement in their training. Since she had also worked with the Wellington School, they were most probably familiar faces providing the strongly needed help to start off this pioneering work.

the people.¹⁰¹ Her school comprised of girls drawn from diverse backgrounds and of varying ages, newly landed from a liberated slave vessel.¹⁰² It marked the first effort at a deliberate programme of education for Liberated African girls' in the Sierra Leone Colony.

Apart from Findlay's support, CMS Missionaries in Sierra Leone were also available to assist Kilham succeed in her plans. CMS Secretaries had expressed the desire for their Missionaries to be there for Kilham, and Dandeson Coates, one of the Secretaries, communicated this to Raban at Gravesend, England.¹⁰³ Raban conveyed the material content of that information to his colleagues. He earnestly hoped to see a relationship of cooperation and cordiality between them and Mrs. Kilham - one that was not going to disrupt the harmony that was so desirous of the "holy work"¹⁰⁴ entrusted to them, and they did not fail in this regard.

Kilham assistants also proved helpful in her school. When Governor Findlay visited the school, he saw noticeable progress in their appearance and performance. He delightfully sent this report to the Secretary of State:

I placed twenty newly emancipated Girls under her [Mrs. Kilham's] charge and I was much pleased in Six weeks after to see the cleanly appearance of those children, and that they not only knew their letters, but could repeat several sentences in English, she has since applied for more children, and I gave her fifteen out of the last slave vessel sent in here making 35 under her care.¹⁰⁵

This number later increased to over 70 girls after Findlay closed down the Bathurst school (supervised by CMS) and put 37 more girls under Kilham's custody. His action demonstrated the true confidence and interest he had in Kilham's education system.¹⁰⁶ This most probably informed the thought he later expressed about John

¹⁰¹ CMS CA 1 M2, Letter from Mrs. Pope, dated December 31st 1823.

¹⁰² Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters*, 10-11.

¹⁰³ CMS CA 1 M5 Correspondence from: Rev. Raban to the Secretaries dated 27, 1830. Raban received the message while he and his colleagues and Kilham, were all waiting in a ship at Gravesend on their way to Sierra Leone.

¹⁰⁴ CMS CA 1 M5 Correspondence from: Rev. Raban to the Secretaries dated 27, 1830.

¹⁰⁵ See: Secretary of States [SOS] Despatches for 1831, "Commencement of Lieutenant Governor Findlay's Correspondences for 1831", no. 16, 7 May 1831.

¹⁰⁶ SL Archives FBC p. -5 FEB 79 00210. Letter from T. Cole Assistant Superintendent Liberated African Department to J. Weeks, Esquire dated 5th January 1831.

Raban's effort at collecting vocabulary of African languages for publication when he said, "this might be all very well if persons could be found sufficiently conversant in those languages who could undertake to go into the interior of Africa amongst the various Tribes, and teach them in their native tongue."¹⁰⁷

Kilham's School ran on the Monitorial System¹⁰⁸ of education and introduced the children to translation work. She instructed the older girls and trained them as monitors to teach and care for the younger ones. She paid due attention to the development of abilities and of piety in the lives of especially those who would serve as teachers.¹⁰⁹ A few of the much older girls became her Native Assistant teachers and some of them served as aides in her translation work.¹¹⁰ Whereas some of them spoke English in addition to their native tongues, none was literate in their own languages.¹¹¹ Part of Kilham's educational philosophy was to teach people so well that they became "helpers of others."¹¹² In this way, her children made satisfactory progress in their schoolwork to the admiration of many including the Governor.

The curriculum included religious lessons, domestic training, character development, simple vocabulary and sentences in English and the Native Languages, reading, spelling Native and English words, writing, translation and simple word formation.¹¹³ The sequence of instruction was as follows: They started with translation of picture

¹⁰⁷ Sierra Leone Archives Fourah Bay College Freetown, Secretary of State Despatches (Henceforth, SLA/SoS) 11 July 1827 to 10 December 1832. See: "Commencement of Lieutenant Governor Findlay's Correspondence in 1831" No. 16, Letter dated 7 May 1831. Findlay was of the view that as an English Colony, children should learn to speak the English language. This concurred with Kilham's plan to teach English as a second language to the Native tongue.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Lancaster introduced the use of monitors in School-education in the early 9th Century.

¹⁰⁹ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, 41.

¹¹⁰ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham*, 8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹² See, *Ibid.*, 7, 18. Mora Dickson, one of the very few who worked with Kilham's original manuscripts, observed that "Written across the top of her [Kilham's] African language lessons was the sentence: 'Let each one who can read these lessons teach another to read'—a slogan which as 'Each one, teach one' was to ring round West Africa over a century later." See, Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, 210.

¹¹³ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters*, 8, 10, 17; Kilham described Ninga, one of the girls in her school, as "one of the best and cleverest...she helps in translation better than any [of the other girls]", 10.

lessons - tangible objects, then learned to write on slates, and to read elementary lessons in writing, then few and simple letter combinations using the 5 vowels beginning with “e” and joining it to one consonant after another.

Kilham’s confidence in her system deepened following a satisfactory assessment of her Native teachers after few days of work with them. She was convinced that they were not only of “good talents” but that the method of attaining the Native language system of instruction was also “easy” and effective. Consequently, she devoted her attention to instructing the teachers and a few monitors who took responsibility for instructing the rest of the classes.¹¹⁴

She combined instruction with translation because she believed that “Translations are as indispensably requisite to the cause of Christian education in Heathen lands, as Schools are necessary to the effectual diffusion of the Holy Scriptures.”¹¹⁵ Two of her school materials, *African Tracts* and *The Sheet Lessons*, produced for African schools, proved very valuable to CMS and they remained recommended texts for their schools.¹¹⁶ A.B.C. Sibthorpe, a Sierra Leone historian, reporting three decades later, also noted that these books became very popular in the school system.¹¹⁷

Moreover, Kilham favoured the combination of “school-instruction” with “useful employment” – that is, skills training. Like many women on the mission field in the 19th century, who became teachers of Native Christian communities, Kilham “inculcated [in the children] the domestic skills of cooking, sewing, tailoring, laundry, and kitch-

¹¹⁴ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham*, p. 17. In order to introduce this system in the mixed schools, Kilham proposed for a certain time to be set aside each day to teach lessons in the respective Native language of the largest group represented in the school. She was convinced that by introducing the children to English words and sentences of “common and requisite use, and by having these words and sentences read to them in [their Native Languages, example, Kosso], with English translation” even those who intended to settle in the colony will be helped to read and write in their own tongues. She believed procedure had the potential to greatly help Africans better understand English.

¹¹⁵ Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, 23.

¹¹⁶ CMS CA 1 M5 C.L.F. Haensel to the Secretaries, February 16th 1829, 69.

¹¹⁷ A.B.C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone*, fourth edition (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1970), 46.

en gardening: what has been called the ‘reshaping and reclothing’ of indigenous society.”¹¹⁸ She believed that,

girls should be taught from books the theory of domestic business, and in turns (sic) the practice of it. The boys should be taught agriculture and mechanics. Some general directions might be given by books, on a very easy scale, with respect to these different acquirements.¹¹⁹

The separation of “domestic business” from agriculture along gender lines may raise questions especially regarding the notion of domesticity and females. Kilham however had a different understanding of domesticity. Any attempt to charge her of gender stereotype in this respect would be an unfair judgment. She was not promoting gender distinction. As part of her School’s curriculum, and unlike the general practice at the time, Kilham was advocating and introducing the teaching of “domestic business” as a subject and course of study that should include both theoretical and practical aspects. In this way, girls training would not prepare them to function only as wives and mothers but as teachers as well.

In addition, she desired to see specialised schools for young men, where, besides learning to read, they would receive short instructions in natural and religious subjects.¹²⁰ This way she also made provision for the education of the African male child. For her, education of children comprised not only school instruction but religious care as well,¹²¹ and she expressed this in a letter to the CMFAI¹²².

How does my heart desire that they may be brought to the acknowledgement of God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; I long to see them humble, but not abject; ‘lively, but not light;’ in-

¹¹⁸ Joycelyn Murray, “The Role of Women in the Church Missionary Society, 1799-1999” in *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds., 66-90. It appears the term missionary was applied restrictedly in the 18th and 19th centuries in the sense of clergymen even though females were also engaged in spreading the Christian faith outside their geographical boundaries.

¹¹⁹ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, ed., Biller, 215.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹²² An acronym for Committee Managing a Fund, raised by some Friends, for the Purpose of Promoting African Instruction.

dustrious, but not anxious; willing to give and receive kindness, but not depending on others for what they should rather do themselves.¹²³

Thus, the form of education that Kilham advocated, what she rightly called “Christian education”,¹²⁴ was an all-rounded education; one that was intended to empower Africans to see themselves as principal agents of their own improvement and advancement. This notion of African agency and Africans’ non-dependence on others for their own destiny, underpinned the Native Language education approach that she promoted to spread the Gospel of Christ in Africa. It also informed the role she took as Assistant Schoolmistress, to collaborate with Maria Macfoy in training females, like Rosanna Kilham. By supporting Macfoy, and helping Rosanna to become a Schoolteacher, Kilham contributed to building the leadership capacity of Liberated African females and prepared them for their future roles in developing Africa. She continued to express her desire to establish more schools under the management of Africans.¹²⁵ Also, by catering for the establishment of two elementary schools for the Wesleyans, and providing school materials for the children, Kilham increased access to school education for more Liberated African females who were settled in other places outside CMS operated areas.¹²⁶

Conclusion

The Liberated Africa female population constituted a good proportion of the total number of residents in the Sierra Leone Colony. They had gone through the brutal experiences of captivity with their male counterparts but received little attention for training opportunities in their new settlement.

¹²³ Kilham, *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham*, 9.

¹²⁴ *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, ed., Biller, 340.

¹²⁵ *Present State of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Being Extracts of Recent Letters from Hannah Kilham*, second edition with considerable additions (London: Darton, Harvey and Darton, Edmund Fry, 1832), 20.

¹²⁶ School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), London, Great Britain. Wesleyan Methodist Society (London) Archives. West African Correspondence FBN 25 ‘Sierra Leone – 1819 Correspondence: Brown’s Account of Sierra Leone – General Observation relative to the Sierra Leone Mission.’

Hannah Kilham saw them as key instruments for Africa's advancement and improvement. She established a school institution for girls where she trained them through the media of their own native languages. Through school-education of Liberated African girls, translation work, and collaboration with Colonial Authorities and Missionary Agencies responsible for providing education in the Colony, the system she employed helped to produce Christian leaders like Rosanna, who became a teacher to other Liberated African girls.

Kilham greatly assisted CMS endeavours in Sierra Leone. She was able to influence the girls in CMS schools through her books that were adopted as recommended texts, thereby contributing the quality of training they received and preparing them to assert themselves future leaders. Missionaries, who were especially involved in translations, owed a lot to Kilham for their initial efforts at language studies. Many of them started with her materials and built upon them to produce works of an enduring nature. In all these, she proved to be a pioneer of both African female education and translation work on the continent.

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