

Daniel J. Danielsen and the Congo: Missionary Campaigns and Atrocity Photographs.

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Daniel J. Danielsen (1871-1916) was a pioneer of the Brethren movement in the Faroe Islands. Earlier in his career, between 1901 and 1903, he served as an engineer and lay preacher for the Congo Balolo Mission (CBM), the British-run organisation which recruited missionaries from Hartley College, London, to serve in various stations in King Leopold II of Belgium's Congo Free State. He also steered the ship that took Roger Casement on his famous consular tour of investigation, which confirmed the widespread existence of colonial abuses in the Upper Congo in 1903. Casement's report initiated the events that would lead to Belgian annexation of the territory in 1908. As its title makes clear, Óli Jacobsen's book is mainly focused on the central African part of Danielsen's career, though a shorter second section covers his missionary work in the Faroe Islands. This review centres on Part One, 'Congo Missionary and Campaigner', and its accompanying Appendices.

Jacobsen brings to light Danielsen's role in the emergence of the Congo reform movement. The book makes two main "discoveries" which are likely to be of interest to historians of the Congo Free State and the campaign against it. First, Danielsen took some of the most famous "atrocity

photographs”, which have historically been credited to British missionaries. Jacobsen convincingly suggests that the Congo reformers deliberately attributed these images to certain respectable missionaries rather than acknowledge the work of Danielsen, who left the Congo having himself been accused of violent treatment of African workers on his steamship. Second, Danielsen held the earliest public meetings, in Scotland and the Faroes, to raise public awareness of colonial abuses. The book is not without other insights, revealing for example that an anti-Leopoldian propaganda text which was published anonymously under the title *Bokwala: The Story of a Congo Victim* (1910), and was promoted by Congo reformers (inaccurately in retrospect) as the *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of its day, was written by a missionary, Lily Ruskin. Jacobsen’s slim volume is lavished with 80 illustrations, and though many are low resolution and some are of questionable relevance, others are rarely seen in print. Scholars of Casement will find insights in the chapter about his 1903 tour.

Even within its modest confines the book has limitations. There are a number of typographical errors and occasional mis-spellings. Unfortunately several endnotes for chapters 4 to 7 are incorrectly sequenced and/or misattributed, which limits the appeal of this work to teachers of undergraduate students and undermines its documentary function. In terms of analysis, the author passes up opportunities meaningfully to engage in historical debates on violence in the Congo, while the broader context of Danielsen’s work is glossed in quite basic fashion at times. For example, chapter 2 documents charges of brutality levelled against Danielsen by a West Indian missionary named Terence B. Sawyers. The use of violence, in particular the *chicotte* whip, upon Congo peoples by missionaries who later criticised the Leopoldian regime is an important topic, which merits further attention. Jacobsen valuably reproduces proceedings from the CBM’s in-house inquiry into the matter. In weighing up Sawyers’ claims, however, Jacobsen comments that they might be accurate since, like the African-American journalist and critic of the Congo George

Washington Williams, Sawyers “would not have been as likely to be susceptible to dominant ideologies” (31), which presumably dictated that European violence against Africans could not be spoken of. This is quite speculative given the vast cultural differences and reasons for being in Central Africa which separate Williams from Sawyers. In the absence of direct evidence the question demands more careful research into the ideological positioning and the kinds of pressures under which evangelists, especially but not only black evangelists, spoke out against injustices. As his assessment of Sawyers’s claims continues Jacobsen points to numerous tributes to Danielsen as one who worked hard, sometimes selflessly, to highlight the wrongs of the “red rubber” years. But righteous indignation against a corrupt system does not rule out the witness’s own interpersonal cruelty. Atonement for his own roughness may even have been a motive for his speaking out.

It is clear nevertheless that Danielsen played a rather thankless role in providing assistance in and documentary materials for what would become the Congo reform campaign. Casement certainly thought highly of him. Jacobsen’s study of the obscure Faroese traveller to central Africa is further evidence of the transnational character of both Leopold’s colony and the organisations and networks that opposed it.

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Comments by Neil Dickson, convener of BAHN, the publisher of the book

I know he makes some criticisms, but to have avoided them would have taken many years of work and extra reading. What you've got to remember is that this

is an very reputable academic journal taking your work seriously and picking up the main points you wanted to get across. The points about the broader context of violence and the use of the chicotte are ones for the specialist. You've been quite open about the accusations against Dollin, and like this reviewer, everyone can make up their own minds as to whether he did it or not. But I would be heartened by this, for what you have written is being taken seriously and your central claims are accepted. The rest is for specialists.

I'm annoyed about the wrong numbering of the endnotes. I wonder how that happened. I will go back and look and see what the problem is. It could be fixed in the online pdf at least.