

RICHARD LESLIE HILL
1901—1996

Richard Leslie Hill, who died on 21 March 1996, was one of the great pioneers in the study of the modern history of the Sudan. Several of his works will remain standard reference works for many generations to come. He was not only an outstanding scholar, but also a far-sighted one, whose foresight has profoundly influenced the field.¹ He belongs to a generation that included Sir Harold MacMichael and Rev. Dr. A.J. Arkell, that is scholar/administrators, whose enthusiasm for the country and its people in which they served, led them to make profound contributions to our understanding of the Sudan and its history.

Richard Hill was born at Ramsbury, Wiltshire, in February 1901 into a family long-established there. In 1913 the family emigrated to New Zealand, where Richard received his education at Auckland Grammar School. He worked his way back to England and entered St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, intending to become an Anglican Benedictine monk. St. Augustine's sent him to Oxford, where he read history and took his B. Litt., later published as his first book, *Toryism and the People* (see bibliography below).

A series of chances took him to the Sudan in 1927, where he served for eighteen years in various positions in the Sudan Railways, retiring in 1945. His love for the institution was expressed in his *Sudan Transport* and in numerous articles. While working in Sudan Railways, he made friends with two amateur historians, who shared his passion for

¹ Several obituaries have appeared; Martin Daly in *The Times*, 5 April 1996 and Peter Holt, *The Guardian*, 19 April 1996.

Sudanese history; one was an Egyptian, al-Shāṭir Buṣaylī °Abd al-Jalīl, who wrote a number of interesting works, the other was Sudanese, Muḥammad °Abd al-Raḥīm, *bashkātib* or secretary at the Sudan Railways Headquarters at Atbara, who was a pioneer in the collection of oral tradition in the Sudan long before the phrase became fashionable.

Upon his retirement from the Sudan Railways in 1945, Hill was appointed senior lecturer in history at University College, Khartoum (later, University of Khartoum). After four years at the College, he retired again and became lecturer in Near Eastern History at Durham University. It was at Durham that his far-sightedness led to the creation of a unique archive. Starting in 1957, just a year after the Sudan's independence, he began a campaign, which was to last more or less the rest of his life, to gather together at Durham as much as possible of the surviving records of the British and others who had served in the Sudan. The result is the Sudan Archive, a unique collection of official and unofficial documentation, of photographs and films, now ably catalogued and preserved by the staff at Durham.

Thereafter Richard continued to write, had a number of visiting professorships (Santa Barbara, California; Simon Fraser, British Columbia and Ahmadu Bello, Kano) before retiring to Oxford. Much of his time in Oxford was devoted to helping his wife, Juliana, in her researches. His hospitality and generosity were unparalleled. The first time I went to see him in 1966, as a very young graduate student about to embark on the study of Darfur, he simply gave me all his notes on Darfur.

Richard Hill's *œuvre* falls into three categories—and here I do not discuss his more ephemeral writings in local newspapers and journals, although they are undoubtedly of great interest—indispensable reference works, annotated translations of nineteenth-century European travel literature, and works of synthesis, of which *Egypt in the Sudan* is the

classic, closely followed by *On the Frontiers of Islam*.²

Hill first laid the foundation for his, and others', later studies with his *Bibliography of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*.³ The title conceals a massive body of investigative research. Precisely because the Sudan was 'pacified' by the Turco-Egyptian⁴ conquest of 1820, it was open to European and other travellers much earlier than most of Africa south of the Sahara. The result was a plethora of accounts, some German or Swiss and scholarly, some French, and occasionally frivolous, by a variety of researchers, tourists, mountebanks, adventurers, and so on, who left records of the Sudan and the Sudanese. The *Bibliography* is a remarkably thorough account of this literature—published in 1937 long before 'Inter-Library' loan and the web. It remains the foundation for Sudanese historical bibliography. It also underlines a problem for younger researchers in Sudanese history, namely the need to be familiar with German, French and Italian in addition to English—Giovanni Battista Brocchi on Sinnār, Gustav Nachtigal on Darfur, Pierre Trémaux on the Blue Nile are but three examples.

The *Bibliography* is complemented by another reference work first published in 1951, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*, which is, I suspect, the book of Richard Hill most frequently consulted by researchers on the Sudan. Few of us do not have it nearby. Richard himself lamented the lack of a proper Dictionary of National Biography already in the preface to his Biographical Dictionary, but although there have appeared since its publication several admirable works in Arabic, none replace Hill's work. Hill, in a letter to me dated 21 November 1976 remarked, 'It was [Muḥammad °Abd al-Raḥīm] who, when I was depressed about ever

2 Bibliographical details are given in the second part of this notice.

3 See Heather Sharkey, 'Ṭabaqāt of the Twentieth-Century Sudan: Arabic Biographical Dictionaries as a Source for Colonial History, 1898-1956', *SAJHS*, 6, 1995, 17-34.

4 A term that seems effectively to have been coined by Hill.

getting ahead with [the *Biographical Dictionary*] encouraged me to persevere’.

For a Sudan buff, it is Hill’s most entertaining work; its pithy style is unsurpassed; an example is his notice of the French left-wing journalist Olivier Pain (1843-84) who sought an interview with the Mahdi. Hill notes, ‘He travelled to Dongola and over the Bayūda to al-Ubaiyiḍ in August 1884 with the intention of obtaining an exclusive interview with the Mahdi ... The Mahdi, failing to comprehend his mission, kept him captive ... He died while accompanying the Mahdist army ... His death provoked a violent anti-British outcry in France where the gutter press attributed his death to British intrigue’.

In 1958 Hill published *Egypt in the Sudan*; on the surface, it is a plain and factual account of the occupation and administration of the Sudan by Egypt from 1820 until the fall of Khartoum in 1885. It is actually rather more than that in that it charts the complex interaction between a modernizing state, Egypt, and a hinterland, the Sudan, where that modernization was to lead to very different results. The parallels between the Egypt of Khedive Ismā‘īl and President Ḥusnī Mubārak and the Sudan of the Mahdi and Ḥasan al-Turābī are striking. What Hill documents in *Egypt in the Sudan* is the growth of a separateness between Egypt and the Sudan, a separateness that was to be consolidated under the Condominium, which in effect legitimated the Mahdist revolution. Much has been written on the Turkiyya since, but *Egypt in the Sudan* remains the standard work.

His last book, *An African Corps d’elite*, maintains his interest in the Turkiyya, but in Mexico, being the story, entertainingly told, of the Sudanese troops lent to the French by Muḥammad Sa‘īd Pasha of Egypt to fight on behalf of Maximilian, a Hapsburg the French were trying establish as emperor of Mexico.

Another important aspect of Richard’s work was the translation and annotation of travel accounts from the nineteenth century. Together with various collaborators, he

published a number of volumes containing rare accounts which he had discovered. My own favourite is *On the Frontiers of Islam*, which includes a scandalous account of a brothel in Wad Madanī run by a scion of the Funj royal family, the Lady Nāṣra. One of Richard's schemes in the late 1960s was the republication of a series of 'pseudo-travellers', that is travellers who did not travel. The scheme, as he notes, never got off the ground, but he wrote a brochure that is gem of scholarship lightly worn.

Richard's last gift to the field was to present his diaries and papers to the Archive that he had established. An important point to note is that he in the 1960s and 70s saw and made notes on documents in the Egyptian National Archives that have subsequently disappeared in the course of the various moves of the National Archives. As a consequence, Hill's notes are in many instances the only record that we have of these documents.

His Writings

The following is based on a handwritten list prepared by Richard Hill (we reproduce a page to celebrate his inimitable handwriting). He himself notes, 'This includes everything except juvenelia, three trivial letters to obscure journals, all in 1924, written in the process of growing up'. Actually, Richard forgot a number of articles and I have endeavoured to make what follows as comprehensive as possible. I would draw attention especially to his book reviews which are often exceptionally informative. I have included most of Richard's own comments. Richard's *œuvre* spans seventy-one years.

1924 'St. Augustine's Monastery, Canterbury', *St. Mary Abbot's Parish Magazine*, July, 9-10.

1924 'L'infelice Lodovico Petrucci Cavaliere', *St. Edmund*

- Hall Magazine*, Oxford 1924-25.
- 1929 *Toryism and the People, 1832-1846* (with a Foreword by Keith Fielding), London: Constable 1929 [based on a thesis for B.Litt, Oxford 1928].
- 1931 (& John Cameron, eds), *Sudan Government Railways, Appendix to the General Rule Book and Working Time Table*, London: McCorquadales 250, xvi pp.
- 1937 'The Suakin-Berber Railway', *Sudan Notes and Records* [hereafter *SNR*], xx, 1, 107-24.
- 1936 'Nile and Congo, comparisons in river transport', *Journal of the African Society*, xxxv, 204-11.
- 1934 'Student Silver Medal', prize essay, Institute of Transport, 'published in shortened form in the Institute journal, I think'.
- 1939 *A Bibliography of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, London: Oxford University Press.
- 1939 'Sudan Railways pioneers', *Railway Bulletin*, Atbara [headquarters of the Sudan Railways], April; repr. in *Railway Bulletin*, 4, January 1950.
- 1938 Review of Lois A.C. Raphael, *The Cape to Cairo Dream*, in *SNR*, xxi, 1, 231-5.
- 1939 Review of Pierre Crabitès, *Americans in the Egyptian Army*, in *SNR*, xxii, 1, 165-6.
- 1939 'Recent Italian literature concerning the Sudan', *SNR*, xxii, 1, 167-9.
- 1940 Review of Muḥammad Fuʿād Shukrī, *The Khedive Ismāʿīl and Slavery and the Sudan*, in *SNR*, xxiii, 1, 205-6.
- 1940 Review of Carlo Zaghi, *Vita di Romolo Gessi*, in *SNR*, xxiii, 2, 366.
- 1940 Review of E. Anchieri, *Storia della politica inglese nel Sudan*, in *SNR*, xxiii, 2, 368.
- 1940 (& Juliana Hill) Review of *La Costruzione dell'Impero, gli annali dell'Africa Italiana*. Milan: *L'Opera dell'Italia in Africa Orientale Italiana dopo la conquista dell'Etiopia*, 4 vols., 1939-40, in *SNR*, xxiii, 2, 370-5.

Bibliography-Richard

This includes everything except juvenilia, three trivial letters to obscure journals, all in 1924, ^{written} in the process of growing up.

'St Augustine's Monastery, Canterbury,
St Mary Abbot's Parish Magazine
July 1924, 11-13; Aug. 1924, 9-10.

'L'infelice Lodovico Petrucci
Cavaliere' Oxford, St. Edmund Hall
Magazine, 1924-5.

Joryism and the people, 1832-1846,
with a foreword by Keith Feeling, London
Constable, 1929 [based on a thesis
for B. Litt., Oxford, 1928]

[Richard Hill and John Cameron
eds] Sudan Government Roadways,
appendix to the General Rule Book
and Working Time Table. London
(McClelland pr.) 1931, pp. 250+xvi

- 1940 (& K.D.D. Henderson) Review of F. Sarubbi, *Il Sudan anglo-egiziano (Addis Abeba 1940)*, in *SNR*, xxiii, 2, 376-77.

Hill notes, '1940-1942 Seconded to War Office, Khartoum, with rank of Bimbashi, railway liaison officer. No leisure and no inclination to write'. Nevertheless:

- 1942 (& K.D.D. Henderson) Review of G. Douin, *Histoire de Règne du Khedive Ismaïl*, Cairo, 1933-41, 3 vols., iii/1, 2, 3A, 3B: *L'Empire Africain*, in *SNR*, xxv, 143-54.
- 1942 'America and Ourselves', in *Sudan Daily Herald*, 9 May.
- 1943 *Christianity and Politics*. Pamphlet no. 2 in All Saints Cathedral, Khartoum, series, 144 pp. Hill notes that no. 1 in the series was by Douglas Newbold.
- 1943 'An optimistic railway scheme: the Sudan Chartered Company', *The Railway Bulletin*, Atbara, 57, July.
- 1943 'The night life of Atbara', *The Railway Bulletin*, August.
- 1944 'The beginnings of steam navigation on the Sudan Nile', *The Railway Bulletin*, 72, October.

Hill notes of the following items that the titles from *Sudan Star* were the work of the newspaper's editor.

- 1943 Juliana Hill, 'Sudan parents and Palestine leave', *Sudan Star*, 7 August.⁵
- 1943 'Sudanese explorers', *Sudan Star*, 4 September.
- 1943 'Sawbones in the old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 27 September.
- 'Americans of the old days in the Sudan', *Sudan Star*. Hill does not give a date for this article.
- 1943 'The ladies of the old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 18 October.
- 1943 'Newspapermen in the Old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 14

5 During the Second World War a number of the families of Sudan Government British personnel were evacuated to Palestine.

- December.
- 1943 'The future of culture in the Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 18 December.
- 1943 'They planned a railway from Suakin to Berber', *Sudan Star*, 22 December.
- 1943 'Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī 'l-Sūdān', *Ṣawt al-Sūdān*, 20, 21, 22, 23 December.
- 1943 'Eagles over the Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 4 November.
- 1944 'Engineers of the old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 1 February.
- 1944 Obituary: Capt. E.E. Bond, *Sudan Star*, 23 February.
- 1944 'On faking history', *Sudan Star*, 2 March.
- 1944 'Travel in the old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 2 October.
- 1944 'France and the Nile', *Sudan Star*, 4 November.
- 1944 'Those dreadful nursery rhymes' [editor's competition followed], *Sudan Star*, 9 and 12 December.
- 1944 '£10 competition for topical nursery rhyme', *Sudan Star*, 23 December.
- 1945 'Eccentrics of the old Sudan', *Sudan Star*, 10 February.
- 1945 'Mumtaz—the man behind Sudan cotton', *Sudan Star*, 1 May.
- 1945 'Grand Hotel, or the future of the Sudan novel', *Sudan Star*, 29 November.
- 1945 'Archives', *Sudan Star*, 12 December.
- 1945 '70 Years', *Sudan Railways Bulletin*, 70th anniversary issue, February.
- 1945 'Sudan Railways 70 years old today', *Sudan Star*, 15 February.
- 1945 'The Soudan Railway, 1875, an introduction', *Sudan Railways Bulletin*, February.
- 1946 'Sudan is the old soldier's bivvy', *Sudan Star*, 15 April.
- 1947 'The lighter side of Gordon', *Sudan Star*, 29 January.
- 1947 Review of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Zakī, *A'lam al-jaysh wa'l-baḥriyya fī Miṣr*, Cairo, in *Sudan Star* [Hill does not give a date].
- 1947 'An unpublished itinerary to Kordofan, 1824-1825',

- SNR*, xxix, 1.
- 1949 Review of S. Santandrea, *Bibliografia di Studi africani*, Verona 1948, in *African Affairs. Journal of the Royal African Society*, 48.
- 1949 Review of Carlo Zaghi, Gordon, *Gessi e la riconquista del Sudan*, Florence 1947, in *SNR*, xxx.
- 1951 'Rulers of the Sudan, 1820-1885', *SNR*, xxxii, 1, 85-95.
- 1952 Review of J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, Oxford 1949, in *Ramsbury Parish Magazine*, xiv, 4, December.
- 1951 *A Biographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1951; reprinted with corrections, London: Frank Cass 1967.⁶
- 1952 'The Eastern Churches in Turkey', *Ramsbury Parish Magazine*, xiv, 4, December.
- 1953 Letter on Sudan biography, *SNR*, xxxiv, 319.
- 1954 Review of Mahmud Awad, *A Challenge to the Arabs*, New York, in *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*.
- 1955 'Louis de Couret', *French Studies*, Oxford, 143-53.
- 1954 Review of E. Stresemann, *Hemprich und Ehrenberg, Reisen zweier naturforschender Freunde im Orient geschildert in ihrem briefen aus den Jahren 1819-1826*, in *SNR*, xxxvi, 87-8.
- 1955 Review of Mohamed Neguib, *Egypt's Destiny*, in *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*.
- 1955 'An unpublished fragment of a manuscript concerning events in the Sudan, 1843-1848', *SNR*, xxxvi, 112-20.
- 1955 'The Gordon Literature', *Durham University Journal*, n.s., xvi, 3, 97-101.
- 1956 'The search for the White Nile's source: two explorers who failed', *The Geographical Journal*, cxxii, 2, June, 247-50.

6 Hill notes that attempts by Martin Daly and the present writer, and by Daly and Sikainji to prepare a third edition died *in utero*.

1957 Review of Şaṭīr Buşaylī °Abd al-Jalīl, *Ma°ālim ta°riḫ Wādī 'l-Nīl*, Cairo, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis*.

1956 'An unpublished chronicle of the Sudan, 1822-41', *SNR*, xxxvii, 9-19.

1958 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the following articles:

- Fa-hsien
- Foa, Edouard
- Garner, Marie-Joseph-François
- Holub, Emil
- Hué, E.R.
- Junker, Wilhelm
- Leo, Johannes
- Selous, Fredrick Courtney
- °Abbās I
- °Abbās II (°Abbās Ḥilmī Pasha)
- °Arābī Pasha [properly Aḥmad °Urābī Pasha]
- Ayyūbid dynasty
- Azharī, Ismā°il al-
- Baybars I
- Browne, William George
- Cromer, Evelyn Baring, Ist Earl
- Egypt [Muslim conquest to 1918]
- Gessi, Romolo
- Hsuan Tsang
- Ibrahim Pasha [*al-wālī*]
- Ismā°il Pasha [Khedive]
- Khalifa, the [°Abdallāhi b. Muḥammad]
- Mameluke
- Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdī
- Muḥammad °Alī Pasha
- Muştafā Kāmil
- Nubar Pasha [Nubarian]
- Osman Diqna
- Polo, Marco
- Sa°īd Pasha [Muḥammad Sa°īd Pasha]
- Sudan, Republic of the
- Suez Canal,

- Tewfik Pasha [Muḥammad Tawfiq Pasha]
 - Wingate, Sir F.R.
 - al-Zubayr Pasha Raḥma Maṣṣūr
- 1959 'Baladiyya: the Arab East', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2) i, 975-6.
- 1959 *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820-1881*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; repr. 1963, 1966.
- 1959 Review of P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, Oxford 1958, in *Durham University Journal*, 2.
- 1959 'Death of a Governor-General (Ahmad Pasha Abu Adhan)', *SNR*, xxxix, 83-7.
- 1959 'The period of the Egyptian occupation, 1820-1881', *SNR*, xl, 101-6.
- 1959 Letter, 'The place name Caturea', *SNR*, xl, 154.
- 1960 'Sudan Archive, Durham. Report on acquisitions', *The Durham Philibiblion*, January.
- 1960 'Sudan', *Annual Register of World Events 1959*.
- 1961 Review of the Arabic version of J.L. Burckhardt's *Travels*, in *The Geographical Journal*.
- 1961 Edited, *Bulletin of Oriental Studies: an Annual Record of Work in Progress in Britain*. Association of British Orientalists.
- 1962 Review of P.M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan*, in *Durham University Journal*.
- 1962 'Oriental Section: Sudan Archive accessions', *The Durham Philobiblion*, ii, 7.
- 1962 Review of R.O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan, 1883-1893*, in *The Geographical Journal*.
- 1962 'Historical writing on the Sudan since 1820', in B. Lewis and P.M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London.
- 1962 'Sudan', *Annual Register of World Events 1961*, London.
- 1963 Review of four 'Gordon' books in *Victorian Studies*, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana, December, 210-12.
- 1965 'Government and Christian missions in the Anglo-

- Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1914', *Middle East Studies*.
- 1965 *Sudan Transport, a History of Railway, Marine and River services in the Republic of the Sudan*, London: Oxford University Press.
- 1965 *Slatin Pasha*, London: Oxford University Press.
- 1965 Review of A.B. Theoblad, 'Ali Dīnār. *The last Sultan of Darfur, 1898-1916*, London 1965, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*.
- 1967 *Pseudo-Travellers: a catalogue of fraudulent and unauthenticated travel, facsimile reprints from*, Cornmarket Press [1967? A Cornmarket Press Catalogue of a project which, alas, failed to 'catch' on with the booksellers. Fortunately for the enterprising publishers, the proposal did not get beyond the prospectus stage].
- 1968 'Sudanese Islam in a developing Africa', in A. Rivkin (ed.), *Nations by Design*, New York, 135-54.
- 1968 Review of Bryon Farwell, *Prisoners of the Mahdi*, in *Middle East Journal*.
- 1969 'Islam in the Sudan', in A.J. Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East*, London: Cambridge University Press 1969, II, 187-202.
- 1968 'The African travels of Panaghotis Potagos, 1876-1877', *Geographical Journal*, cxxxiv, 1968, 55-9; cxxxv, 1969, 317-18.
- 1970 *On the Frontiers of Islam: Two Manuscripts concerning the Sudan under Turco-Egyptian Rule, 1822-1845*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1972 'Sudan', in *Bibliotheca Asiatica*, 9: *Middle East and Islam, a Bibliographical Introduction*, Zug, Switzerland, 267.
- 1974 (& Elias Toniolo) *The Opening of the Nile Basin: Writings by members of the Catholic Missions to Central Africa on the geography and ethnography of the Sudan, 1842-1881*, London: Christopher Hurst.
- 1976 'Carcereri, Paolo Stanislao', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XIX, 754-6.

- 1976 (trans. of:) Carmelo Conte, *The Sudan as a Nation*, Milan: Giuffrè.
- 1980 (with Paul Santi) *The Europeans in the Sudan, 1834-1878: some manuscripts, most unpublished, written by traders, Christian missionaries, and others*, 1980-84.
- 1981 'Risalendo il Nilo', *Nigrizia*, Verona, March, 21-4 [special edition commemorating the life and work of Bishop Daniele Comboni].
- 1984 (ed.) *The Sudan Memoirs of Carl Christian Giegler Pasha, 1873-1883*. Transl. from the German by Thirza Küpper, with a foreword by the Pasha's great-granddaughter, Heidi Groha, London: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy (Union Academique Internationale, Fontes Historiae Africanae, series varia, II)
- 1995 (& Peter Hogg) *A Black corps d'élite : an Egyptian Sudanese conscript battalion with the French Army in Mexico, 1863-1867, and its survivors in subsequent African history*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

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Photograph courtesy of David Hutchinson, University of Durham