



Convenient superintendent or independent liberator?

A critical look at Halfdan Endresen's role in the liberation of  
slaves in Northern Cameroon

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## **Sammendrag/abstract**

I Nord-Kamerun i 1950 begynte mange slaver å rømme til den norske misjonsstasjonen i Ngaoundéré. Det Norske Misjonsselskap, ledet av tilsynsmann Halfdan Endresen, hjalp disse slavenes med å få sin frihet, og over de neste 15 årene spilte de en stor rolle i forbedringene av slavenes posisjon og etter hvert også avskaffelsen av slaveriet. Gjennom en tekstanalyse av relevant litteratur og arkivmateriale blir Endresens rolle fremhevet, og hans viktighet uavhengig av sin organisasjon understrekes. Han fungerte i stor grad som en reaksjonær vakthund, som holdt den franske lokale administrasjonen og etter hvert den kamerunske regjeringen ansvarlig overfor menneskerettighetene gjennom kritikk og kontinuerlig vilje til å konfrontere høyere autoriteter. Gjennom en postkolonial lesning av kildene viser det seg at mange har oversett viktigheten av de rømte slavenes egen innsats, og heller har gitt æren til Endresen. Dette ser ikke ut til å gjelde for Endresen selv, som inkluderte mange av de rømte slavenes egne historier i sine bøker, og som også innrømte at de rømmende slavenes var det som hadde tvunget ham til å ta handle.

In 1950, Northern Cameroon, many slaves started escaping and running to the Norwegian mission station in Ngaoundéré. The Norwegian Mission Society, led by superintendent Halfdan Endresen, helped these slaves get their freedom, and over the next 15 years played an important role in the improvement of the slaves' position, and eventually the abolishment of slavery. Through a text analysis of relevant literature and archive material, Endresen's role as an individual is highlighted, emphasizing his importance separately from his organization. He functioned much like a watch dog, only acting in reaction, keeping the French local administration and eventually the Cameroonian government accountable to the Human Rights through criticism and continued willingness to confront higher authorities. Through a postcolonial reading of the sources it is clear that many have overlooked the importance of the escaping slaves' own efforts in their own liberation, giving only Endresen credit. However, this does not appear to apply to Endresen himself, who included many escaped slaves' stories in his books, and also admitted that the escaping slaves were what forced him to act.

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# 1 Introduction

In the end of 1952, in Ngaoundéré, Northern Cameroon at a political gathering, the High Commissioner of France declared that all people of Cameroon were free, a public condemnation of the slavery that permeated the region. In 1965, 13 years later, the now independent Cameroonian administration, on order from the nation's president, gathered all the lamidos – minor local kings – to inform them that everyone in the country had the same rights, that no one could be forced to serve others, and that the practice of harems had to end. What did these two events, both monumental in the fight against slavery in Cameroon, have to do with a simple Norwegian missionary?

In this paper I will address the Norwegian missionaries in Cameroon and the role that they played in the battle against slavery in the Northern parts of the country. My focus will be on Halfdan Endresen, a Norwegian missionary to many known as the liberator of slaves, and I will attempt to uncover what role he actually played in the abolishment of slavery in Northern Cameroon.

Halfdan Endresen was a missionary for the Norwegian Mission Society (hereafter referred to as NMS) between 1932 and 1963 and spent 31 years in Cameroon as superintendent at their mission station in Ngaoundéré, a city central in Northern Cameroon. To many he is known as a liberator of slaves, and some claim that he was responsible for the eventual abolishment of slavery in Cameroon.

My research question for this paper is: What did Halfdan Endresen contribute to the fight against Slavery in Northern Cameroon? To limit the paper, the focus will be specifically on Ngaoundéré, where Endresen worked. The focus will mainly be on the years 1950-1952, since those are the most impactful years, though there will be references to events throughout the entirety of Endresen's work in and after Cameroon.

To approach this, I will first introduce some relevant theory, in form of postcolonialism and a reflection around orientalism. Thereafter the selection of sources will further be explored together with the choice of method. Then I will provide some of the historical context required to understand the sources, before going through and analyzing them. The sources

are divided into four source groups, based on where they came from; literature produced by Endresen, literature produced by the NMS, archive material from the Mission and Diakonia Archives, and literature by other researchers. After that there will be a final analysis where the topic question will be attempted answered, before the paper's conclusion.

Throughout most of NMS' writings, the question of slavery in Northern Cameroon and its associated challenges is simply referred to as "the slave case" and will be so throughout this paper as well.

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 Postcolonialism

In this paper, my theoretical framework will be postcolonialism, and I will try to approach most of the sources from a postcolonial perspective. But what does postcolonialism mean?

Postcolonialism does not equate to post-colonialism, which refers to the historical period after the end of colonialism. Postcolonialism refers more to a perspective, certain reading practices, or a type of attitudes and values (McLeod, 2000, 5-6). These phenomena are not historically limited or bound to the period after the end of colonialism but are post-colonial in the sense that they were not necessarily accessible until after the end of the colonial period.

But what is postcolonialism then? McLeod (2000, 6) argues that word should be used less as a noun, and more as an adjective to describe a certain perspective, a certain attitude. Tomas Sundnes Drønen (2009, 8-9) explains that postcolonial theory has its source in comparative literature, where texts written by authors from former colonies, writing in the language and writing style of the colonizers but with a double cultural background, required new methodological approaches. The postcolonial perspective is about understanding how victims of colonization were affected by the colonial power. But the colonizers have also been affected by the colonized; both cultures have been affected by their meeting. Through these new authors from formerly colonized states, previously separated experiences melt together, which gives access to new perspectives.

The postcolonial perspective is historically young: for most of modern history, literature has been produced almost exclusively in the West. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 24-25) describes how the West, or Europe, has presented themselves as a subject, or the Subject, who is the one who studies the Other, meaning the colonized Third World. The idea of "Europe as Subject is narrativized by law, political economy, and ideology of the West", but still this Subject presents itself as an impartial observer. Since there are such power structures in place, which both assure that Europe has the right to be the Subject, and get to

present their Subject self as impartial, this has led to the narrative presented by the European Subject to become the normative one.

This is the narrative that postcolonialism has and still is challenging with its new perspectives. Robert Young (2003, 17-18, 20) argues that the term “Third World” still retains power, as it represents an alternative culture and system of knowledge, separate from the still dominant Western academia. This difference might be best described as looking at the world from below instead of above, from the perspective of the suppressed or downtrodden, rather than the observing researcher. Postcolonialism begins with a demand that the West, both academical and not, need to take this different knowledge seriously, as seriously as their own Western knowledge.

But this, of course, requires that someone from below is allowed to share a perspective. But can they? Are the downtrodden allowed to express themselves? Can the Subaltern Speak? Spivak (1988, 25) seem to disagree.

Spivak (1988, 25-26) has doubts that, even if the subaltern, referring to the people without power in a colony, had the chance to speak out, they would not be able to do that, since they lack the understanding of their own conditions. Instead, the subaltern must rely on intellectuals who study them, to be able to communicate their situation to the world (once again one can see the Subject and the Other). These are often Westerners, or sometimes the local elite – people who subscribe to the same forms of Western academic knowledge, rendering them, in the end, not much different from the first group.

When these intellectuals study the subalterns, Spivak (1988, 28) points out how they have an obligation to suspend their own consciousness, since they cannot truly replicate the consciousness of the subaltern. The intellectual must make sure that the subaltern is presented as a subject, and doesn't just become a part of the Other, as another point of investigation. Unfortunately, part of Spivak's point is that these are all things intellectuals have failed to do, as they have attempted to talk on behalf of subaltern groups, without talking with them.

This is particularly true for women in colonies, who often have become the battlefield of ideological wars without any particular involvement of their own. Often have they been



exposed to “colonial feminism”, where the colonial state has intervened on women’s behalf against some (according to the colonial state) oppressive social practice. Extremely seldom were the women in these cases ever consulted about their opinion on this claimed oppression (Young, 2003, 97). This reveals the extremely challenging position of women in colonized territories. Not only do they suffer under the subaltern’s inability to speak, but due to the gendered nature of society (even more so in colonial territories pre-liberation), they find themselves doubly effected, and even deeper in shadow (Spivak, 1988, 28).

So, what is postcolonialism? Postcolonialism is about a perspective, different from the traditional, Western academic view that has dominated for the last three hundred years. It is about approaching situations from below, from the viewpoint of the exploited and downtrodden, from the perspective of the subaltern. It means to be critical of intellectuals who claim to be speaking on behalf of others who are or were unable to speak for themselves.

## 2.2 Orientalism

For further theory, an understanding of the concept orientalism is required. Orientalism refers to a research tradition that started in the early 17th century and included the study of cultural expressions in fields like religion, philosophy and law in the area known as the Orient. As a research tradition, orientalism has been closely connected with colonialism, as they came into existence almost at the same time, and in general had interests in the same areas. After the end of colonialism, the tradition of orientalism has been harshly criticized for the way it has portrayed the Orient and Orientals (Ruud, 2009, 25,27).

Orientalism is a research tradition, where the West (as Subject) studies the Orient (as Other), a tradition that has been heavily criticized in the time after the end of colonialism.

Orientalism appears to fit nicely into that dominant, European narrative that Spivak presented, and which postcolonialism tries to combat. Though orientalism doesn’t encompass everything in this narrative, as it is only one of, and not *the* colonial discourse (McLeod, 2000, 47), it does give a way to try and understand some of the texts written in the time.

To better understand the concrete aspects of orientalism, Edward Said's book on the topic, *Orientalism*, gives a good representation. Though the book is not without flaws, and Said has been accused of "finding what he is looking for, for ignoring that which does not fit, and for being selective in his choice of sources" (own translation) (Ruud, 2009, 80), it does make certain valid points, which are still discussed today.

According to Said, orientalism claims to be objective research (like Spivak criticized the West for) but is in reality only a Western fantasy: The West defines the Orient as the opposite of itself, so that the Orient is what the West does not want to be. The Orient is timeless, unlike the progressive West; the Orient is strange, irrational and bizarre, and is confusing to the rational and controlled European; the Orient is degenerate, lazy, cowardly and lustful, unlike the hardworking and brave European; and the Orient is feminine and passive, unlike the masculine and initiative-taking West (McLeod, 49-55).

Additionally, orientalism had, at its time, not only become institutionalized, but also latent (McLeod, 49-52). This meant that in addition to enable "legitimate" research, orientalism also influenced all other spheres of society, especially the creative ones; some of the biggest heroes of the time were adventurers and explorers, travelling to the Orient and returning with their (orientalist) travelogues.

Orientalism is, in summary, a research tradition, in which the West through an uneven power balance were able to define the Orient as a lesser opposite, presenting it as inactively feminine, strange, incapable of change or advancement on its own, reliant on help from their own degeneracy. It is also an idea that influenced Western society beyond just the academic sphere, shaping the literature, mentality and choice of heroes. It is also a close companion of colonialism, both being enabled by and helping enable it.

I have now addressed the concepts of postcolonialism and orientalism. Seeing as many of the texts that will be used in this paper is written in Cameroon's pre-liberated time, or shortly after, there will not be any texts written with a postcolonial perspective – that does not prevent utilization of it in the analysis of the texts. Additionally, many of these sources were written in a time where orientalism still heavily influenced society, meaning that

awareness of such a field potentially will enable a better understanding for what is written, how and why.

As I return to the research question at hand, one point needs to be addressed. Both postcolonialism and orientalism are closely related to colonialism; However, this paper does not focus on colonialists, but on missionaries. As Europeans in Africa in the mid-1900s, it is impossible to entirely remove missionaries from the European colonial project, especially if we accept Said's idea of the latent nature of orientalism. However, it can be discussed to what extent mission societies can be considered promoters of the colonial project (Drønen, 2009, 12), especially in the case of NMS in Cameroon, who represented the non-colonial Norway in a French colony, where the missionaries often were at odds with the colonial administration. Though Endresen and his fellow missionaries by no means should be elevated above postcolonial or orientalist criticism, it is worth remembering that they did not represent the same colonial powers as the French administration.

### 3 Method

In this paper the choice of method has been textual analysis. This is mostly due to necessity, as there are very few people available for interviewing who have any personal experience with the people and the topic of this paper. It is also worth noting that the data on this topic is somewhat limited, as it isn't a heavily researched field, and therefore it hasn't always been room for a selection process.

All the data collection has happened at VID Specialized University's campus in Stavanger (formerly known as the School of Mission and Theology), as its library has a quite extensive selection of mission-literature, and the NMS' archives are in the basement of the University, in the Mission and Diakonia Archives. If it had been possible, it would of course have been interesting to be to access archives both in Cameroon and in France, but due to the scope of the paper this was not possible.

As presented earlier, this paper is built on four groups of sources: literature by Endresen, literature by NMS, archive material from the Mission and Diakonia Archives, and literature by other researchers.

Endresen wrote in his time three books about himself and the battle against slavery in Cameroon, all of which will be included in this paper. For NMS, I collected three different anniversary books which all in varying degrees mentions Cameroon and the slave case, as well as a biography on Endresen written on behalf of NMS. Lastly, for the researchers, I will utilize three different works: a book on missionary photos by Marianne Gullestad, with a chapter dedicated to photos by Halfdan Endresen of former slaves; an article by Odd Magne Bakke which looks at the impact of Norwegian missionaries on the abolishment of slavery in Northern Cameroon; and an article by Tomas Sundnes Drønen about a visa conflict between Norwegian missionaries and the French administration in Cameroon, largely built on French archive material.

Before the sources obtained from the archives are addressed, it is important to note that collecting data in an archive is a time-consuming process, and that it requires, at least in the case of the Mission and Diakonia Archive, physical presence. Due to the outbreak of COVID-

19 and the following lockdown, my time in the archive was cut short. Therefore, my selection of archive material is limited, and does not include all the things which I had hoped for. Nonetheless, the material that was collected will still be used.

I started out with some station diaries from Ngaoundéré, partly written by Endresen, partly by other missionaries. Through these, it is possible to see how both Endresen and other missionaries saw Endresen and the slave case in its own time. I was unable to uncover any writing by Endresen about his personal experiences from the time, but I did find a correspondence between him and the head of NMS about the topic of slavery, something which will allow access to both how Endresen presented it, and how NMS reacted at the time. Additionally, I also found a collection of reflections by Fløttum, another missionary, which challenges some of the traditional exceptions about the slave case. Many other interesting documents were also discovered but were in the end not relevant to the paper.

It is an unfortunate reality that this paper and its source material will be limited, arguably incomplete. A paper of this size would probably struggle to do a question of this type and size full justice, but it is still unfortunate that the data collecting process was cut short due to COVID-19.

There is also a challenge when it comes to the postcolonial perspective; there might simply not be any sources on this topic written by Cameroonians, at least none that was made accessible for this paper. Seeing as a postcolonial approach is intended in this paper, it is undoubtedly a loss not to have the words of the colonized directly represented in the source material. In this case, it appears that the “subaltern” was not allowed to speak – at least not by themselves. It will therefore be important to keep an eye out for when others write, or claim to write, on behalf of the Cameroonians, and to approach this with a postcolonial, critical eye.

The term “Cameroonian” here is an unclear one. Though there’s a large variety of local tribes in the territory around Ngaoundéré with varying social positions and cultures, due to the scope of the paper and source material, they will be generalized into “Cameroonians”. Additionally, this group will only refer to enslaved or formerly enslaved Cameroonians,

meaning the perspective of the Fulani – the slave keepers – will not be presented in this paper.

How will these texts be read? All the source material here is written in the past, they're historical texts, written in a different cultural and historical context than the current. These are things that need be kept in mind while reading and analyzing them; though some things are and can be confirmed as factual, many things will be left up to interpretation, and maybe even guessing. In these cases, it is important to remember and beware that one writes from a certain perspective and cultural context oneself, and not from an impartial, objective position (Kjeldstadli, 1999, 25-27).

As previously established, the viewpoint in this paper will attempt to be a postcolonial one; I will try to read the sources in a way that reveals the viewpoint of the Cameroonians themselves, when the sources allow it, and criticize them when they don't.

## 4 History

Before the sources are presented and analyzed, it is important to get an overview of the context in which these texts were written, and to get an idea of the relevant timeline. First, I'll give a brief history of Cameroon up until its independence. Then, I'll explain a bit about the Fulani people - the slave keepers in Northern Cameroon, about their relation to slavery and the French colonial administration. Following, I'll briefly address NMS' history in Cameroon, before finally giving a timeline over Endresen's life together with the slave case.

### 4.1 Cameroonian History

Though it probably isn't in the postcolonial spirit to start the history of a nation with the story of how they were conquered by outside forces, that is how it will be done here. During the transition between the 18th and 19th century, what is now known as Northern Cameroon was conquered by the invading Fulani. In the 1870s, Germany started colonizing the territory, and by 1884, the German colony Kamerun was established, containing all of present-day Cameroon in addition to some other territories. The territory stayed under German control until World War 1, where the colony was invaded by French and British troops. In 1919, the colony was divided by the League of Nations and given to France and Britain as mandates, where France got the larger geographical part, including Northern Cameroon (Boddy-Evans, 2020). After the end of World War 2, the country became a UN trusteeship, but even though it was technically granted self-government, Cameroon was still under French control. This lasted until 1957, when France set Cameroon up as an independent state, which eventually led to independence in 1960 (Benneh & DeLancey, 2019).

### 4.2 The Fulani and the French

As mentioned above, the Fulani were not originally local to Cameroon, but arrived in the late 18th and early 19th century. They conquered the area and divided it into lamidates, small kingdoms which were ruled by *lamidos* – minor kings. Ngaoundéré, the base of operation for

NMS and the place where Endresen did most of his work, was such a lamidate under a lamido (Bakke, 2008, 32).

Slave trading was of great importance to the Fulani, and between the 1850s and early 1900s, they conducted large slave raids in the regions, often trading the slaves away to other Fulani states. Though the Germans were mostly successful in ending the slave raids and stopping the large-scale slave trading, they did not end slavery among the Fulani, who still kept their slaves (Bakke, 2008, 32-33). Slaves continued to be the property of their owners, and when an owner died, the slaves were considered heritage in the same way as livestock, and often divided with no regard for familiar connections. The lamidos typically had a lot of slaves, as they inherited many of them, and were known for their large harems (Larsen, 1973, 58).

When the French took over control of the territory, they decided to adopt the German model of indirect rule over Northern Cameroon, unlike in their other colonized territories. The Germans before them had indirectly ruled through giving power to the Fulani and lamido in the regions - the reason why the Germans hadn't gone further in abolishing slavery was because they were reliant on good relations with the Fulani to keep the peace (Bakke, 2008, 33). The French chose to continue this practice, both letting the Fulani and lamidos control their lamidates, and not challenging the fact that they were keeping slaves. As a consequence, the power balance in the region became quite delicate; in the example of Ngaoundéré, there was typically only a very few representatives of the colonial administration present, keeping their positions for an average of 18 months (Drønen, 2016, 270), meaning that they were very reliant on the Fulani and lamido to resolve local problems. At the same time, the lamidos were reliant on the good will of the administration.

### **4.3 NMS in Cameroon**

In 1923, a survey expedition was sent out by the NMS and the Norwegian Sudan Mission, searching for a mission field in the Sudan-region, referring to a sub-Saharan belt of territories (Endresen & Nikolaisen, 1949, 295-296). Their choice fell on Northern Cameroon, on Ngaoundéré and the regions around, and in 1925, the first three missionaries sent out by NMS arrived. Though much effort was put into the mission there wasn't much concrete success for the first 20 years of work (Larsen, 1973, 17-19, 51), and the French



administration even remarked in 1939 that “their results in no way matched their efforts”, with only a couple of hundred converts to their cause (Drønen, 2016, 261).

This, however, changed as the 1950s came, where the French administration eventually feared the impact of the missionaries could be strong enough to destroy the relationship between Europeans and Muslims in the region forever (Drønen, 2016, 266). It is worth noting that this change of heart is closely related to the slave case, which is addressed below, but it also indicates a growing in the general impact of NMS. When an independent church was established in Northern Cameroon (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon), NMS played an important role in its establishment, and Halfdan Endresen was elected as its first bishop (Skagestad, 1977, 21). By that point, NMS had baptized 5097 people in the last 30 years; 454 of them in the first 15, while 4643 had been baptized in the following 15 (Larsen, 1973, 83). This as well helps show the increased impact NMS had on Ngaoundéré and the region in the post-war time. Since then, NMS has continued to work together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon.

#### **4.4 Endresen and the slave case**

Endresen was born the 20th of June 1896 and knew from a young age that he would become a missionary. After a few years of working in the postal service, he was accepted at the Mission School (later known as school of Mission and Theology) and was ordained as a missionary priest in 1921. He first spent 8 years on Madagascar, before marrying his wife Birgit and changing his missionary field to Cameroon (Skagestad, 1977, 6-7).

Endresen arrived in Cameroon in June 1932, where he became the superintendent of Ngaoundéré. Already the same year (Endresen, 1969, 67-70), or the year after (Larsen, 1977, 35), depending on the source, the first slave-related event happened; a young girl escaped the lamido’s harem, and had run to the mission. Johannes Thrana, the then station leader, bought her freedom with a couple of phonograph records.

For the next 31 years, Endresen was the superintendent of Ngaoundéré mission station, and took care of, among many other duties, slave related issues. However, though there are sources on the missionaries taking effort to combat slavery in this period (see e.g. Fløttum

liberating 16 slaves (MDA, 1986, 26-27), Endresen protecting the girl saved by Thrana (Endresen, 1969, 71), Endresen and the Federation improving conditions in 1946 (Endresen, 1954, 82)), the “slave case” did not really become a topic until 1950.

In the end of 1949, as Endresen returned from a vacation in Norway, “the running away of the slaves [became] a serious question” (own translation) (Bakke, 2008, 36). This running away of slaves to the mission station escalated through the years, and in 1951, it reached “dimensions that can only be categorized as a social crisis” (own translation) (Lode, 1992, 34). This continued through most of 1952, and the period might best be described as a “slave crisis” for the mission.

Endresen personally brought many of these runaway slaves with him to the lamido and later French administration to try and negotiate their freedom. Endresen was thorough in all cases, writing down all of the runaway slaves’ accounts to be able to bring their cases forward to the administration (Endresen, 1954). This was however not always successful, and in 1950 he attempted to write a complaint intended for “the highest authorities”, addressing the slave case, though it is unsure if it ever reached its intended recipients (Skagestad, 1977, 14).

In 1951, a new district chief came to Ngaoundéré. He was more sympathetic with the Fulani and lamido, letting them utilize the police to take back escaped slaves while criticizing Endresen for “interfering in local customs”. As a reaction, Endresen went to the county governor, who promised that he’d abolish slavery “if he was ordered to it” (own translation) (Skagestad, 1977, 15-16).

In 1952, Endresen put forward a report on the slave case for the Federation of Protestant Missions, a federation for protestant mission societies in the region, shocking many of them. As a consequence of the report, the Federation chose a general secretary, a French pastor, tasked with getting in contact with the High Commissioner of Cameroon (Lode, 1992, 35). This led to the High Commissioner personally arriving in Ngaoundéré, enabling Endresen to give a full report. Because of this meeting, Endresen choose not to speak up about the slave case when a UN commission visited Ngaoundéré, in fear of jeopardizing the progress. This was rewarded, as the High Commissioner later the same year during a large political meeting

declared all people in Cameroon to be free, as well as reducing the power of the lamido (Lode, 1992, 35). A few months later, the Fulani leader expressed to Endresen that he understood the mission was correct, and that there had to be an end to the slavery (Skagstad, 1977, 18). The slave crisis was over.

This did not last however – when Endresen left for Norway again, the lamido gave in for external pressure, and the slavery continued (Lode, 1992, 35). Endresen returned in the end of 1954, and continued to fight for the slave case, though other missionaries now had the day-to-day-responsibility of helping escaped slaves, who continued to come to the station. Up until the liberation, the administration became more cooperative when it came to securing slaves' freedom (Bakke, 2008, 43), and when the Cameroonian government took over in 1960, they allowed the mission station to continue to be a safe haven for slaves (Lode, 1992, 35). The Cameroonian government also bestowed Endresen with knighthood in “L'Ordre de la Valeur du Cameroon”, the highest order of Cameroon, as thanks for his long mission service and fight against slavery (Skagestad, 1977, 21).

In 1963, Endresen retired and travelled home. He continued to fight slavery, founding the Norwegian branch of the Anti-Slavery Organization, and in 1965 he helped produce a report on slavery in Cameroon for the UN. Though Cameroon's delegates in the UN denied the report, claiming it was built on misconceptions, the administration of Northern Cameroon was ordered to put an end to slavery by the president of Cameroon that same year (Bakke, 2008, 44). This was the beginning of the end of slavery in Northern Cameroon.

Twice after this, Endresen returned to Cameroon as a visitor. On his last visit, he could happily conclude that slavery was basically abolished. Despite this, he continued to fight against slavery through the Anti-Slavery Organization, until he died the 23rd of November 1973 (Skagestad, 1977, 21-23).

# 5 Analysis

Now that the theory and historical context is in place, it is time to try and answer the topic question: what did Endresen contribute to the fight against slavery in Northern Cameroon? I will now present the sources, divided into the previously mentioned source groups, accompanied with short analyses, before bringing them all together in a final analysis.

## 5.1 Source Groups

As previously mentioned, the sources have been divided into four groups: literature published by Endresen, literature published by NMS, archive material from the NMS, literature published by researchers.

### 5.1.1 Literature published by Endresen

In his time, Endresen published three books related to Cameroon; *Slavekår i dagens Afrika* ("Slave labor in today's Africa"), *Solgt som slave* ("Sold as slave"), and *I slavenes spor* ("In the tracks of slaves"). The first one was written in 1954, just after the slave crisis as he was home on vacation in Norway, while the two others were written in 1965 and 1969, thus after his retirement and return to Norway.

#### ***Slavekår i Dagens Afrika***

This book (Endresen, 1954) summarizes the slave crisis between 1950-52. It contains a collection of retellings of the stories of escaped slaves, mostly women, about how they ran away from their slave masters to the mission station, where Endresen helped them get their freedom. The book tells how Endresen, from his perspective, challenged the administration on different levels and eventually, with the help of the Federation of Protestant Missions, reached the High Commissioner. The book ends optimistically with the official declaration of all Cameroonians' freedom and the end of the slave crisis in 1952.

This book is dominated by retellings of the escaped slaves' stories. Endresen (1954, 13-104) repeatedly makes a point of how thorough his writing down of these stories were, for the

sake of challenging the administration. Though I was unable to obtain the original impairments, and it is impossible to know how close these retellings are to the actual stories told by the slaves, Endresen appear to do what Spivak (1988, 27) criticized others for not doing; he talked directly with the women he's writing on behalf of.

Endresen's writing also reveals his willingness to pursue the problem upwards. When the local administration becomes uncooperative, he reaches the central administration through the Federation; when the district chief causes trouble, he goes to the county governor, and then makes the Federation get in contact with the High Commissioner. Only when the UN commission arrived did he not pursue the problem higher, in fear of jeopardizing the current progress (Endresen, 1954, 69, 96, 116, 141). In this, Endresen showed an understanding of the power structures he was a part of, and a willingness to utilize them.

The book also reveals another important point; Endresen never actively liberated slaves. He only helped them secure their freedom after they escape to the mission station. Neither does he address this point in the book. This lack of action might be worthy of criticism. However, it must be kept in mind that Endresen and the small Norwegian mission were reliant on the goodwill of the French administration, and openly challenging the Fulani might simply have been out of the question with their limited practical and "political" resources.

### ***Solgt Som Slave***

*Solgt Som Slave* (Endresen, 1965) is a continuation of *Slavekår I Dagens Afrika*, including the entirety of the first book in it. He describes the setback after his departure, and the slow and irregular but gradual improvement of the slave case, and even though he no longer deals with escaped slaves on a day-to-day-basis, he shares a few personal experiences. In the end of the book, he criticizes the UN and their (lack of) dealing with the slave question.

When it comes to Endresen, the new parts of this book make it clear that his focus is on the UN, both in his criticism of them and with a much stronger focus on the Human Rights in his writing (Endresen, 1965, 116, 137, 143-150). This makes sense when you consider that this book is written in 1965, while the slave case is thematized once again in the UN (Endresen, 1969).

However, the book tells very little of what Endresen did between his return in 1954 and retirement in 1963, only including a few anecdotal stories (Endresen, 1965, 114, 131). Based on his actions and achievements in 1950-52, one might question why nothing noteworthy was done in this period. Unfortunately, all the currently available sources are very quiet about this period, which leaves it up to speculation. It is worth noting that the last part of the fifties was a chaotic period for Cameroon as it struggled for liberation, making efforts for the slave case less of a priority in the administration's eyes. Additionally, Endresen did turn 60 in 1956; his age might have played a part in his reduced efforts.

### ***I Slavenes Spor***

In Endresen's (1969) last book, his focus is less on Cameroon and more on slavery in general. On a voyage to visit Cameroon, he writes about the slave history of West Africa. He once again criticizes the UN for its inactivity in the slave case, though he acknowledges that a UN report in 1965, built on his observations, has probably led to drastic changes in Ngaoundéré. When he arrives, he confirms with joy personally that slavery is practically abolished. The rest of the book is dedicated to the establishment of the Norwegian branch of the Anti-Slavery Organization and other cases of slavery across the world.

This book is mostly dedicated to anti-slavery across the world, reflecting Endresen's position in his new organization as well as slavery being functionally abolished in Cameroon. It still shows the impact of Endresen's work on the slave case, as the UN report of 1965, built on his observations, most likely played a part in the Cameroonian government's final efforts to end slavery in Ngaoundéré (Endresen, 1969, 48-49). The book also shows Endresen's larger passion for the slave case – it is not only limited to Cameroon.

When looking at these books, it is important to remember that they convey the picture that Endresen himself wanted to convey. Though he does not appear to brag in his writing, it is likely that he is invested in portraying himself, or at least the mission, in a favorable light. The books are also written with a Norwegian audience in mind, meant to inform about the situation in Cameroon in a way they understand, and maybe at the same time invoke some sympathy for the cause.

With that said, Endresen very seldomly fall into an orientalist retelling of his experiences: he doesn't represent the Cameroonians as helpless, in the same way that he doesn't presents himself as helpless. The slaves escape by their own power and came to the mission for help by their own power (Endresen, 1954, 19-21), just like Endresen goes to higher authorities to make changes. He does not demonize the Fulani or the lamido, many times showing that he too is human (Endresen, 1969, 55), often criticizing the (European) local administration just as much. He also repeatedly commends the former slaves on their hard work and good spirits (Endresen, 1965, 15). In other words, though Endresen's writing by no means should be taken as impartial retellings, he does show a considerate and sober attitude in his representation of those he writes about.

### **5.1.2 Literature published by NMS**

From NMS' published literature, there are three anniversary books, *Det Norske Misjonsselskaps historie i hundre år* (The Norwegian Mission Society's history for a hundred years), *Kamerun: Norsk misjon gjennom 50 år* (Cameroon: Norwegian mission through 50 years) and *I tro og tjeneste* (In faith and service). Additionally, a biography named *Halfdan Endresen: postmannen som ble slavenes frigjører* (Halfdan Endresen: the mailman who became the liberator of laves) will be presented.

#### **Anniversary books**

The three anniversary books were written with about a twenty-year span between each and show a development in the narrative around the slave case in Cameroon. The first book, *Det Norske Misjonsselskaps historie i hundre år* was published in 1949 in delayed celebration of the 100 years anniversary of NMS. This was before the slave crisis in 1950, which is reflected in the book only mentioning slaves once, and only passingly (Endresen & Nikolaisen, 1949).

The next book, *Kamerun: Norsk misjon gjennom 50 år* celebrates NMS' 50th anniversary in Cameroon, published after slavery's official end (Larsen, 1973, 58-61). Under the title "battered, miserable and sick did they arrive" it writes shortly about Endresen's importance in the slave case, opening with his offering of stepping down as superintendent. It's not very

historical in its retelling, relying mostly on citations from Endresen's own books and portraying him as a hero, leading the mission in the fight against slavery.

Lastly, *I tro og tjeneste* is written in celebration of NMS' 150th anniversary. A chapter, neutrally named "the fight against slavery" (own translation), is dedicated to the slave case (Lode, 1992, 32-36). It explains that all missionaries in Cameroon were involved in the slave case, but that Endresen was so central that he will be the focus. This time the retelling is more historical and chronological, though still putting a large focus on the period 1950-1952 and the importance of Endresen's report in 1965, drawing a clear link between it and the end of slavery in Cameroon.

It is clear to see a development throughout these books; in 1949, the slave case was not even a topic, while in both the other books it is an important story. This makes sense if one remembers that these anniversary books are written in celebration of NMS' achievements, and in 1949, the slave case was not one of those.

There are also differences between the retellings in 1973 and 1992, though they are not massive. Though Lode (1992, 32-36) keeps a more neutral tone, a more historical retelling, and focuses earlier on the fact that it was not just Endresen who fought against slavery, his chapter is almost as focused on Endresen as Larsen's (1973, 58-61). They also both heavily focus on the period 1950-52 and the importance of Endresen's report in 1965, with only brief mentions of other missionaries and events. Additionally, though the language in Larson's chapter might be more condescending, none of the authors appear to give the slaves any credit, either presenting them as if in need of help or almost completely ignoring them. Both books tell the mission's and Endresen's story, not the story of the escaped slaves.

### ***Halfdan Endresen: postmannen som ble slavenes frigjører***

This biography (Skagestad, 1977) follows Endresen's life from high school until death, with some general information about slavery in Cameroon, the Fulani and anti-slavery efforts. It does, however, not address the question of slavery before 1950, when Endresen had "no choice but to help", as "his special missionary task" (own translations) (Skagestad, 1977, 11). Once again, the period of 1950-52 is dedicated a lot of attention, while the rest of the



decade is left with only one page. When Endresen leaves Cameroon in 1963, Skagestad presents him as a hero in the eyes of the Cameroonians, due to his medal and the kind parting words of the bishop, which both shows great respect for Endresen. She ends the book with Endresen's report to the UN, his last trips to Cameroon, the joy of seeing slavery ended, and then his continued work against slavery until his death.

As an NMS-produced biography about Endresen, this book unsurprisingly paints him as a hero. This time some of his credit is founded in the local Cameroonians; he did receive a medal for his work, and he was asked to return to Cameroon so that he could be buried there – a great honor, especially for a European (Skagestad, 1977, 21). However, Skagestad also quotes Endresen on the fact that he “had no choice” but to help the slaves, without actually in any way acknowledging the slaves' efforts, once again only retelling Endresen's and the mission's story.

In conclusion, NMS has had an interest in portraying the slave case as a victory for NMS and choose to make Endresen the champion of the case. All the sources also seem to focus particularly on the period 1950-1952 and the UN report in 1965, with limited to no information about the rest of the time. It is also noteworthy that none of the books, though all heavily based on Endresen's own writings, reflect his underlying respect for the slaves' own effort.

### **5.1.3 Archive material from the NMS**

When it comes to the archive material, as previously mentioned, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the data collecting process was cut short, and thus, the selection of documents is limited. Additionally, much of the data that was collected turned out not to be relevant for this paper. Some of the documents still provide interesting data; a note of reflection from a missionary, the station diary from Ngaoundéré, and a correspondence between Endresen and the mission secretary of NMS.

#### **Sverre Fløttum – note of reflection**

This note is written by Sverre Fløttum, fellow colleague of Endresen, where he reflects upon things which might not have seemed important for him at the time (MDA, 1986, 24-27). In

the note, he writes how no one told the slaves to escape, they just did it on their own, and that this want for freedom eventually spread to Ngaoundéré (he was stationed in Tibati, a station nearby). When he talks about slaves Ngaoundéré, he says how they were a problem “not just for Endresen”, implying that his position in the matter is obvious. Finally, he also notes how he helped liberate 16 slaves in the period between 1939 and 1943, almost to his own surprise.

These are interesting datapoints. Here, one can once again see that the slaves are the ones doing the escaping, taking the initiative themselves, this time confirmed by Fløttum. This also shows that another, contemporary missionary highlights Endresen as the main force behind slavery (though the note is written in hindsight). And finally, this reveals that the missionaries were as a matter of fact active in the slave case before 1950, even if only in a limited sense.

### ***Dagbok for Ngaoundéré stasjon 1940 – Sept 1952***

The station diary was written by different authors (MDA, 1952, 70, 74, 84-85, 97-98) who never signed their writings, so it is often unclear who wrote what. There are however strong indications that Endresen was the author for the years 1950 and 1951 (he had a very distinct way of writing Ngaoundéré). Though Endresen briefly mentions the slave case in his summaries, there's little data of interest in them. Later, however, another author brings up how Endresen has his hands full with the slave case, without mentioning the rest of the mission, and he credits Endresen with opening the eyes and ears of the French administration to the reality of the slave case. Later in the diary, there is also a case where the teachers and students at a bible school pray for the slaves; for that occasion, they also specifically pray for Endresen, and that God must give him strength to fight for the slaves.

Though it is hard to interpret much from Endresen's sober summary, the two other datapoints give an interesting look at the perception at the time. The diary entry crediting Endresen was written by other missionaries, at the time. And though the prayer does not necessarily mean that the local students agreed with the sentiment of the prayer, the fact that a missionary teacher choose to pray that way helps solidify the idea that the slave case was in fact seen as Endresen's case, even at that time.

## **Correspondence between Endresen and Skauge**

As superintendent of Ngaoundéré station, Endresen often corresponded with missionary secretary Skauge. In late 1951 in one of these correspondences, where Endresen has written about his book-in-the-making, Skauge expresses his thankfulness to God that Endresen is willing to fight against slavery to the end, and that he would like to gain the moral support of the board for Endresen's case (MDA, 1951a). This he also achieves, when he only a few weeks later in another correspondence expresses the full moral support of A.U. (probably referencing "arbeidsutvalget", or the executive committee), giving Endresen support to continue in whatever way he sees most fitting (MDA, 1951b).

Through this correspondence, it is revealed how NMS was willing to back Endresen at his own time, and not just as a response to his "threat" of leaving the mission, but on a moral level.

The archive material gives a glimpse into the situation at the time, giving access to the less filtrated and cultivated views and opinions of the actors. It also shows that Endresen was seen as the man behind the slave case, even at his own time.

### **5.1.4 Literature published by researchers**

Finally, what other researchers have said about Endresen will be presented. The literature that will be looked at is an article by Odd Magne Bakke on the missionaries' impact on the abolition of slavery, a commentary on photos taken by Endresen by Marianne Gullestad, and a look at the French perception of Endresen through an article by Tomas Sundnes Drønen.

#### ***The impact of Norwegian Missionaries to the Abolition of Slavery in Northern Cameroon (ca. 1940-1965)***

In this article, Odd Mange Bakke (2008, 35-38, 43-44) analyzes the impact of missionaries from the NMS on the slave case. He criticizes their first 25 years (1925-1950), for condemning it only as a preventor of mission, and having no practical involvement. He provides three possible reasons for this; the missionaries policy of not involving themselves politically, a limited workforce, and limited knowledge of how terribly the slaves were treated. However, he does give them credit for their work after 1950, especially Endresen.

Among his observations, he includes the French administration's frustration in 1955 over 75 % of escaped slaves still favoring to run to the mission. He also fails to find indications that mission work is the underlying motivation for liberating slaves. In his conclusion, he concludes that the Norwegian mission "and in particular Endresen" played an important role, an observation supported by French sources stating that the "abolition of slavery must to a great extent be ascribed to the work of the mission" (own translations).

Bakke credits the mission for its work, giving legitimacy to Endresen and NMS' own presentation of the events. He does, however, strongly criticize their inactivity before the slave crisis of 1950. This will be discussed later in the paper.

### ***"Documentation of efforts against slavery: Halfdan Endresen, 1954-1969"***

Marianne Gullestad (2007, 100-107) writes in her book about the usage of photo by missionaries, seen in a cross-cultural, somewhat post-colonial perspective. In her chapter on Endresen's photos, she does credit him for taking most of his photos in full profile – something that the Cameroonians preferred themselves – and for always providing names of those he photographs. With the nature of his books in mind, produced for Norwegians and not the ones being portrayed in it, and the time it was produced in, Gullestad concludes that Endresen, though with some flaws, shows a relatively high level of respect for those he is photographing. She also credits him for referring to the photographed as "former slaves", unlike other mission literature where the same photos are presented as "old slaves".

This is a rather impartial presentation of Endresen as quite respectful towards the local Cameroonians, something which could lend more legitimacy to his writings on their behalves. It should also serve as a reminder that Endresen belonged and wrote in a certain time period.

### ***Slavery, Human Rights and Visas***

Tomas Sundnes Drønen's (2016, 259-262, 266-270) article describes a visa conflict between NMS and the French administration in Cameroon in 1950. The article, largely built on French archive resources, describes how the good relations between the two turned sour in 1950. The French administration showed much frustration with the mission due to the fear of

them destabilizing the region, in particular with Endresen, who they also showed great admiration for, praising his manner, intelligence, controlled temperament and knowledge of the local languages and situations. Sundnes Drønen describes Endresen as a political opponent of the French administration, to the point where even Endresen's inactivity made it into the administration's reports. Their respect of Endresen becomes more highlighted when his replacement Johannes Walle is reported of as characterless, not showing the tact of his predecessor while also making many mistakes. Sundnes Drønen also points out the fear among the administration that Endresen would go to the UN, as such an accusation would be "désagréable", disagreeable.

Sundnes Drønen confirms here through French sources the importance of Endresen, at least in the 1950-52 period. This becomes particularly clear when one compares the "fawning praise" for Endresen with Walle's less flattering presentation (Drønen, 2016, 266-267). It also shows once again the importance of the Human Rights and the UN, revealing from the French side that this was something they feared Endresen might employ as a tool (or threat) to make changes happen.

## 5.2 Final Analysis

Now that all the data are in place, what do they tell about Endresen and his contribution to the fight against slavery in Northern Cameroon?

The Cameroonians' own voices are a good place to start. It has been, as previously mentioned, impossible to discover sources from the time written by Cameroonians themselves. Their stories have however been made available, namely through Endresen's writings, in particular his first book (Endresen, 1954). That appears, however, to be the only sources building directly on Cameroonians; other NMS literature builds almost entirely on Endresen's writings when retelling the Cameroonians' stories, and the very limited glimpse into French perspectives have shown no dialog with the suppressed Cameroonians. Though this last point is a very weak one, and does undeniably require more research, it does not change the fact that in the currently provided source material, Endresen appears to be the only author who has "spoken with the subaltern", and let them speak through him. This

doubly so, as most of his sources appear to be women, who have struggled even more to be represented and heard (Spivak, 1988, 24-25, 28).

This last observation of course builds on the trust that Endresen's retellings of the Cameroonians' stories are truthful, something which cannot be said with complete certainty. However, if Marianne Gullestad's (2008, 107) conclusions about Endresen's photographing as relatively respectful for its time are kept in mind, it should lend some credibility to what he has written. Yes, there are definitely problems here in a postcolonial perspective - he is still writing on behalf of Cameroonians and for a Norwegian audience, it is unknown where and when the retellings have been written down, and the power balance between a European middle-aged white male missionary and a Cameroonian just escaped female slave will undeniably have an effect on an interview - but at least he is in a dialogue with the people he is writing on behalf of. Additionally, he does not appear to excessively Orientalize those he writes about either: though they're presented as needing saving to a certain extent, they're not presented as completely helpless, degenerate or irrational, and even though most of the escaped slaves are women, they don't appear as the typically feminine and passive that could be expected in a more orientalist presentation (McLeod, 2000, 52-55).

This last part is important; the Cameroonians weren't passive. They themselves might not have led directly to the great changes, but they were the ones that took initiative and escaped, creating the "problem" of the slave case. Fløttum (MDA, 1986, 24-25) wrote how no one told the slaves to escape, but they did it themselves, and Endresen himself even said that when slaves arrived at the station, there was no other choice than to help set them free (Skagestad, 1977, 11). Without escaping slaves, there would have been no slave crisis in 1950, and no need for Endresen to act. Does this diminish Endresen's accomplishment? Perhaps to a certain extent. I believe, however, that the more important takeaway is the importance of the slaves' own role in the slave case: they were not passively liberated by outside forces, but actively tried to escape, seek out help, and force others to take actions on their behalf.

What of Endresen's own actions then; what did he really do? NMS was probably directly involved in the liberation of a few hundred slaves (Larsen, 1992, 61), Endresen probably in most of those. The real changes, however, he did not have control over; it was the High

Commissioner that declared all people of Cameroon to be free and weakened the power of the lamido in 1952 (Endresen, 1954, 107), and it was the Cameroonian government that in 1965 challenged the lamidos and finally started to end the slavery in Cameroon (Endresen, 1969, 49-51). Endresen, “the liberator of slaves” was not directly responsible for either of these to monumental changes.

I will argue, however, that Endresen must be understood less as a personal breaker of chains, and more as a watchdog or a lawyer, keeping the authorities accountable to themselves. Though Endresen has been describes as a political opponent of the French administration (Drønen, 2016, 268), he at no point goes against the law. When it is possible to buy slaves free, he does that, even making sure that the transactions are put in writing (Endresen, 1954, 35). Later he repeatedly challenges the administration on the Declaration of Human Rights, which France signed in 1948, and uses that as his tool for liberating slaves. When the local administration sent police after escaped slaves, Endresen asked them to leave the station and go into hiding, as he would not lie to the police when they arrived (Endresen, 1954, 73).

And when Endresen got no way with the local administration, he repeatedly went to higher authorities; when the local administration refused to cooperate, he went to the regional chief. When he was unwilling to help, Endresen went to the Federation, so that they could reach the High Commissioner (Endresen, 1954, 96, 84, 87). Through this method, Endresen was able to force higher authorities to change their practice and attitude, by keeping them accountable to previous promises. It appears to have been the same strategy in 1965, when the report on slavery built on his observations was presented to the UN, and the government of Cameroon, though denying the report as incorrect, later that year gathered the lamidos in Northern Cameroon and put an end to slavery (Lode, 1992, 36). Though the impact of Endresen in this last case must be speculated, the French have later admitted that the Norwegian effort was integral to the abolishment of slavery (Bakke, 2008, 44). In other words, though Endresen and the mission were not directly responsible for the weakening of slavery in 1952 and its abolishment in 1965, their influence on the events were of undeniable importance.

With that said, Endresen did only help slaves that escaped to the station, putting little to no effort into liberating captured slaves, unless they were recaptured, and only preventing new slaves from being taken when specifically asked to do so. In general, his actions when it comes to the slave case appear to always have been reactionary. He only helped liberate slaves when they arrived at the station, and he only went to higher authorities when the current one's refused to cooperate. Though this can be explained and understood by knowing that the missionaries were supposed not to take part in politics (Bakke, 2008, 37), it is still a point of criticism against Endresen, as well as once again highlighting the importance of the slaves' own efforts to break free.

This also begs another question; though many important things happened in 1950-52 and 1965, what of the rest of Endresen's 31 years in Cameroon? We've seen that the source material is thin on the period between 1954 and 1963 when it comes to Endresen, and in his article, Bakke (2008) is highly critical of the entire mission up until 1950.

Though I do not entirely disagree with Bakke's assessment of the mission's early years, even though I consider the missionaries having "no practical involvement" (Bakke, 2008, 36) being an incorrect accusation (see; Fløttum liberating 16 slaves (MDA, 1986, 26-27), the first slave case in 1932 (Endresen, 1969, 67-72), Endresen and the Federation improving conditions in 1946 (Endresen, 1954, 82)), I consider his explanation for why lacking. He provides three reasons; the fact that the mission was expected not to partake in politics, the missionaries' few numbers, and the fact that they might not have understood how poorly slaves were treated (Bakke, 2008, 36). Though none of these reasonings are baseless, I believe Bakke overlooks possibly the two most important factors; first, the Declaration of Human Rights wasn't signed until 1948. Throughout all his books, Endresen repeatedly refers to the importance of the Human Rights, both to the reader and to different authorities, and in his article, Sundnes Drønen (2016, 267) reveals that fear of being challenged in the UN was a reality among the French administration. In other words, Endresen and the mission, who were reliant of the goodwill of the French administration to even be allowed to stay in the country, had up until 1948 simply not the tools to challenge the administration on the slavery case. And secondly; Bakke seem, like most of the sources, to fail to realize the importance of the escaping slaves themselves. The reason not much happened before 1950



or rather why so much happened in and after 1950, is because that was when the slaves themselves forced things to happen.

When one looks at the period after the dramatic events of 1952, the arguments are fewer and weaker. Though the sources tell that there was quite steadily improvement from 1955 and onwards (Bakke, 2016, 43), slavery was still existent and a large problem in Ngaoundéré. When Endresen returned from his vacation in 1954, there had clearly been a backlash from the progress made in 1952. Why was no action taken? Why didn't Endresen once again turn to higher authorities to attempt to force change? In 1952, he chose not to speak up when a UN delegation arrived in the country to not jeopardize the improvement of the French government (Endresen, 1965, 106) – why did he not turn to them now? Unfortunately, the source material on this period is too thin, and though it can be tempting to accuse Endresen of inactivity, there simply is not enough ground to justify such claims on. It is however noteworthy that both Endresen and NMS are very sparse with words when describing the period between 1954 and 1960, though if this is an indication of lack of action or simply that nothing dramatic enough to compare to 1950-52 happened is impossible to say. This is a question that cannot be answered properly here but must be addressed in another research. However, the mission continued to play an active role in the slave case, with the French administration noting with frustration that in 1955, 75 % of escaped slaves still went to the mission station (Bakke, 2008, 43).

It can now be said with quite certainty that the mission was of great importance to the abolishment of slavery in Northern Cameroon and Ngaoundéré, confirmed by the French administration in their final days (Bakke, 2008, 44). However, how much of that can be credited to Endresen? Did he deserve his status as “liberator of slaves”, or was he just the superintendent at the right station at the right time?

I think it is quite easy to argue Endresen's individual importance, maybe best exemplified in his willingness to leave the mission if his involvement in the slave case was detrimental to the mission (Larsen, 1973, 61). This statement both personified the separation of the slave case from normal mission strategy (Bakke, 2008, 44), and that Endresen, even though he got the support of NMS, was willing to give up his position to fight slavery. Endresen's individual importance is further highlighted both by other missionaries and the French administration:

The unknown author of the station diary (MDA, 1952, 84-85, 97-98) described the slave case as Endresen's and how the school children prayed for Endresen's and not the mission's success, while Fløttum in his writings (MDA, 1986, 25) felt the need to highlight "not just Endresen's" importance in the slave case. Meanwhile, the French administration showed through Sundnes Drønen's article (2016, 266, 269) their admiration and respect of Endresen's character, in stark contrast to Walle, who was seen both as more infuriating and easier to "combat" than Endresen. The Cameroonian government also saw Endresen as individually important, rewarding him with knighthood (Skagestad, 1977, 21). Finally, Endresen's work for the Cameroonian slaves did not end with his retirement in 1963, but he continued his efforts, independently from NMS.

In other words, Endresen played a central role in the mission's effort for the slave case, so central that it, both at the time and later, was thought of by many as Endresen's case. This not only because of his position as superintendent or his commitment to the case, but because of his character, which was of a nature that let him successfully communicate in a way that influenced those he needed to influence.

## 6 Conclusion

What did Halfdan Endresen contribute to the fight against slavery in Northern Cameroon, specifically Ngaoundéré? He was undeniably very important, partly as a leader of the NMS in Cameroon, but mostly as an individual. He had a large, though indirect, impact on the improvement of the slaves' position in 1952, and his work probably had a strong influence on the eventual abolishment of slavery in 1965. His work took the shape less of a stereotypical liberator, and more that of a watch dog, who through criticism and accusations attempted to hold the French administration and eventually Cameroonian government accountable to the Declaration of Human Rights, which was one of Endresen's most important tools in his battle against slavery.

However, it must be remembered that Endresen's work for the slave case for a long time was entirely reactionary, and that his efforts probably would never have mounted to much were it not for the slaves that ran to the station. It might seem obvious that fighting against slavery should be motivated by slaves, but it is important to recognize that these slaves were essential actors in their own liberation, and not just passive victims. In the same way that Endresen went to higher authorities when he himself couldn't improve the situation, the slaves went to Endresen and the mission when they couldn't improve their own. This is not meant to discredit Endresen's work, but to highlight the importance of the escaped slaves in the story of their own liberation, something Endresen did to an extent.

Though one might criticize Endresen's reactionary approach, it is important to remember the missionaries relatively weak position in Cameroon, reliant as they were on the French administration's approval. It was almost through the Declaration of Human Rights alone that they could actively challenge the administration, and that only because France had signed it. Considering the mission's limited power, it is quite impressive how large their impact on the case was, and Endresen undeniably punched above his weight class, considering his humble position as superintendent of a tiny mission.

Endresen did a lot for the slave case. Whether he could have done more is hard to say. However, he, together with the mission, did enough that many slaves were willing to risk

torture and punishment, even their lives, to run away to seek their help to be set free. For many of them, he did enough.

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