Title: Uduk faith in a five-note scale: mission music and the spread of the Gospel

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Abstract: The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) began work among the Uduk, who were living in a remote area close to the border with Ethiopia, in 1938. After the deportation of the missionaries in 1964, Christianity of a kind continued to flourish among the Uduk. The new expansion of faith was carried into the countryside partly on a wave of song and music. The rendering of evangelical hymns into a language like Uduk, or the composition of fresh lyrics, is easy for one of optimistic faith. At the same time, the bare and culturally shallow language of the resulting texts is open to all kinds of misunderstandings, and to none. The author discusses problems of verbal translation and composition in the making of Uduk hymns. The 92 Uduk-language lyrics in the hymnal fall into three categories. 1) Straight translations of texts, set to their existing tunes. This method works quite well for those hymns where the content is simple, narrative or descriptive rather than theological or metaphorical. 2) New lyrics to old tunes. An existing Western tune has been used, but the message is very freely composed in Uduk. 3) Fresh compositions, made for the Uduk context with their own words and tunes, often simple to the point of sounding like slogans. The author carried out fieldwork among the Uduk between 1965 and 1969 and made a brief visit in 1983. Notes, ref.