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# **AFRICA TODAY**

## **The Sudan: 25 Years of Independence**

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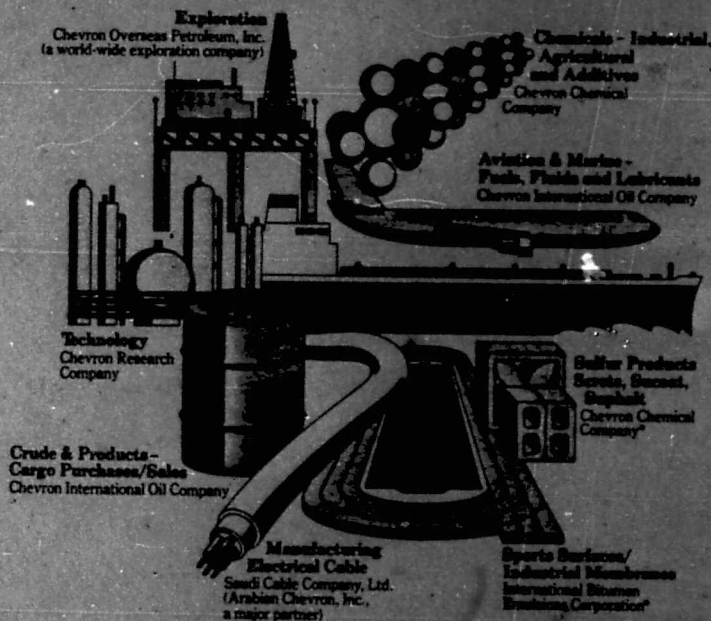
**Special  
Commemorative  
Issue**

**Guest Editors:  
Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban & Richard A. Lobban, Jr.**

**VOL. 28, NO. 2  
1981 2nd Quarter**

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Volume 28 (1981)

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## Guest Editors' Introduction

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and  
Richard Lobban

This special issue of AFRICA TODAY celebrates twenty-five years of Sudan's independence. We are pleased to be guest editors of this issue which recognizes that historic event. We hope that this issue may become a part of the history of the independent Sudan as it continues the tradition of scholarly studies of Africa's largest country. At the very outset we must say that we are indebted to Mr. Osman Hassan Ahmed, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan in the United States, for the initial suggestion to undertake this project. His concern and support are very much in keeping with his own research in the development of Sudanese educational policy.

We are, of course, extremely grateful to Edward Hawley, Executive Editor of AFRICA TODAY, for his enthusiastic support of the idea. This is the second special issue of AFRICA TODAY on the Sudan; the first being AFRICA TODAY 20:3, 1973. This anniversary issue thereby carries with it a special meaning and a special mission. The Sudan's independence in 1956 was a landmark and an important symbol for African and Afro-Arab peoples of the continent, most of whom were still struggling for freedom from the yoke of colonialism. As the Sudan celebrates its quarter-century of independence the issue of the full emancipation of African peoples is still not fully resolved.

When the banner "Sudan for the Sudanese" was raised, the intelligentsia of the Sudan were immersed in the process of writing and re-writing their own history, and of constructing their own social science. Characteristic of this new scholarship is a non-Eurocentric view of the Sudan; this is now the dominant trend in Sudan Studies today. In short, the historic break with colonialism signalled important intellectual breaks with colonialist thought and scholarship.

The articles, reviews, and graphics which we have collected in this Special issue of AFRICA TODAY are, we believe, a just contribution to the Silver Jubilee of the Sudan's independence. We have tried to give distinction to the collection with the works of William Adams and Peter Shinnie. We hope that the high caliber of these interlocking articles gives the tone we wish to set and they offer the paradigmatic appraisal and framework in which works which are not archaeological may also be placed. We are likewise honored by the contribution from Mohamed Omer Beshir, truly one of the Sudan's most distinguished scholars and dedicated advocates of research on the Sudan.

There has been a transformation in the scholarship of the Sudan from the reports of the passing European travelers interested in the "quaint" customs of "primitive" peoples to the more rigorous approaches. These were often distinguished in their own time but were distorted by the notion of the "colonizing mission" not to mention the biases of racism and ethnocentrism which were not fully extirpated from their works. Apart from the senior scholars already cited, most of the rest of the contributors to this issue are younger scholars of the Sudan who have done their research in the last 15 years. While the themes and subjects are divergent we believe that they all are unified by the freshness of their perspectives and by their re-evaluation of colonial and other sources. The struggle for the independence of the Sudan laid the base for these revitalized studies. The present task is to accept the benefits and responsibilities of looking at the Sudanese and their history on their own terms. The articles by Johnson, Huntington, Ackroyd and Deng, and Burton are all tackling new problems, or, at least, old problems and data with a refreshing outlook. The studies of the archaeology, history, and social realities of the south have really just begun again and we hope that these offerings will only trigger more investigations.

Conscious of the unity and diversity of the Sudan, we sought to attract articles focusing on aspects of the Islamic and northern regions of the nation as well. Here Spaulding, Fluehr-Lobban, El-Tijani and Lobban seek to appraise aspects of the northern Sudan's culture and history, past and present. The role of persisting Islamic values is one of the integrating themes in this section. The unity of north and south has also been stressed in many of the book reviews.

So often, social scientists who teach in Faculties of Arts and Sciences, forget the essential function of the arts. We have tried to overcome this deficiency with the works of Hale and Berkley who deal sensitively with these related questions. The graphics by Muhammad Bushara which adorn the pages are also particularly enriching in this respect and are typical of the fine artistic work and potential now seen in the modern Sudan.

Let us also add a note of self-criticism. While we have sought to have some balance between the topics which are presented ranging from the archaeological to the historical, from the north to the south, and from the arts to the sciences, we do not believe that we have succeeded in achieving the proper balance between Sudanese and non-Sudanese scholars. This failure on our part is not for the lack of effort, since the questions of transport and communication with the Sudan have given us more than a few headaches. However, there are many works in English written by Sudanese which should really be in these pages. Future studies will also bring to light a number of old manuscripts and recent papers in Arabic and other languages which should be translated and made available to scholars who do not have access to those materials.

Finally, we note that the current interest in the Sudan has not only made this special issue of AFRICA TODAY a possibility, but there is now the journal of NORTH EAST AFRICAN STUDIES published at Michigan State University. This journal provides substantial space for Sudanist research. This context has also made it possible for the creation of the Sudan Studies Association in the Spring of 1981 following its organizational meeting at George Washington University and its founding convention at Fordham University where the Secretariat now resides. Strategic assistance by Mr. Osman Hassan Ahmed is again gratefully acknowledged in forming this Association and its newsletter. As founding officers we encourage all interested in the Sudan to become members and attend the up-coming meetings and programs which are planned.

In short, a lot is now going on in Sudan studies. While the areas of current research are far greater than those in this collection, we trust that this will provide a glimpse of where Sudanist scholarship has been and where it is headed.

We would very much like to acknowledge the assistance of Irma Morettini and Frances Taylor who provided very accurate typing for some portions of this special issue. In a closing personal note this issue of AFRICA TODAY is being edited while we have become parents of our second daughter, Nichola Felicia Fluehr-Lobban, born on 2 July 1981.

## **Letter of Greetings from the IAAS,**

### **University of Khartoum**

On behalf of the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS), we have the honour of conveying our best wishes upon the publication of this special issue of **Africa Today** and upon the formation of the Sudan Studies Association in North America.

We are pleased that a journal as widely read as **Africa Today** has agreed to publish this collection of essays commemorating 25 years of the Sudan's independence. The articles reflect the richness, variety and high standards of scholarship characteristic of research on the Sudan. I am pleased to be able to say that scholarly work in the IAAS and the University promises a future which will continue those fine traditions.

The IAAS maintains strong ties with a wide spectrum of institutions abroad. We hope that the formation and development of the Sudan Studies Association will serve to expand and enrich these relationships. We in the IAAS welcome the formation of the Association and look forward to establishing cooperative research links with the organization as it grows.

We applaud the publication of this commemorative issue on Sudan and hope that the next 25 years bring about increased opportunities to publish the ever-growing body of work on the Sudan by scholars from Sudan and abroad. We wish the Sudan Studies Association in North America all the very best in its endeavours.

Sincerely Yours,  
Dr. El Haj Bilal Omer,  
Head, Dept. of African and Asian Studies  
IAAS, University of Khartoum

## Foreword

### Mohamed Omer Beshir

The establishment of the Sudan Studies Association in the United States and this special issue of **Africa Today** commemorating the Sudan's twenty-fifth year of independence are welcome events. It is hoped that the SSA, through its newsletter and planned conferences will provide those involved in Sudanese studies with an additional forum for communication and interaction.

It is perhaps relevant to mention in this connection that a number of similar activities have already taken place or are being planned to celebrate this historical event. The Sudan was among the very first colonial possessions in Africa to have attained independence after the Second World War. The way it achieved this, for better or worse, set an example and was copied by other countries. It is therefore relevant to look at this as a special event. Thus, it is also appropriate for the scholars involved in Sudanese studies to celebrate this occasion with the publication of this volume.

A conference, for example, was organized for November 1980, by the African Studies Center at the University of Edinburgh on this same topic. More than fifty academics, scholars, and others with connections with the Sudan attended. The papers presented covered areas of history, economics, and politics.

The British Middle East Association Conference in July 1981, at the University of Durham, England devoted, for the first time, one of its sessions for the Sudan. A workshop on Research in Progress on the Sudan was held at the same time in the School of Oriental Studies in Durham. About thirty post-graduate students engaged in research on the Sudan as well as Sudanese academics and non-academics attended. Papers on different areas of study were presented and discussed. These three conferences which I have attended have highlighted, more than any other thing, the urgent need for more interaction and communication between those engaged in Sudanese studies and research on the Sudan.

Mohamed Omer Beshir is at present a Senior Researcher at St. Anthony's College, Oxford. He is also the Senior Researcher at the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum. In the past he has held other responsible positions at the University of Khartoum and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among his many published works are *The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict*, London, 1968 and *Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan*, New York, 1974. In 1964 he was the Secretary General of the historic Round Table Conference which initiated talks aimed at unifying the northern and southern regions of the Sudan.

Three other conferences, although not all directly connected with the occasion, have taken place or are being planned in Khartoum. The first of these was the Seminar on Folklore organized by the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum in February 1981. Issues related to folklore and nation-building were discussed. A Conference on the Mahdiya organized by the Department of History at the University of Khartoum is planned for November 1981, and a Conference on the Nile Valley Countries, organized by the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum is also planned for November 1981. Early in 1982, a Conference on the Sudan will be held at the University of Durham. A number of ex-Sudan Political and Technical Service personnel have been invited to contribute their experiences.

The upsurge in interest in research focused on the Sudan is neither sudden nor unexpected. It reflects the increased interest in Sudanese studies which has occurred inside and outside the Sudan since 1956. The list of the conferences organized by the Sudan Philosophical Society, the different Institutes and Departments at the University of Khartoum, and by the National Council for Research during the last twenty-five years testify to this fact. The many visitors to the Sudan Central Record Office and to the Sudan Collection at the University of Khartoum have resulted in a number of research degrees on topics relevant to the Sudan at the University of Khartoum, Britain, USA, Egypt, Scandinavia, France, and in Eastern European countries. This productivity underlines the fact of growing involvement in Sudanese studies.

The number of published works and articles on the Sudan in learned journals inside and outside the Sudan have similarly increased. The institutions engaged directly in Sudanese studies and research relevant to the Sudan include, in addition to those already mentioned, the Universities of Juba and Gezira, the Sudan Council for Art and Literature, and the Public Records Office in Khartoum. The contribution of the Sudan collection in the University Library and the University Press have also been significant. The role of the Institute of African and Asian Studies has likewise been quite important and is widely acknowledged. The establishment of the Graduate College in the University of Khartoum in 1974 has likewise been acknowledged as a further step in the promotion of Sudan studies. The recently established Institute of Economic Development and Research, and the Institute of Environmental Studies are expected to stimulate additional research in the important areas of economic, social, and environmental concern.

Outside the Sudan, in addition to the Sudan Archives at the University of Durham which continues to be the largest center for Sudan collections except for materials kept in the Sudan, the University of Hull

and the University of Bergen in Norway have become major centers providing supplemental resources for research on the Sudan. One hopes that the Sudan Studies Association will stimulate further interest in Sudanese studies and provide new opportunities for the growth of Sudanese studies in North America and elsewhere.

There are today no less than 500 Sudanese and non-Sudanese engaged in research on, or related to, the Sudan in universities and research centers outside of the Sudan. About 1000 post-graduates are today registered for higher research degrees within the Sudan. Already 500 have been awarded higher research degrees on topics relevant to the Sudan. In addition to these numbers there are no less than 500 Sudanese and non-Sudanese academics engaged in Sudanese studies. All of this underscores the fact that the last twenty-five years have witnessed a substantial growth in Sudanese studies and in research on the Sudan.

This intensification in research activities and the number of scholars involved, as compared with the colonial period, has yielded a wealth of information and has made a great contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the Sudan's history and society. I do not propose to provide a bibliography on these studies nor to evaluate the publications in the different fields. I am neither competent nor qualified to do this. It is not desirable in any case for me to do this. It is possible, however, to make a general assessment. The writings in Sudan studies by Sudanese scholars have not only been notable but also positive. The research and publications of the younger generation of non-Sudanese scholars, unlike those of their predecessors in the colonial period, have not been motivated by colonial considerations and

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, there are today a number of constraints which impede the further development of scholarly contributions on the Sudan. As in many countries of the Third World, the institutions concerned with research on the Sudan suffer from the paucity of research facilities, especially the lack of funds. The low salary scales for academics and research workers limit the attractiveness of teaching and research jobs to young and brilliant graduates. The time and devotion of those already on the job are also limited. The conditions and research facilities in the universities and institutions are poor and hence their productivity and efficiency in terms of research are low.

The financial support to the research and development activities from internal and external sources is very low despite the growing demands and the increase in the numbers involved. This unhappy situation, as far as the Sudan is concerned, has been further complicated by the present brain-drain which is taking place. The immediate task in my view is to rectify this position through a new national policy which would give priority, and

economic and financial backing, to the development of research. Until that is done, a number of steps should, in my view, be taken to rationalize and streamline the present situation. It has been pointed out at various conferences that there is an urgent need to compile a register of researchers and on-going research on the Sudan. The creation of such a register will provide a valuable source of information and communication. There is, on the other hand, a pressing need to update the already valuable bibliographies on the Sudan. The existing material in the Bibliographical Dictionary of the Sudan is a project which deserves attention and effort. In this respect the Sudan Studies Association Newsletter is a welcome contribution to the dissemination of information. What is needed perhaps is a comprehensive newsletter or bulletin which would provide a continuous link between those engaged in research on the Sudan.

It has been recognized for some time now that a large number of researchers for higher degrees inside and outside the Sudan remain unknown or unavailable. Many of them hold valuable information and original materials on Sudan studies. There is a need to make these available in one form or another. Because of the paucity of financial and human resources referred to above, the publication of the Sudan's most learned journals, **The Sudan Notes and Records**, and **KUSH**, to mention only two, have not been maintained. The continuation of their publication and their maintenance is another urgent need.

Beyond these aspects of communication, information, and publication, there is need to consolidate and develop further post-graduate studies in the Sudan, the expansion of exchange and training programs with universities and institutions outside the Sudan. The encouragement of research workers from outside the Sudan to undertake research relevant to the Sudan's problems and the support for centers and institutes dedicated to Sudanese studies is of no less importance.

These are some of the issues on the management and administrative aspects of research which I consider pressing, but they are not the only ones. The provision of the necessary infrastructure in terms of personnel, buildings, and equipment as a continuous national undertaking is the cornerstone for the development of Sudanese studies and research on the Sudan.

In order to achieve this, and without losing sight of the university's main objective of having qualified manpower, the philosophy of higher education needs to be reoriented towards research in those areas relevant to the Sudan's problems. The issue, as often argued, is not whether



priority should be given to theoretical or practical concerns. The issue is to create a climate constructive of research relevant to nation-building, and to the development of the natural and human resources. It is a difference between constructive research and valueless or negative research. While certain areas and certain topics have been over-researched and over-used, other areas have been neglected. The results of research have not yet filtered down to the educational system nor have they been used in a rational way by policy makers. A communication gap exists between the "intellectual" on the one hand and the administrator or the ordinary man and woman on the other hand. In many cases they speak and write in a language which is not comprehended by the ordinary citizen.

The last twenty-five years since the Sudan's independence have seen relative progress in different aspects of Sudan's life. Although the achievements have been less than the expectations and even the direction and degree of progress has been less satisfactory than it was before, nevertheless there have been positive changes. The changes can only come through the indigenization of the institutions and the systems employed to make effective change. The mutually cooperative efforts of the concerned and the committed research workers with the others is central and indispensable toward this end. It would be wrong to interpret this as an irrelevant leisurely occupation for an "elite".

The continuous dialogue and interaction between the research workers within the Sudan and outside of the Sudan, and the challenge of ideas and their discussion is one of the essential pre-requisites for channeling Sudan studies and research toward the positive and valuable ends. My appeal is for constructive, Sudan-centered and not Euro-American centered research on the Sudan.

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#### Editor's Note

We are most grateful to our guest editors, Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Richard Lobban, for the many hours of devoted effort involved in bringing together these many articles and book reviews from distinguished scholars in recognition of the Sudan's first quarter century of independence. Special thanks, too, go to Osman Hassan Ahmed, acting Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, for his close cooperation in the project. Our apologies to them, to the many authors whose work included Arabic, German or French words and citations, and to our readers, for our inability to reproduce accent marks not included in our printer's type.

Our next issue will follow shortly. The feature article is an analysis of dependency theory and its radical critics by William Hansen and Brigitte Schulz. We will also have an expanded publications section, as there proved to be no room for one in this issue. Don't miss it! There is an order form on page if you are not a subscriber.

Edward A. Hawley

## **Important Dates in the Modern History of the Sudan**

Osman Hassan Ahmed and Mamoun A. Yousif, compilers

- 1821 The Turko-Egyptian Conquest of the Northern Sudan and the establishment of the Northern Sudan as an administrative unit.
- 1840 The successful penetration of the Sudd to establish a river route to equatorial Africa; and the beginning of the end of the isolation of the South.
- 1881 The beginning of the revolt against foreign rule led by Mohamed Ahmed El Mahdi.
- 1885 The Fall of Khartoum and the establishment of the Mahdist State with Omdurman as its capitol.
- 1899 The Anglo-Egyptian Conquest of the Sudan and the initiation of the Condominium rule in the Sudan.
- 1924 Abortive uprising in Khartoum against the Condominium rule.
- 1930 The inauguration of the Southern Sudan Policy that led to separate administrative systems for northern and southern Sudan, and the restriction of northern influence in the south.
- 1938 The establishment of the Graduate Congress that signaled the rise of Modern Sudanese Nationalism.
- 1945 The creation of Sudanese political parties; some calling for union with Egypt, others demanding Independence.
- 1946 The reversal of Southern Policy that resulted in casting the lot of the South with the North after 16 years of separate administration.
- 1947 The convening of the Juba Conference attended by Northern, Southern and British representatives to discuss future north-south relations.
- 1948 Creation of a legislative assembly in Khartoum. Boycotted by some political parties.
- 1953 The Anglo-Egyptian agreement granting the Sudanese the right of self-determination.
- 1953 The first parliamentary elections in the Sudan were held. The alliance of the Unionist Parties led by Israeli El Azhari won the election and formed the transitional Sudanese government.
- 1954 Formation of the first southern political party, the Southern Liberal Party.

---

Osman Hassan Ahmed is Acting Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, Washington, D.C. Mamoun A. Yousif is in the last stages of work toward his Ph.D. at George Washington University.

- 1955 Revolt of Southern troops stationed in the South against the government.
- 1955 The Sudanese government announced the abandonment of its policy of a link with Egypt.
- 1956 The Declaration of Sudanese Independence.
- 1958 Military Coup led by Lt. General Ibrahim Abboud. Banning of political parties, suspending of provisional constitution and the dismissal of parliament.
- 1960 Formation of a Southern Political Organization, Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (SACDNU) in exile.
- 1960 Vigorous implementation of the government's policy of Arabization and Islamization in the South.
- 1963 The birth of the Anya-Nya guerrilla movement in the south to fight against perceived northern domination.
- 1964 Expulsion of foreign missionaries from the South.
- 1964 A popular revolution precipitated the fall of the Abboud Military Regime in October and the return of parliamentary government and political parties.
- 1965 Convening of the Round Table Conference on the problem of Southern Sudan.
- 1969 A successful coup was staged by a young group of army officers led by Gaafar Mohamed Nimiery. The establishment of a leftist government with communist participation.
- 1969 Declaration of Policy of Regional autonomy for the Southern region.
- 1970 The quashing of an armed rebellion led by Imam Al Hadi Al Mahdi, leader of the Ansar sect.
- 1971 Abortive communist coup.
- 1971 General Gaafar Mohammed Nimiery was elected President in a general plebiscite.
- 1972 The Addis Ababa Agreement granting autonomy to the Southern Sudan and ending the Civil War.
- 1973 Ratification of the permanent Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan.
- 1976 Opposition Forces of the National Front stationed in Libya staged an abortive coup.
- 1976 Joint Defence Accord between the Sudan & Egypt.
- 1977 National Reconciliation and the return of some of the opposition leaders from exile. (Sadig El Mhadi and Moslem Brothers leaders.)
- 1980 Implementation of regionalization by establishing five regions in addition to the Southern region.

## **Paradigms in Sudan archaeology**

William Y. Adams

Ever since Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,<sup>1</sup> it has become fashionable to speak of the growth of science in terms of a succession of paradigms. Each paradigm represents a distinctive combination of methodology, accumulated data, research interests, and a philosophical point of view. Paradigms are usually tantamount to developmental stages, but the concepts of paradigm and of stage are not precisely equivalent. Stages in scientific development are often inaugurated simply by technological breakthroughs or basic discoveries, but paradigm shifts always involve a new philosophical orientation. Moreover, paradigms do not follow one another in a rigid succession. Often they co-exist for substantial periods of time, when some researchers are working within the framework of an older paradigm while others have adopted a new one.

I shall argue in these pages that field archaeology in the Sudan has been governed by four successive paradigms during the period of 164 years since Giovanni Belzoni cleared out the temples of Abu Simbel in 1817.<sup>2</sup> These paradigms, as I hope to show, have in large measure reflected the changing political circumstances of the colonial and post-colonial worlds, but they have also been shaped by methodological advances, by the growing professionalization of archaeology, and by the Western world's changing philosophical vision of Africa and her peoples.

1 Thomas Kuhn: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962)

2 cf. Giovanni Belzoni: *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations of Egypt and Nubia* (London: John Murray, 1820), pp. 94, 101, 206, 214.

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My discussion will be concerned mainly with archaeology in the narrow sense of the word: that is, with investigations that begin with the physical unearthing of buried remains. Many scholars have contributed to the reconstruction of Sudanese history through the description of exposed ruins, the analysis of texts, and the study of previously recovered *objects d'art*, but I do not include them in the category of archaeologists because their work lacks the dimension of field methodology which is a critical part of every archaeological paradigm.

For the sake of terminological simplicity I shall temporarily annex to the Sudan that part of Egypt, formerly known as Lower Nubia, whose peoples, culture, and history are more integral with the Sudan than with Egypt proper. That is, I shall use the terms 'Sudan' and 'Sudanese' to refer to all of the peoples, cultures, and archaeological remains to the south of the First Nile Cataract, where ethnic Egypt ends and Nubia begins. The pursuit of archaeology developed hand-in-hand in Egyptian Nubia and in the Sudan, and from the beginning both followed a rather different course than did the investigations of Egyptologists in Egypt proper. Because of the scarcity of written texts, it was always recognized that field archaeology had a much more central and critical part to play in the reconstruction of Sudanese history than in the northern country, where archaeology has generally been treated as supplementary to textual history.

The four paradigms in Sudan archaeology I have designated as the extractive colonial, the enlightened colonial, the post-colonial, and the independent national. I shall be concerned here chiefly with the first three, leaving the fourth and most recent for consideration by my better informed colleague, Professor Shinnie.

### The extractive colonial paradigm

What I have called the extractive colonial paradigm in Sudanese archaeology was dominant throughout the 19th century: it is exemplified by the field activities of the aforementioned Belzoni, of Joseph Ferlini,<sup>3</sup> and of A. E. Wallis Budge.<sup>4</sup> The three men make a rather disparate group, for Belzoni and Ferlini had no pretensions to scholarship, while Budge was one of the most respected philologists of his time. From the standpoint of field archaeology, however, their work was very much of a piece: it is remarkable for its almost total irresponsibility. Like the colonial powers in general they were out to extract whatever they could, and they belonged

to an age when the White Man was above the law in Africa. The lack of any kind of standards in their excavation is understandable in view of the total lack of professionalization in 19th century archaeology, and the lack of any sense of accountability toward the peoples and countries in which they worked was characteristic of the 19th century colonial mentality. But their almost wanton destruction of the monuments themselves bespeaks a contempt not only for the modern cultures but for the ancient cultures as well. This point of view is clearly implied in the words of Budge:

"Many archaeologists have imagined that we shall find in the Sudan the ruins of purely native buildings and monuments which will enable them to reconstruct a connected history of the country, but none of the surveys and explorations which have been made by ancient and modern travellers has resulted in the finding of any ruins which are not . . . in fact, the work of foreigners."

Fortunately for posterity, the Sudan throughout the 19th century was remote and difficult of access, and the amount of 'extractive archaeology' undertaken was mercifully limited. The situation was much worse in Egypt, where wholesale looting by supposedly cultured gentleman and lady amateurs was an accepted practice. There was however one important philosophical difference between the two countries. The scholars and diggers in Egypt generally respected and admired the country's ancient civilization, while despising its modern day inhabitants. In the Sudan the reverse was true: the travellers and field workers tended to like the modern Sudanese (albeit as 'happy savages'), while holding their ancient cultures in contempt.

No discussion of 19th century archaeology in the Sudan can omit all mention of Richard Lepsius. His two-year sojourn in Egypt and the Sudan (1842-44) resulted in the 12-volume *Denkmaler aus Agypten und Athiopien*,<sup>6</sup> an encyclopedic work recording hundreds of hieroglyphic texts and reliefs which were then visible on the walls of temples and tombs. Lepsius was, for his time, a meticulous observer, respectful of the antiquities and the cultures he studied, and the volume of his published work certainly shows a well developed sense of responsibility toward the community of scholars. He stands as an example of the levels of responsible achievement that scholarship occasionally reached in 19th century Africa, but I have not included him in my discussion of paradigms because in the narrow sense he was not an archaeologist.

3 Ibid., pp 511-512.

6 Richard Lepsius, *Denkmaler aus Agypten und Athiopien*, 17 vols (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-1853)

3 cf. A. E. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Sudan*, Vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1907), 285-320.

4 Ibid., pp. 66-504.

In sum, then, 19th century archaeology in the Sudan was very much a reflection of the regime that nurtured it: contemptuous, exploitative, and irresponsible. The field workers, primarily, were amusing themselves, with no sense that what they did could ever be of real consequence to anyone. Their only redeeming virtue was that they did so little.

### The enlightened colonial paradigm

The Anglo-Egyptian regime which was instituted after the Kitchener reconquest was like enough to its 19th century predecessor so that many Sudanese referred to it as the 'second *Turkiya*'.<sup>7</sup> Yet nearly all observers will agree that it took a more enlightened view of its responsibilities toward its subjects, as is evidenced especially in its development of educational institutions. This relatively enlightened paternalism is reflected also in the archaeological paradigm that became dominant in the Sudan during the first half of the 20th century.

The outstanding figure — indeed one might almost say the mythological father — of the enlightened colonial paradigm in Sudanese archaeology was George A. Reisner. Beginning with his inauguration of the first Archaeological Survey of Nubia (necessitated by the building of the original Aswan Dam) in 1907,<sup>8</sup> he went on to organize and direct the monumental Harvard-Boston Expedition, which was active in the northern Sudan in nearly every season until 1931.<sup>9</sup> Many other scholars came in his footsteps, and most in one way or another were influenced by his example of responsible field work and imaginative scholarship. Other pioneers of the early 20th century included F. L. Griffith, John Garstang, Henry Wellcome, Leonard Woolley, and David Randall-MacIver; a generation later came H. W. Fairman, W. B. Emery, L. P. Kirwan, M. F. Laming Macadam, Ugo Monneret de Villard, Georg Steindorff, and a good many others.

A little-recognized figure who contributed almost as much as did Reisner to the development of the enlightened colonial paradigm was J. W. Crowfoot. As Inspector (later Director) of Education in the Sudan he had little opportunity for direct involvement in field work, although he did take part in several surveys.<sup>10</sup> But it was he who, within the Education

Department, created the administrative nucleus for what was later to become an independent Department of Antiquities, and it was through his influence and interest that the Anglo-Egyptian regime sought both to encourage responsible archaeology and to protect the surviving antiquities of the Sudan. If the work of Reisner, Griffith, and others shows a much greater sense of accountability toward the Sudan than did their 19th century predecessors, this is in part because Crowfoot, on behalf of the Sudan, demanded it.

The leading figures in early 20th century Sudanese archaeology were a fairly diverse lot, but they had a number of important characteristics in common. They were nearly all established scholars from recognized institutions, and their sense of scholarly responsibility is reflected in the volume of their published work. Yet their orientation was still primarily toward the recovery of objects rather than the reconstruction of history, and most of their publications are hardly more than illustrated catalogues. They had, inevitably for the time, no formal archaeological training, but they had at least an incipient sense of appropriate methodology. Reisner himself was in the forefront of this development, for it was he who pioneered the use of standardized forms for recording archaeological data.<sup>11</sup> Yet Reisner and most of his colleagues continued the 19th century travellers' practice of recording most of his notes in the form of a diary — a charming anachronism that survives to the present day among many Egyptologists. Field work mostly took the form of sustained campaigns carried out over many seasons in the largest and most conspicuous archaeological sites in the northern Sudan; the massive financial investment in this work shows for the first time a clear appreciation that Sudanese archaeology had an important story to tell.

The archaeologists of the enlightened colonial period were nearly all Egyptologists, and their outlooks, their interests, and their deficiencies were those characteristic of the field of Egyptology in general. Field methods, though gradually improving, lagged far behind those that were developing in other parts of the archaeological world; there was not (and indeed still is not) a full appreciation for the importance of contextual evidence.<sup>12</sup> But the most significant deficiency of the enlightened colonial paradigm was philosophical: the persistence of 19th century racism and of the colonial mentality. In this respect Reisner himself was as bad as any, for

7 William Y. Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 641

8 George A. Reisner, *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia, Report for 1907-1908*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Government Press, 1910)

9 See Dows Dunham, "The Harvard-Boston Archaeological Expedition in the Sudan", *Kush* 3, pp. 70-74

10 Cf. Budge, op. cit., pp. 437-8; J. W. Crowfoot and F. L. Griffith, *The Island of Meroe and Meroitic Inscriptions*, Part I, Egypt Exploration Fund, *Archaeological Survey of Egypt*, Memoir 19 (1911)

11 John H. Rowe, "Review of C. W. Meigham, *The Archaeologist's Note Book*", *American Anthropologist* 63, pp. 1379-80

12 See Bruce G. Trigger, *Before History: The Methods of Prehistory* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), pp. 61-90

he was to write:

" 'Wretched Nubia' was at first a part of Egypt. After the First Dynasty it was only an appendage of the greater country, and its history is hardly more than an account of its use or neglect by Egypt."<sup>13</sup>

Racism led Reisner and many of his colleagues to attribute the more advanced stages of Sudanese cultural history not merely to Egyptian influence but to actual Egyptian (or Libyan) immigration, while periods of cultural decline were blamed on the departure of the Egyptians or on migrations from the south. Sudanese history thus resolved itself into a series of disconnected episodes attributable to different actors. This rather myopic viewpoint shows conspicuously the lack of cross-cultural insights which might have been obtained from the study of cultural and of racial history in other parts of the world.

The enlightened colonial paradigm was to become increasingly enlightened with the passage of time, and then to be supplanted in part by other points of view. Yet it is by no means extinct even yet; it continues to flourish especially among the older generation of Egyptologists. The Nubian Salvage Campaign of the 1960s stimulated a renewed interest in the Sudan on the part of Egyptologists, and in so doing gave the old, Reisnerian vision a new lease on life. A striking demonstration of this can be seen in W. B. Emery's *Egypt in Nubia*,<sup>14</sup> a work of general history published in 1965 which hardly departs from the theoretical position staked out by Reisner at the turn of the century. Except for the accumulation of some new data, it is the book that Reisner himself could and probably should have written.

A less happy example of the persistence of the enlightened colonial paradigm can be found in the International Society for Nubian Studies, an organization which was founded by and which continues to be dominated by Egyptologists of the old school. The steadfast refusal of this group to admit a Sudanese or Nubian scholar to its governing council, despite the presence of eminently qualified candidates, is an indication that the colonial mentality dies hard.

### The post-colonial paradigm

There has been an interval in the history of nearly every African country, following the achievement of independence, when the upper levels of bureaucracy were still staffed by civil servants trained in colonial days and in colonial ways, and when the functions of government were

<sup>13</sup> Reisner, *op. cit.*, p. 348

<sup>14</sup> W. B. Emery, *Egypt in Nubia* (London: Hutchinson, 1965)

carried along to a large extent by momentum from the colonial era. In the field of Sudanese archaeology this transitional phase has its counterpart in what I have called the post-colonial paradigm, which still reflects some of the thinking of the colonial era while showing a keen and necessary appreciation for altered political circumstances.

If George A. Reisner was the founding genius of the enlightened colonial paradigm, that honor must surely be accorded to A. J. Arkell with respect to the post-colonial paradigm. His field work in the Sudan preceded the formal granting of independence in 1955, but it was carried out at a time when the coming of independence was clearly foreseeable. Arkell prepared for that time by organizing the Sudan Antiquities Service for the first time as a sub-ministerial government branch, and by training the first Sudanese antiquities inspectors. One of his proteges, Thabit Hassan Thabit, was in time to become the first Sudanese Commissioner for Archaeology (as the Director-General of Antiquities was then called).

Another pivotal figure in the development of the post-colonial paradigm is P. L. Shinnie, whose work in the Sudan began in the last years of the colonial era and has continued right down to the present day. To the pioneer names of Arkell and Shinnie I would add those of three Americans who came to the Sudan in the first decade following independence: Bruce Trigger, Fred Wendorf, and myself.

Arkell, Shinnie, and the three Americans are of backgrounds even more diverse than were those of their colonial predecessors, but again they have important characteristics in common. The most important is that none of them was or is an Egyptologist. All of them except Arkell had formal archaeological training in fields far removed from the Nile Valley, and all, including Arkell up to the time of his recent death, remained active in other and distant fields. Their first involvement in the Nile Valley was, in every case, in the Sudan rather than in Egypt; to the extent that they are also interested in the cultures of Egypt it is as a spillover from their interest in the Sudan, rather than vice versa as in the case of Egyptologists.

I cannot, obviously, speak of the virtues and defects of the post-colonial paradigm with total objectivity, but I think that nearly all observers will agree as to the methodological advances which it has introduced. Its practitioners have brought with them a variety of analytical techniques and an attention to precision which are the legacy of their earlier work in prehistoric archaeology. Their publications are clearly focused, for the first time, on the reconstruction of culture and of cultural history rather than on the description and illustration of objects *per se*.

An enhanced sense of accountability toward the Sudan, demanded by the Sudan Antiquities Service itself since the earliest years of



independence. is another important component of the post-colonial paradigm. Expeditions are now required to demonstrate technical as well as financial capability before they are granted licenses; licenses are drawn up with much more attention to detail than was formerly the case; and excavators are held strictly to account both for the publication of their results and for a fair division of finds with the Antiquities Service. Yet these requirements have not, as in Egypt, resulted in a confrontation relationship between archaeologists and the government, for the practical assistance and numerous facilities granted to all archaeological expeditions by the Sudan Antiquities Service are a source of worldwide admiration. The warm, collegial relationship between archaeologists on the one hand and antiquities officials on the other is, in my experience, without parallel among Third World countries.

The most significant advance of the post-colonial paradigm, from my point of view, is again to be found in the ideological sphere. The recent generation of archaeologists are free at last from the taint of the 19th century racism, and also at least to some extent from the dominant shadow of Egypt. They are finally able to appreciate the cultures of the Sudan for their own sake, and to see the pattern of Sudanese history as a connected whole and not as a series of foreign-inspired episodes.<sup>15</sup> It is surely significant that all five of the leading figures of the post-colonial school (Arkell, Shinnie, Trigger, Wendorf, and Adams) have written wide-ranging books on Sudanese history,<sup>16</sup> a task which was undertaken by none of their predecessors except W.B. Emery.<sup>17</sup>

While I have attributed the transformations of the post-colonial paradigm chiefly to the influence of non-Egyptologists, it would certainly be unfair to omit all mention of two leading Egyptologists, Torgny Save-Soderbergh and Fritz Hintze, who have also been important contributors. Both have directed important field operations, but their main contribution has come through the study and interpretation of textual material.<sup>18</sup> They are unique among Egyptologists in focusing their attention and interest on the Sudan rather than on Egypt.

15 cf Adams *op. cit.*, pp. 7

16 A J Arkell *A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821* (London: Athlone Press, 1949). P L Shinnie *Meroe* (New York: Fredrick Praeger, 1967). Bruce G Trigger, *Nubia under the Pharaohs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976). Fred Wendorf, Ed. *The Prehistory of Nubia*, 2 vols. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1968). Adams *op. cit.*

17 Emery *op. cit.*

18 Torgny Save-Soderbergh, *Agypten und Nubien* (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons, 1941). Fritz Hintze, *Studien zur Merotischen Chronologie und zu den Opertafeln aus den Pyramiden von Meroe. Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur, und Kunst, Jahrgang 1959, No. 2*

Sudanese observers will insist, rightly, that the post-colonial paradigm is not wholly free from deficiencies and prejudices. Its adherents are far more Sudan-oriented than were their predecessors, but in the last analysis they were still reared in environments and climates far removed from the Nile Valley. With the best of intentions they cannot see the cultures and the history of the Sudan through the eyes of someone who was raised in their midst. There is, too, a continuing tendency to look almost automatically for the sources of Sudanese culture in the Mediterranean Basin, which was the cradle of so much of our own civilization. On the other hand I think none of us except Shinnie has as detailed a knowledge of sub-Saharan African archaeology and culture history as we appropriately should.

A further limitation of the post-colonial paradigm is an accident of economic history. Sudanese independence was followed almost at once by the signing of the Nile Waters Agreement and the subsequent inundation of Sudanese Nubia by the Aswan Reservoir, which for a decade forced the archaeologists to concentrate their attention almost exclusively on the most northerly part of the country. Many of us, like Trigger and myself, have never had the opportunity to work elsewhere than in Nubia, and mostly in Lower Nubia at that. If our point of view is no longer 'Egyptocentric,' it is still to a degree 'Nubiocentric,' which is perhaps another form of parochialism.

This latter deficiency is being corrected by the younger generation of European scholars who are now busily at work in many parts of the Sudan. In other respects I have the impression that most of them still adhere to the post-colonial viewpoint, but there may be some who have fully adopted the independent national outlook.

### The independent national paradigm

For any newly independent people, a significant turning point is attained when they begin to rewrite their own history to suit the needs of emergent nationalism and of cultural integration. This development, which is already very conspicuous in many Third World countries, significantly affects the aims if not the methods of field archaeology. I can thus far see only the faintest glimmerings of such a development in the Sudan, if only because Sudanese archaeologists are still routinely sent abroad (mostly to England) to complete their graduate training, and here they are firmly indoctrinated in the colonial or post-colonial traditions. But I can see the gleam of nationalistic aspiration in the eyes of a few of my Sudanese

colleagues, and the number of able and energetic students who are now enrolled in the Archaeology program at Khartoum University foretells a time in the not too distant future when the study of Sudanese antiquity will be largely in Sudanese hands.

If Reisner was the pioneer of the enlightened colonial paradigm, and Arkell of the post-colonial, I think we must identify a pioneer figure for the independent national paradigm in the unlikely person of the late Bryan Haycock. Nurtured originally in conventional Egyptology, he was converted, during his tragically abbreviated career at Khartoum University, into a genuine Sudanese nationalist, with a keen appreciation for every phase of the country's history. Lack of proper training prevented his carrying out any actual archaeological excavations, but his lectures and his numerous field surveys stimulated the interest of a whole generation of Sudanese students in the history and the antiquities of their country.<sup>19</sup> The current, very active Archaeology program at Khartoum University is Haycock's legacy, and nearly all of the Sudanese scholars on its staff were originally his students.

My colleague Professor Shinnie, who has himself taught at Khartoum University in the recent past, is better qualified than am I to talk about the most recent developments in Sudan archaeology. I do not expect him to use my paradigm model of analysis, since he likes to poke fun at my anthropological jargon, but I suspect that a lot of what he will have to say will be relevant to the emergency of an independent national paradigm in Sudanese archaeology.

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<sup>19</sup> See Fritz Hintze, "Von den Herausgebern" *Meroitica* 2, 1976, p. 6, and William Y. Adams, "Meroitic North and South" *Meroitica* 2, 1976, p. 174.

## ***Changing Attitudes Towards the Past***

P.L. Shinnie

My friend Dr. Adams has provided an interesting and lively description of the 'paradigms' of the nature of investigations into the ancient Sudan from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century until today, or very nearly today, and though he nicely suggests that he is leaving the latest 'paradigm' for me to deal with he has his usual cogent and forthright comments for that too and accurately charts the main differences between the new workers in the field and the old.

Since I have worked on various aspects of the archaeology of the Sudan for longer than any other living archaeologist, having first come to that country thirty five years ago, I have seen very considerable changes in attitudes to the past during these years and it is perhaps worthwhile to consider them and to think about the reasons.

It is noticeable from reading Dr. Adams' article that the Sudanese first three periods that he discusses. It is only during the very last few years that there has been a growth in participation by young Sudanese scholars and this is an indication of a very remarkable change in attitudes in the country. It can be assumed that indigenous participation in archaeology, and in any other academic or cultural activity will reflect the attitudes of the time and it is only with a growing awareness of national identity that concern with the past is likely to be a major issue.

When I first went to the Sudan a common attitude on the part of many Sudanese towards the rather slight efforts that were being made to investigate and preserve their antiquities was "Why do you bother with these things, they are nothing to do with us, they are not the remains of our ancestors, we are Arabs and came here only a few hundred years ago

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and are not interested in what the unbelievers left behind in the country." This was a widespread view and it is a tribute to the first Sudanese recruited to the Antiquities Service, Thabit Hassan, who became its first Sudanese head, and Abdelrahman Adam, who died tragically young whilst studying at Cambridge, that in spite of the bewilderment that their taking up the study of the past caused to their colleagues, and no doubt to their families, they persisted and made contributions to the history of their country.

The Sudanese were not alone in disparaging the antiquities and ancient history — I well remember many officials of the British administration expressing surprise that I had come to study and preserve the archaeological sites. The surprise was in part that any young man should devote his time to such a bizarre subject and be paid to do so. For Arkell the matter was rather different, he had been a Political Service officer and it was quite within the understanding of the British at that time that a man might have a hobby and I am sure that that is how they thought of it. The question 'But is there any archaeology in the Sudan?' was not an infrequent one from people living only fourteen miles from the large and important site of Soba which I myself excavated in 1951. On another occasion I had a fierce argument with a British official of what was then the Education Department. My suggestion that the school history syllabus might include the history of Napatan, Meoritic and Medieval times was met with a firm statement that there was no recorded history prior to 1821. It was in an attempt to change this view, based on ignorance, that the Antiquities Service started to publish a series of simple pamphlets on the history and antiquities of the Sudan and to issue them in both English and Arabic — though this was not the first attempt to provide information to the public, as Arkell had published in Arabic a few years before.

The view of the unimportance of the ancient Sudan was not restricted to those in the country and on one famous occasion at a meeting of the Egypt Exploration Society in London, at which the late Professor Emery was lecturing on his interesting excavations at Buhen, the chairman and then president of the Society, the late Sir Alan Gardiner, the doyen of British Egyptologists, said in introducing the speaker, "Since unfortunately we can no longer work in Egypt (this was at the time of the Suez crisis) we have had to transfer our activities to the Sudan." Arkell and I who were sitting together could scarcely contain ourselves. I also remember the puzzle I caused to my Egyptological friends and colleagues when I argued for the interest and importance of the archaeology of the Sudan.

During the late 40s and 50s the view that I have described

*P.L. Shinnie*

predominated and very few Sudanese or others were convinced of the richness of evidence for the past or its relevance for the present. Of foreign scholars few were interested and with the closing down of the two British expeditions that had been working through the 1930s — that of the Oxford Excavations in Nubia, directed and largely funded by that great scholar of Meroitic archaeology and language, Francis Llewellyn Griffith, at Kawa, and that of the Egypt Exploration Society at Amara West — foreign activity came to an end. The Egypt Exploration Society continued until 1950 though the last two seasons were carried out jointly with the Sudan Antiquities Service, and I am grateful since this activity allowed me to have my own first excavations in the Sudan. There was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for undertaking field work not only by the British but by the whole non-Sudanese world of scholarship and it was only with the coming of Professor Vercoutter to excavate at Kor on behalf of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in 1953, the return of the Egypt Exploration Society, though unwillingly, in 1957, and the Butana expedition of the German Democratic Republic in 1958, that foreign participation started again.

Now the situation is quite different — during the winter of 1980-81 there were 18 foreign expeditions at work, coming from a wide range of countries: Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the U.S.A., and scholars in many other lands were at work on research or in publishing the results of previous field work from such diverse countries as Argentina, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, the U.S.S.R., and others. Certainly as Adams writes, the archaeological requirements of the building of the High Dam at Aswan have played an important part in making part of at least the Nubian Sudan known to the world, and the marvellous chance of the preservation of the cathedral at Faras, so skillfully investigated by the Polish expedition, has resulted in bringing the ancient Sudan to the attention of the world.

There is also a marked change in Sudanese attitudes and where in the past it was difficult to find Sudanese willing to be trained as archaeologists now there is a flourishing Department of Archaeology in the University of Khartoum, largely staffed by Sudanese scholars, and training increased numbers of Sudanese students, some of whom go on to further training — usually abroad — and return to their own University as teachers, or to posts which are being established in the new Sudanese Universities, or to staff the Antiquities Service — or in a few cases go as a valuable export to other countries.

The causes for this change, not only in the internal view of the Sudanese about themselves and their past, but also in the view taken by the outside world, is not far to seek. The main factor undoubtedly was the coming of political independence on 1st January 1956. With this freeing of the Sudan from foreign rule it became possible for the Sudanese to consider their role in the world of independent states and for a new concept of independent ethnicity to arise. The older generation of Sudanese politicians, although a number of them were of Nubian origin, certainly identified the Sudan with the Arab world — the claims of language, religion, culture, and a certain historical legacy in the northern Sudan all combined for them to emphasize the Arab nature of the country and even to perpetuate certain myths concerning the role of Arabs and Arabic speaking people — including the view of the Arab origins of the Fung rulers of the *Sultana Zarga*, the one pre-1821 element in the history of the country to which much attention had been paid.

During the years following 1956 a change was to be seen, particularly amongst the younger scholars coming out of the University of Khartoum, which had become a fully independent University in the same year, having formerly been in 'special relationship' with the University of London — which had been responsible for the awarding of degrees and which had some control over syllabuses. The new concept of a Sudan nation, which, although sympathetic to Arab aspirations and feeling a close identity with other Arab countries, had a character and origin of its own only developed very slowly. It still has many ambiguous aspects and is not accepted by all.

This new concept, sometimes expressed in its most extreme form as a statement that the Sudan is an African rather than an Arab country, has caused quite a different view of the past with great significance for the study of history and archaeology. Now the national heroes are seen not to be those of the Arab world as a whole or even only Abdullah Gamaa, the Mahdi and the Khalifa, properly important as they are, but also Piankhy and Taharqa. Who are the two rulers from early times for whom there is good written evidence and who played an important part at a crucial moment in the development of the ancient Sudan. That there were other important figures in early history there can be no doubt, but the rulers of Meroe, although the names of many are known, have left too little detail of their activities for them to become the focus of national aspirations, and the rulers of the Christian kingdoms of Nubia are also shadowy and impersonal.

These changes in attitudes towards the past have coincided with a rebirth of interest in the origins of the non-Arabic speaking parts of the

Sudan, and it is certain that in the northern part of the country the Nubians, Bega, the Fur and others will be developing interest in their own history. The recent administrative changes with their emphasis on decentralization will certainly encourage this, making it likely that in the near future centres of study for local history and archaeology will develop. Such a development is also probable in the southern Sudan with its great diversity of peoples and languages, but I am not sufficiently informed to say anything about it.

The sense of history is probably most developed amongst the Nubians because of the comparatively well-known history of their homeland from Pharaonic Egyptian times, through the period of the kingdom of Kush and those of the Christian rulers, and much of the Sudan's historical traditions come from this area. The Nubian language, still spoken today, is known in written form from the eighth century A.D. and may well have been spoken in the area of a much earlier date even though it was not the written language of Kush.

The influence of Nubian culture and language with its centuries of existence in the Sudanese Nile Valley had had a profound influence on modern Sudanese culture. Although replaced by Arabic as the speech of much of the northern Sudan, Nubian was certainly being spoken much further upstream of the Nile than its present limit at Debba until some considerable time after the arrival of the first Arabic speakers and its influence on the colloquial Arabic of the present day riverain population has been much underestimated.

As a result of the changes I have indicated Nubians are becoming increasingly aware of their own history and traditions which have done much to mould the character of the modern Sudan, and certainly now show a pride and interest in their past that they would not have done some thirty years ago. And it is by no means only the Nubians, important though they are in the intellectual and cultural life of the country, who show this new awareness. It will, I hope, lead more and more young Sudanese to turn to the study of archaeology and history, not only as professionals, though some of them will do so, but also as educated people wanting to know more about their history and able to provide the intellectual climate in which the professionals can work.

Dr. Adams has suggested that I am qualified to describe the latest developments in the period of his 'independent national paradigm.' I am

not sure that he is right and certainly I cannot do it with his felicity of expression as he can; but my long acquaintance with the country may make some general remarks useful. There are two noticeable changes in the nature of archaeological activity in the latest period — there have been changes also in historical studies, but of them I cannot speak with the same knowledge. The first of these is the increased participation of Sudanese archaeologists — I have already referred to the teaching programme of the University of Khartoum which is now producing a number of young scholars who will no doubt approach their research from a rather different standpoint than that of their foreign colleagues.

Adams points out, and seems to regret, that Sudanese archaeologists are still sent abroad for graduate studies. I do not see this as a matter of regret and think that the benefit obtained from the greater exposure to methods and techniques and diversity of views not as yet available in Khartoum outweighs the "ideological" disadvantages, nor do I think that the majority of those responsible for the training of Sudanese archaeologists are themselves aiming to indoctrinate them with colonial and post-colonial traditions. Nor is it only to England that such graduate students are being sent — it is true that the present teachers in the Department of Archaeology in the University of Khartoum all took their Ph.D.s at Cambridge (though two of them had previously studied for M.A.s in Canada), but more recent graduates are now studying in Canada, France, Germany and Norway and are likely to return with increased technical competence and widely different views of the subject. And several members of the Antiquities Service have received training in Eastern Europe (Poland and the U.S.S.R.).

It is still only at the undergraduate level that training is being given by Sudanese to Sudanese, but this, largely based on training excavations in the University of Khartoum's own concession at Sururab, has already produced a number of B.A. Honours theses which have made a considerable addition to knowledge particularly of late or post Meroitic times and of the Stone Ages. It is likely that foreign excavations will increasingly be asked to assist in the training of Sudanese students and two such expeditions are now formally joint ones with the University of Khartoum — that of the University of Calgary at Meroe and of the University of Lyons in its activities along the Red Sea Coast, and another joint activity with Southern Methodist University is being planned.

To turn to archaeological research by foreigners, the most obvious change, as already mentioned, in the number of expeditions and the wide range of countries participating, but there are also more fundamental

differences due in the main to changes in the ways in which archaeologists look at their subject. Archaeologists have been and are bound by the prevailing theoretical concepts of their time and over the last thirty or so years there have been very considerable changes in theoretical position and in the array of specialized techniques available for the study of the materials retrieved by archaeological field work. There has been a very marked change, almost a revolution, and the Sudan is now beginning to reap the advantage of participating in it.

Traditionally the archaeology of the whole Nile Valley has been old-fashioned and constrained by those whose main interest has been in the reading of ancient texts. It is with no wish to decry the marvellous and devoted scholarship of many Egyptologists that I must say that I consider that their impact on field work in both Egypt and the Sudan has been most unfortunate. In Egypt matters are changing and a new generation of scholars, well trained in modern archaeological methods, is at work, but there still linger traces of the old view, in which the qualification for directing an excavation has been an ability to read a hieroglyphic text.

Fortunately the Sudan, although much of the early archaeological work was Egyptologically orientated, has escaped the worst of the influence of a text-dominated approach, and even in the period before the First World War the work of the Wellcome expedition at Jebel Moya had broken new ground and used new methods. Reisner, although coming from an Egyptological background, also applied new and carefully developed techniques of field work although we would not now consider them adequate. However I note that in spite of the model excavations of Pitt-Rivers in England in the latter part of the nineteenth century from which generations of excavators learnt, the very first properly executed section drawing of an excavation to be published was from my early effort at Soba in 1951.

The activity caused by the building of the Aswan High Dam, although bringing the archaeology of the Nubian part of the Sudan — as also of Egypt — to the attention of the world, did not advance the quality of the work very much and emphasized the preponderance of studies in Nubia. But it introduced a number of younger archaeologists to work in the Sudan. A number of new techniques were used for the first time and, again for the first time, the study of human and other faunal skeletal remains showed what could be learnt by modern methods of analysis. The work of physical anthropologists had been of particular value in showing the continuity of the Sudanese population and has thus provided further



evidence for the relevance of such studies to the modern Sudan — persistence of physical traits as well as of cultural features is now accepted as indicating a distinctive Sudanese element in both ancient and modern times.

The end of the High Dam crisis when all effort had to be devoted to salvage work, and the closing of Lower Nubia by flooding to any further archaeological work has had a beneficial effect on the development of archaeology. Now the increasing number of scholars both Sudanese and foreign who are interested in the past of the country can take a more relaxed look at the problems, even though modern development schemes demand that an eye be kept on them to prevent the destruction of ancient sites and loss of valuable knowledge.

'Development archaeology' is becoming increasingly important as the Sudan begins major development schemes and it is here that co-operation with and understanding by the general public is required. The excellent work of the French team working with the Sudanese authorities to carry out salvage operations is much to be commended and it is hoped that other countries may also consider a similar type of organization where a fully equipped team of field archaeologists can be used as a kind of 'fire brigade' to areas where sites are endangered.

Apart from this there remain large parts of the Sudan where basic research is required, and modern attitudes where archaeological investigation is planned to attempt to solve specific questions are now replacing, though still not entirely, the older attitudes where excavations were planned to find material to fill museums or sometimes just because a site was there and the archaeologists were looking for something to do.

Now, not only are the aims of research activities more precisely defined but the old dominance of the river valley is being challenged. The past of the whole of the Sudan is being regarded as worthy of study and in recent years work has begun in the Southern Sudan, the most conspicuous, but not the only, project being that of the British Institute of Eastern Africa. Sudanese and foreign scholars have started investigations in Darfur, there is archaeological survey in the Butana and in the region of Kassala and along the shore of the Red Sea. Certainly there are rapidly changing attitudes to the past both by scholars and by the general public and its study is in a healthy and flourishing state.

## ***The Future of the Southern Sudan's Past***

**Douglas H. Johnson**

Of the history of the southern sphere, the home of the negro, nothing is known and little can be guessed, save that from the beginning of time

Tattooed cannibals danced in files

And 'Blood' screamed the whistles and the fifes of the warriors.

'Blood' screamed the skull-faced, lean witchdoctors

Sir Harold MacMichael<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Southern Sudan has suffered for some time from the assumption that it does not exist. Sir Harold MacMichael's recourse to Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo" was in line with the tradition that assumed that if the South had a past, it was not worth knowing. Other authors have assumed that it was not possible to know it, and Arkell baldly claimed that before 1821 the Southern Sudan had no history.<sup>2</sup> The problem has not been so much the lack of a past as lack of sources giving the records of the past. With the creation of written records concerning the South during the Egyptian invasion of the Sudan it is not so much the South's history that begins as it is historians' interest in the Southern Sudan.

During the twenty-five years of the Sudan's independence great advances have been made in the study of African history, especially in the use of oral traditions, the critical assessment of written sources, and the emphasis on the continuity of a history that includes, rather than begins with, the colonial period. These developments have had their impact on the study of Northern Sudanese history, but they have yet to affect in any significant way the writing of Southern Sudanese history. Most of the studies of the South's history belong temperamentally to that earlier era which regarded the colonial period as the most important period in the

1 H. MacMichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1934) p 2

2 A J Arkell, *A History of the Sudan* (London, 1961), p 2

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South's past because it was then that the region's relationship with the rest of the Sudan was forged. A preoccupation with present politics determined the topics which have since been studied at great length: the slave trade, diplomatic rivalries, missionaries, the Southern Policy. The internal histories of Southern Sudanese societies have received less attention. They have been sacrificed to the broad outlines of Sudanese history, and they have been subordinated to the material which the administrative documents — the main sources for Southern Sudanese history — preserve the best: the history of administration itself.

Because the colonial period is taken as the *de facto* beginning of Southern Sudanese history, and the assessment of the course of that history is derived almost exclusively from the European participants in that period, the scholarly description of the Southern Sudan has suffered from implicit value judgements that have obscured, rather than illuminated, the full complexity of the Southern Sudanese past. The themes of regional isolation, social primitiveness, resistance to colonial rule and the destruction of Southern Sudanese societies by outside forces predominate.

It is in the books of Richard Gray and Robert Collins, who between them cover the Egyptian, Mahdist, Belgian and British periods, that these themes are so forcefully presented.<sup>3</sup> Gray describes the Southern Sudan's geographical, cultural and political isolation as the reason why the region could not forestall the devastation it suffered in the nineteenth century. His vision of the South is one of a region bounded since ancient times by formidable geographical barriers, taking no part in the cultural centers of East and North East Africa. The intrusion of the outside world came like a sudden apparition, overwhelming this unprepared region in unprecedented devastation.<sup>4</sup> Collins' continuation of the saga is, if anything, much starker. He writes of the complete destruction of the South's traditional way of life during the Mahdiyya, and of the futile attempts to return to the "pristine tribal anarchy" of the past that characterized Southern Sudanese resistance to the Mahdists and British.<sup>5</sup>

Southern Sudanese societies are judged in this context by the extent to which they were "prepared" for this series of invasions, and by their ability to make any impact on the local colonial powers. By this standard they are seen to have had little influence on the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to have been powerless observers as the social

and political structures of their societies were first dismantled and then reassembled by succeeding waves of invaders and administrators. The judgement is made on purely political grounds, but it is extended to cover the full range of Southern Sudanese life. G. N. Sanderson describes the removal of Egyptian authority in the nineteenth century as plunging the South into "a Hobbesian 'State of Nature'" which continued until the advent of British rule because the Mahdists "were quite unable to fill the vacuum which they themselves created."<sup>6</sup> (though, surely, Nature must have been uneasy in the presence of the vacuum?) Collins sees the twentieth century resisters as preoccupied with the immediate task of opposing the British and making no effort to anticipate change and restructure their societies along new and lasting lines.<sup>7</sup>

There is a cultural arrogance in these judgements that forces its way through the obvious sympathy these authors have for the plight of the modern Southern Sudan (most of their comments were written during the civil war). It is an arrogance inappropriate to a discussion of an independent Sudan, but it is not confined to foreign observers. Mohamed Omer Beshir either shares or is influenced by it when he invokes the stereotype of the Southern Sudan's isolation, in "the very heart of Africa," to justify its exclusion from his discussion of the forces that shaped the Sudanese nation. He further dismisses Southern Sudanese resistance to colonial rule as unprogressive, being based on "tribal concepts and beliefs," meriting no comparison with the religious and nationalist movements of the North.<sup>8</sup>

These rather distant and dismissive judgments give us no real understanding of the internal history of the Southern Sudan. Words like "tribal" and "traditional," used in this way, have no descriptive value. The assumption that an entire region can live in a political vacuum during the absence of a colonial power tells us more about the point of view of the author than it does about the history of the region. What the employment of these terms does tell us is that the authors as yet lack the sources that can give them the sort of information needed to make the judgments they feel compelled to make. The superficiality of these judgments will

3 R. Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan, 1839-1889* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961); R. O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan, 1883-1898: A Struggle for Control* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962); *King Leopold, England, and the Upper Nile, 1899-1909* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968); *Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971)

4 Gray, pp. 8-10

5 Collins, *The Southern Sudan*, p. 177; *Land Beyond the Rivers*, pp. 46-8, 208

6 G. N. Sanderson, Review of Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan*, in *Sudan Notes and Records* XLVI, 1965, p. 171; and Review of Collins, *The Southern Sudan*, *ibid.*, p. 175

7 Collins, *The Southern Sudan in Historical Perspective* (Tel Aviv, The Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1975), p. 40

8 Mohamed Omer Beshir, *Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan*, (London, Rex Collings, 1974), pp. 2, 52

continue until sources closer to home are tapped: the documents found in district and province headquarters in the Southern Region, and the oral traditions of the Southern Sudanese themselves.

It is in these sources, more than in any others, that data about internal developments and the impact of external events are likely to be found. It is frequently not in the contemporary documents of pacification that evidence can be found to assess the impact of that period, but in the much more detailed accounts of Southern Sudanese societies written by a later generation of administrators. It is usually not the administrators of the first thirty years of condominium rule who provide the best insights on the conditions of the Southern Sudan at the beginning of the century, but the administrators of the last twenty-five years of Anglo-Egyptian rule. It was in this period that administrators were expected to have a proficiency in the local languages (only a handful had attained this proficiency by the 1920s), and it was during this period that some assessment of the policies and activities of their predecessors could begin. But the documents in which these assessments are made and in which detailed observations of the districts are recorded are precisely those documents that do not appear in Khartoum or Europe. It is mainly in the archives of the district and province headquarters that this material can be found.

Government papers sent to Khartoum are distillations of local reports and correspondence, or a selection of those reports, and it is only in the fullness of the collections of local documents themselves that one can find the specific data from which more general statements were drawn, data which are often open to other interpretations than those sent to Khartoum. It is also in the local documents that one can find direct evidence of the working assumptions and values employed by province staff in judging the information they had at hand, and in interpreting it for Khartoum. An analysis of these assumptions is crucial to the understanding of the way evidence was presented. They can be seen operating most directly on the evidence for Southern Sudanese "resistance" and in the assessment of the impact of the nineteenth century on Southern Sudanese societies.

The **Sudan Intelligence Report** records the progress of pacification and the anxiety of government officials about the potential of resistance or rebellion. Reports of local "hostility" sent to Khartoum appear, on investigation, to be derived in many cases from the reluctance of local leaders to offer the unconditional submission the government demanded. Government efforts to counter this negative "hostility" often forced the Southern Sudanese into more active opposition. Seen in this light the "resistance" of such famous leaders as Gbudwe, Arianhdit, Ngundeng and his son Guek appears to have been imposed on them more than it

Douglas H. Johnson

originated with them. Such an interpretation receives ample support from oral traditions.<sup>9</sup>

It is also clear from local documents that during and after pacification administrators were obsessed with "tribal purity." To them, evidence of assimilation of different cultures was an indication that a society had not the strength to resist foreign influences and was proof of a breakdown of tribal structures. It is against this assumption that we must judge the twentieth century assessments of the violence of the preceding century. The redistribution of local populations into different political or social groupings was equated with the "disappearance" of whole groups of people. The extension of kinship networks across tribal political boundaries, which caused innumerable administrative headaches when trying to keep persons within their assigned districts, was proof of the breaking up of the social organization. It was only after tribal separation was attempted and failed that administrators realized that social flexibility was not equivalent to social disorder. But it was a later generation of administrators who discovered this. The early efforts at, and arguments for, separation are well documented in the government files in Khartoum. The post mortems on the failure of such policies are confined to the district and province files. Their absence from the sources used in existing studies has helped to perpetuate misconceptions that were being discarded by the end of the colonial period.

There are limitations to the use of administrative documents, no matter how detailed they are. Administrators were naturally constrained by the demands of their daily work, and there are some aspects of Southern Sudanese life, notably religion and the motivation of Southern Sudanese leaders, which administrators neither fully investigated nor fully understood. It is only by turning to oral testimony that a more comprehensive account of Southern Sudanese history can be constructed.

The civil war prevented the systematic collection of oral traditions, and the historical quality of the existing ethnography of the region is uneven.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that a substantial body of historical material

9 Cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Azande. History and Political Institutions* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 388-91; R. G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 76-8; D. H. Johnson, "History and Prophecy among the Nuer of the Southern Sudan," University of California, Los Angeles, Ph. D. dissertation, 1980.

10 Amateur ethnographers among administrators and missionaries were usually not as systematic in the collection and presentation of traditions as historians are now expected to be. Even the historical material of Evans-Pritchard, who was first trained in history, varies in quality from a very thorough collection of Zande historical sources to a very sketchy reconstruction of Nuer and Anuak history.

does not exist, as at least one historian claims,<sup>11</sup> for local files themselves contain a variety of historical traditions collected between thirty and fifty years ago. These can be used not only as sources of information, but as controls on versions of the same traditions collected at a much later date. Other documents in the files can also provide corroborative evidence for testimony referring to the condominium period.

Historians of the Southern Sudan have shown a marked confusion when trying to use material based on oral sources. They have sometimes overgeneralized the material at hand. Sanderson's evidence for the "Hobbesian 'State of Nature'" is based mostly on Santandrea's description of the small tribes of the western Bahr al-Ghazal,<sup>12</sup> which Sanderson applied to cover the entire Southern Sudan. At times when anthropological evidence has conflicted with administrative sources it is discarded without discussion.<sup>13</sup> Anthropologists have used oral traditions to elucidate and illustrate general principles on which Southern Sudanese societies operate, and their collections sometimes lack the details historians need.<sup>14</sup> Historians must work from this expression of general principles to elicit further historical information. To try to write history from the published collections of these materials alone does not do full justice to oral sources; it is trying to write history by remote control. If historians expect to get answers to the questions they think are the most crucial, then they must be present to ask them.

At the very least a combination of oral sources with a more thorough collection of colonial documents will revise our understanding of the colonial period. Over forty years ago Evans-Pritchard pointed out that the anthropological study of administration involved more than just the study of native institutions. It was equally necessary to study British social organization and ethical standards,<sup>15</sup> for "to understand administration we have to study the values which are expressed in it and the sentiments that control it."<sup>16</sup> From his own extensive observations he saw the problem of

Southern Sudanese administration as the conflict of moral systems: "The moral relations between natives and Government provide the most fundamental of administrative problems, for the natives have to integrate into their social system a political organization that has no value for them."<sup>17</sup> Historians have yet to address themselves to either of these problems in their studies of Southern Sudanese administration. They have not made a thorough study of the documents for expressions of the values which governed administration, nor have they used oral research to determine the resolution of the clash of values Evans-Pritchard observed. The first is part of the historian's duty in controlling his sources, to assess their historical context and reliability. The second should be the ultimate aim of any administrative history: an assessment of the impact of administration on those it administered.

Let us finally suggest a picture of the Southern Sudan's past which may emerge if the colonial period is not taken as the beginning of that past, if a comprehensive survey of all colonial documents, both local and distant, are tested against oral traditions. The "isolation" of the South fades away, for the distinction between "North" and "South" is scarcely clearcut. The "formidable geographical barriers" which later hindered the movement of armies, flotillas and caravans are no hindrance to the movement of people (as anyone who has traveled overland in the South during the dry season can attest), and even less so to the flow of languages, cultures and ideas. Some three centuries ago the Upper White Nile valley was dominated by the Nilotic Dinka, Shilluk and Anuak. Their position on the rivers affected trade and other contacts between the Sudanic kingdoms, and they controlled the grazing land of a number of Arab pastoralists. Each of these societies established links with other peoples beyond their borders. The Nuba were involved in the royal ceremonies of the Shilluk; the Dinka opposed the advance of Sennar but also joined that kingdom's armies; Nilotic culture was spread into the Ethiopian foothills in varying degrees by various agents.

The peoples of the Upper Nile valley were far from static. Some were forced by ecological changes or political tensions to move, and in doing so mingled with others. Assimilation and adaptation was a constant fact of life and was accomplished by the creation of new clans which were bound in special ways to the *reth* of the Shilluk, by the grafting of foreign groups on to the Dinka lineage system, by the absorption of strangers into the Nuer

11 I. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, 1886-1890* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972) p. x.

12 S. Santandrea, *A Tribal History of the Western Bahr el Ghazal* (Verona, 1964).

13 Compare Evans-Pritchard's treatment of the fall of Gbudwe (*The Azande*, pp. 388-91) with Collins (*Land Beyond the Rivers*, pp. 113-22).

14 This is particularly true of the Dinka traditions recorded by Lienhardt (*Divinity and Experience*), and by Francis Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds. The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978) and *Dinka Cosmology* (London, Ithaca Press, 1980).

15 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Anthropology and Administration," *Oxford Summer School on Colonial Administration*, 1937, p. 88.

16 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Administrative Problems in the Southern Sudan," *Oxford Summer School on Colonial Administration*, 1938, p. 76.

17 *Ibid.*

kinship network, by the appeal across political and even linguistic boundaries of certain religious centers, and further south among the Azande, and by intense acculturation of conquered peoples through reciprocal military and economic obligations between king and subjects.

Before Egypt's conquest of the Sudan, then, large sections of the South were already in contact with "the outside world" and were not dominated by it. Adaptation to external influences had been developed from long experience. It was only with Egypt's arrival that the balance of power on the White Nile shifted against the Southern Sudanese peoples there. During the violence of the nineteenth century many of them suffered dislocation, but the old patterns of assimilation were adapted to meet the new challenge. By the end of the century the Azande, the Dinka of the Bahr al-Ghazal, and the Nuer, who between them account for more than half the population of the Southern Sudan, occupied more territory and exerted more influence over their neighbors than they had half a century before. The process of assimilation continued in many places during the twentieth century despite administrative attempts to divide the South into discrete "tribes." The visions of religious leaders during the turbulence of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were remembered throughout the colonial period and achieved a new relevance during the civil war that followed independence.

The irony of this reconstruction is that while much of the information comes from documents now in the Southern Region, or from oral traditions that had not been collected or published twenty-five years ago, a great deal of it is derived from sources that were available to and used by some of the historians who have written on the South.<sup>18</sup> Their preoccupation with a narrow political history led them to overlook the fundamental strengths of the social systems they claimed were destroyed or the religions they dismissed as "traditional" or "tribal." Their focusing on the colonial period obscured some of the broader trends in Southern Sudanese history, trends which are of great significance to the history of the rest of the Sudan. Comparison of new sources with the old makes these trends more apparent than before.

This essay has concentrated on the defects of Southern Sudanese historiography, which may be unfair as many of the authors so criticized would acknowledge some of these defects in works published many years ago. The defects are in urgent need of correction. The old interpretation of the Southern Sudan's past supported the assumption that the Southern Sudanese were incapable of meeting the challenges of the modern world. The belief that the Southern Sudanese were either atavistic or inert in their response to externally initiated change contributed to many grave miscalculations during the civil war. The Southern Sudanese rejection of certain national policies was seen not as deriving from the Southern Sudanese themselves, but as being inspired by outsiders. This is a view that still has adherents in the Sudan. A lack of familiarity with evidence that challenges this belief justifies itself by asserting that the evidence does not exist. A failure to gather and examine the evidence will only perpetuate ideas detrimental to national development.

Those who cannot or will not make the journey South to consult local sources<sup>19</sup> must restrain their urge to make sweeping judgments about the Southern Sudan's past. No longer should prejudice be recorded as fact, or local incidents generalized to encompass the whole region. This much is already taken for granted in the study of the rest of the Sudan's history; it is time it is expected for Southern Sudanese history as well.

<sup>19</sup> Research in the Southern Region should be somewhat easier in the future than it is at present. Provincial and district files are currently being transferred to the Southern Regional Records Office in Juba (those of Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria Provinces have already been transferred). A small collection of oral traditions is also being gathered there.

<sup>18</sup> Recent historians who have used contemporary and ethnographic sources to present such a reconstruction are P. Mercer, "Shilluk Trade and Politics from the mid-seventeenth Century to 1861," *Journal of African History* XII(3) 1971 and J. Spaulding in R.S. O'Fahey and J. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London: Methuen, 1975). Ethnographic and historical material can be found in W. Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk* (Modling, 1925); F. Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds*; R.G. Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in J. Middleton & D. Tait (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1958); H.H. Wilson, "Report on the Dinkas of the White Nile," *Sudan Intelligence Report* 104 (March), 1903; K.D.D. Henderson, "The Migration of the Missirya into South-west Kordofan," *Sudan Notes and Records* XXII(1), 1939; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951); and *The Azande*; W. James, *Kwanim Pa. The Making of the Uduk People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). For a synthesis of local documents and oral traditions see D.H. Johnson, "History and Prophecy among the Nuer of the Southern Sudan."



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## **The Challenge for Rainfed Agriculture**

**in Western and Southern Sudan:**

### **Lessons from Abyei**

Richard Huntington, James Ackroyd, Luka Deng

The Sudan is primarily an agricultural and pastoral society and national political independence predicated economic stability and increased production in the vast rural areas. Since Independence, the emphasis of Sudanese agricultural policy has been directed toward the large irrigated schemes that are the legacy of the colonial era, and for the immediate future this emphasis is likely to continue, due to the current balance of payments problem created by the increased price of imported oil and the declining yields of Gezira cotton. However, for most of the citizens of Sudan, there can be no irrigation of their fields. Hence, finding productive ways for these rural people to participate economically in a developing Sudan is one of the great challenges facing the nation as it enters its second quarter-century.

The modernization of rain-fed agriculture is an intrinsically difficult enterprise in that considerable capital must be risked on a situation where the fundamental element, rainfall, is beyond human control and known to be capricious. The mechanization of rain-fed agriculture faces three basic problems. First is a certain sociological problem. The egalitarian intent of most projects is to increase the income of the rural poor. Studies by social

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scientists at the University of Khartoum and the Economic and Social Research Council show, however, that rural mechanization schemes have greatly increased income disparity, as some people have benefitted and others have not. The second problem is ecological. The semi-arid regions, especially in the west, are delicate environments. And the economic adaptation of the peoples of these areas (especially nomads) is also part of a fine balance that is easily upset at some difficult-to-determine economic and human price. Finally, there is the financial question. To date, most of the mechanized rain-fed agriculture is subsidized one way or another by the government or by foreign donors and hence detracts from national independence.

In an effort to find a way through this impasse of the dualistic economy, researchers are re-examining the practices of traditional agriculture to see if these might provide a basis for modernization that is different from the largely imported farming system used on the mechanized schemes. The machine is often mistaken for a means of by-passing the great problems of nature, but actually it plunges us more deeply into them. As we shall see, tractors are severely limited by factors of topography, soil composition, and rainfall. The system of traditional farming is intimately adapted to the local environment and any new system must respond to all of the same natural factors. Proposals to change or replace the traditional systems must take, as a starting point, a thorough understanding of the practices that have been adapted to those environments for centuries.

We observed the 1980 agricultural season near Abyei, South Kordofan Province. During this period we lived in a small Ngok Dinka village and kept daily records of the time and labor devoted to the agricultural production of fifteen homesteads. We also collected data on such things as feed consumption, water procurement, and small livestock. This research was part of the work of the small Abyei Rural Development under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources in Khartoum. The Government of Sudan contracted with the Harvard Institute for International Development to design and implement the experimental project which was then funded in large measure by the American government. A preliminary social and economic survey was conducted in 1977 by the Development Studies and Research Centre of the University of Khartoum. In 1980, Harvard conducted a geographic survey and research on livestock practices as well as technical trials pertaining to agriculture, water, and livestock. Our observations of one village are placed in the context of these other studies. In this research, we discovered what the anthropologist always discovers: practices which seem simple, foolish, lazy, or inefficient to outside experts are in fact part of an overall system of some considerable complexity and rationality.

One aspect of Sudanese traditional agriculture that is often forgotten in modernization plans is that, for most farmers, agriculture is only part of their total economic and productive activity. It is part of a larger system that includes an important investment in livestock. The household production unit is tied into a larger and more flexible labor pool through kinship and into a wider and more diversified "credit union" through systems of livestock transactions. If one forgets these largely invisible networks and assets, then the farmer on his small field looks far poorer and more economically vulnerable than he in fact is. Our concern in this article is with sorghum production, but we must never forget that it is part of a wider and dynamically complex economic system in which livestock is a crucial element.

We can best understand a system of traditional agriculture in terms of two cycles. One is the annual cycle of the growing season which is dominated in Abyei by the two natural factors of rainfall and topography. The other cycle is a long-term cycle of shifting agriculture and periods of fallow. This cycle in Abyei is dominated by the actions of a parasitic weed which limits the length of time a field may be planted before yields drop. All aspects of this traditional farming system operate to minimize the amount of human labor necessary for every operation. We approached this research with the notion that farmers work very hard for a relatively meager return, but we found instead a system that is extraordinarily labor efficient.

### The Annual Cycle

Like many peoples throughout Sudan, the farmers of Abyei plant a number of varieties of sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) on small fields by hand labor with long- and short-handled hoes. Interspersed among the sorghum, they plant very small amounts of sesame, groundnuts, maize, and okra. The agricultural season lasts from April through January. In April and May, just before the rains, the fields must be cleared and cleaned in preparation for sowing. This is perhaps the most difficult and least liked labor of the agricultural year because the season is extremely hot and drinking water is absent in the vicinity of most homesteads. In late May and June, the first crop is sown. The garden close to the house is sown first with quick maturing varieties of sorghum, maize, and other crops, then the large field is sown with varieties of slower maturing sorghum. In late August the varieties in the garden begin to ripen and these are harvested daily for meals and snacks. The main harvest is done in October and early November. The sorghum stalks are cut at the base allowing new shoots to

sprout ("ratoon") which produce a smaller second harvest in December and January. Also, for this second harvest, some replanting is done.

**Topography.** The Abyei area appears to be flat, and to the eye of an outsider vast stretches seem available for agriculture. This flatness is deceptive. The plain is dominated by a system of broad, flat, and meandering "ridges" and slight depressions. The difference in elevation is as little as one meter over a distance of more than a kilometer from the peak of the ridge to the bottom of the depression. This small difference of elevation and gradual slope is crucial during the rainy agricultural season. The wide depressions lack adequate drainage to prevent water-logging of the sorghum plants. This is made worse by the extreme impermeability of the black clay soil. The broad tops of the ridges, on the other hand, are too dry and hard for planting sorghum.

Fields must be strung out like beads on a string along the low slopes between ridges and the depressions. Often the difference in elevation between the high and low side of the cultivable area is as little as 30 centimeters. House, cattle byre, and garden are built on the higher ground. The main field is either directly behind the garden or, more often, a short distance away. A village generally consists of a single row of houses and fields along one slope, or two such rows along the sides of a narrower ridge.

**Rainfall.** Sorghum is an extraordinary crop in terms of its resistance to rainfall variations. Once established it is famous for its hardiness and it can survive periods of drought and heat that are fatal to other crops such as maize. Even brief periods of flooding do not kill the sorghum whose roots go down into the dryer soil below. The problem is to get it established. The critical factor is not so much the total amount of rainfall but its variability of timing. The Abyei rainfall patterns of 1979 and 1980 are almost the reverse of one another with the heaviest rains falling early (May) in 1979 but late (September) in 1980. The farmers' system must be able to respond to such radical shifts.

Before the first heavy rains the cracking clay soil is too hard to work. Sowing can be done only for two or three days after a heavy rainfall. During these days the farmers work long and hard with a long-handled hoe to sow as much as possible before the soil dries out. A shallow hole is made at each pace as the farmer strides along vigorously creating a row of holes. About a dozen seeds are dropped into each hole and then covered with soil by a little push and a pat with the foot. Sowing is vigorous, active labor and people take pride in their exertions. However, even with several members of the family working together, a farmer can only sow between one-third and one-half a feddan per day. (1 feddan = 1.04 acres = 0.43 hectares.)

After sowing, rain must fall again within a few days or the seeds fail to germinate. Every day spent sowing is a gamble and, if the next rain does not fall punctually, the area must be resown. This resowing fills in among the thin germination from previous sowings. Most of the field is sown twice and many parts are sown three or four times during the short planting season.

During 1980, there were only 14 days available for sowing following six rainstorms between late May and early July. During the sowing period, the problem lies with the erratic nature of the early rains and the farmer is often unable to get everything sown during the earliest optimal days. As the rainy season progresses, there are other problems relating to rainfall. As cloudy days become the rule, the low sunlight intensity can reduce plant growth. Later in the season, standing water in low areas of the fields can destroy plants. In farmers' fields one sees this only in the low spots of the newer sections. But the problem is acutely visible in the Project's attempts to operate larger group farms for mechanized agriculture.

**Weeding.** The literature on Sudanese agricultural development almost universally stresses that a major limiting factor to production is weeding. These observations generally refer to problems on mechanized schemes where large plots have been plowed and sown by tractor. The tenants and laborers are understandably unable or unwilling to put in the very long hours of backbreaking weeding. It is a different story on their own fields. All of the fields in our sample were kept relatively free of weeds. The fields were clear of weeds before sowing began and weeding activity started before sowing was completed as the people weeded a bit in the breaks between rainstorms. During July and August, weeding was the main activity. While weeding, the farmers thin the sorghum stands to bunches of five stalks. Weeding is done by both men and women. It is done individually and in sociable beer parties, women's beer parties, and men's beer parties.

The nearly 60 feddans that make up the 15 farms of our sample received 2000 hours of weeding. The busiest week saw just over 500 hours of weeding done by over 60 people. And this work is being done during July, a relatively cool, overcast, comfortable season when adequate water is nearby and there is a pleasant variety of foods such as greens, fish, and milk available. Furthermore, much of this work is done at the beer parties. Interestingly, the labor at the beer parties is as efficient as that of a sober person working alone. Notice that whereas during sowing, farmers perceive available labor time to be critically short, during weeding it does not seem to matter to them if the work is done one day or

another. A farmer may work in his own field for two days and then work at a neighbor's beer party on the third day, and go in to town on the fourth day, etc.

Weeds are more of a problem in some years than in others, and grain for beer brewing is not always in supply at that season. But the fact that these beer parties are such an institutionalized part of weeding suggests that at weeding time farmers generally exchange many days' labor for parties and also weed their own fields by their own labor and by brewing beer for a work party if they fall behind.

The farmers correctly perceive the critical importance of weeding but they do it in a manner which, again, minimizes labor rather than maximizes yields. In the long run, the *timing* of weeding is as important as the timing of sowing, but it seems less pressing to the farmers. However, all weeds on the field are damaging the crop, and the fact that people are still doing weeding six weeks after sowing shows that a certain trade-off is being made between potential yields and labor mobilization.

**Harvest.** The entire family cooperates on harvesting the field. Men walk through the crop, chopping down the tall sorghum at the base. The women follow behind cutting the sorghum heads off the stalks and children gather these heads and place them in baskets for women to carry to the house. Harvesting and threshing are the agricultural activities most strongly apportioned by sex. Cleaning, sowing, and weeding are done by both men and women. But for the harvest, men always chop and women cut, carry, and thresh as a prelude to their female cooking duties.

For the second harvest, new shoots ratoon from the cut bases and produce thin stalks with small sorghum heads. If adequate soil moisture is available this ratoon harvest can equal thirty percent of the original harvest. If the first harvest has not grown well, then areas are resown with quick maturing varieties. The second harvest provides an important measure of security. If conditions are unfavorable early in the season, this can be offset to some extent by better conditions later.

In 1980, the harvests of the 15 farms in our sample produced a total of 19,000 kg of threshed sorghum. This provides a surplus of about 12 percent over the consumption requirements (about 3 kg daily per household) of the people resident on the farms. Regarding yields, these fields averaged 325 kg of sorghum per feddan plus sesame, okra, maize, and groundnuts which are interspersed in the sorghum fields. These yields leave room for improvement, but they are better than those of mechanized rain-fed agriculture and they come close to sorghum yields obtained on Sudanese irrigated schemes. In terms of labor, one typical family (man, woman, three children) put in a total of 90 person days sowing, weeding, and harvesting 1100 kg of sorghum. This means that for every day of labor

they realized 12 kg of sorghum. Considering the market prices of sorghum, the cash value of this labor greatly exceeds the daily wages paid for unskilled work in Sudan. Of more importance to the family is that they secured their sustenance for the year and will also be able to use some of the surplus to acquire more livestock.

Many aspects of the annual cycle have implications for possible modernization of rain-fed agriculture in the area. First of all, the topography makes it difficult to create fields large enough for efficient tractor use. Large mechanized schemes would need careful leveling and drainage engineering which, although possible, would add substantially to already high capital costs. Additionally, there is the problem of the erratic early rains. The farmers compensate by sowing and resowing with intricate precision. Resowing the whole field by tractor adds even more to the costs, but a single sowing rarely succeeds. Also, tractor work is even more limited by rains than hand sowing. On the first day after a rainstorm (the best time for sowing) the heavy clay soils are too wet for the tractor to operate.

Agricultural conditions in Abyei are favorable but uncertain. The farmers carefully tailor their activities to meet the variations in rainfall, topography, and pests. Their success is based not on long hard labor, but on close supervision of two harvests. Tractor programs in South Kordofan generally produce but a single harvest on a field too large to oversee with the necessary care. Tractors in Abyei sometimes produce large amounts of sorghum, but at increased risk, increased cost, and reduced yields per feddan. And tractors do not address the major problems of the Abyei agricultural year, such as the variability of rains and the multiplicity of pests.

### The Long Cycle

The most serious problem facing sorghum production is infestation by striga (*striga hermonthica*), a parasitic weed. It takes a number of years for the incidence of striga, or "witchweed," to increase and then severely reduce the sorghum yields. Before ten years it is necessary to clear a new field, which is frequently located near the house. Opening a new field entails clearing acacia and thorny scrub. For the first two or three years the yields are relatively low for several reasons. The new fields have elevational irregularities creating many pockets susceptible to waterlogging. Weed growth is more persistent in new fields. Also the upper layer of soil is thick and heavy in the new fields and this retards water percolation.

The fourth through sixth years are most productive. The sorghum is well established, weeds are easy to control, soil is light and workable, and

the field is uniform. From the seventh year on, the effects of the parasitic striga are devastating. Height and head size of the sorghum are greatly reduced and the ratooning process for the second harvest is nearly halted entirely. Weeding the fields of the parasite does little good because the damage is being done underground by many more plants than are visible. Also the striga seeds remain dormant in the ground for many years, ready to germinate whenever triggered by the presence of chemicals given off by sorghum.

No farmer's field is of uniform age except in the first year. Generally to make a new field, one works very hard to clear two feddans the first year and then adds to it bit by bit. Some farmers stay in one place for more than seven years, gradually adding new land to one end of the field and abandoning the striga-infested area at the other end. The farmer takes these factors into his calculations, devoting more effort to seeding and weeding the 5-year-old sections, weeding the newest parts last, sowing the oldest fields less often, etc.

This long cycle of field fertility is also integrated into a man's career stages. An older man might carefully limit the amount of new land added to his field and accept lower yields in order to forestall having to move and clear an entirely new field. Often there are periods when a man has an older field and a newer one (and an older and a newer wife) between which he balances out his activities during a transition phase of his life. Men marry rather late, usually in their early thirties, because of the difficulty of obtaining cattle from kin for the bridewealth. A number of years later, when a man takes a second wife, he often leaves the first wife with the older field and house. The result is that women are often independent heads of households, either as widows or as wives left behind by their remarrying husbands. There is a certain congruence between the patterns of field depletion and men's decision to move on to a new wife.

This long cycle of 8 years under cultivation and at least 20 years fallow also has implications for modernization, for it means that the labor and expense of land clearing must be repeated every 7 years and that fully two-thirds of the arable land must under present methods be withheld from production. This is not to suggest that a solution is impossible, but that the problem to be solved is formidable. A five-year rotation of cotton or legumes has been suggested as part of a solution to the striga problem. But no legume has yet been found that does well in Abyei's climate and cotton is subject to pests and other problems difficult to control in such a remote area.

The farmers of Abyei have created a system which copes with a complex package of environmental constraints and dangers. It is an efficient system in the way it conserves land and labor and produces an ample

harvest. It is a complex system in terms of making intricate use of both subtle and radical variations of soil, seed, elevation, and moisture in the short cycle and linking this with a long-term pattern of soil depletion and regeneration woven furthermore with the progressive unfolding of a person's life career.

### Implications for Development Strategies

One might argue that it is not possible to improve upon the traditional agricultural adaptation of these people to this difficult environment. And indeed no system has yet been found that is more efficient in its use of labor and land (two elements in critical short supply). Also one could argue that the improvement of traditional agriculture is unnecessary because it already meets people's needs for sustenance, security, and surplus. However, we must remember that the traditional rural farmers are often very very poor and they legitimately desire increased production, security, and manufactured goods. Specifically for the Abyei area, it is important to note that grain is in short supply in the region immediately to its south where greater rainfall and less arable land are a severe limitation to production. In spite of the many problems and extreme remoteness, intermediate areas such as Abyei are more favored than the much wetter areas to the south or the much dryer areas to the north. It may be that areas which are currently the most backward might at some future time become a key to evening out some of the disparities in rural food supply which can be a cause of suffering and conflict.

Three systems of farming have been proposed and tried in rainfed areas in recent years and all of them raise major problems and important questions. The major difficulty with most proposed improvements is that they are often presented by their proponents as relatively simple solutions to the problems of rainfed agriculture. However, any program to increase sorghum production must be at least as complex as the traditional system because it must face the same complicated package of environmental constraints and problems.

The most important and widespread innovation has been the use of tractors. We have already mentioned the overall financial and logistical difficulties of tractorization in remote rural areas. Specifically in Abyei, tractors are unable to respond well to the variations in rainfall and topography. The great problem with tractors in the Abyei area is that, costs and logistics aside, they seem to make little technical contribution to agriculture. (They are a great boon to transportation.) Normally, a tractor may be used for a number of purposes such as aerating the soil, placing the



seeds, controlling weeds, and incorporating crop residues. For the most part in Abyei, either tractors are not needed to perform these functions or they are ineffective when attempting to do so. For instance, the deeply cracking clay soils aerate themselves, crop residues are effectively incorporated into the soil by termites, and weed growth cannot be controlled by tractors because of the timing of the rains and weed growth. Tractors can place seeds into the ground, but in the heavy wet soils this placement is rarely at the best date or optimal depth. If one considers the range of environmental constraints (rainfall, topography, soil, parasitic weed) and labor constraints (weeding, harvesting, clearing, protecting, threshing, storing) facing sorghum production, it seems that the tractor is of minimal aid in the creation of a viable, long-term farming system.

Animal traction also has been tried and experimented with in recent years as part of several projects in both the western and southern regions of Sudan. The results have been disappointing. Much of the difficulty has been blamed on the "cultural" factor of the reticence of some of these traditional peoples to treat cattle as beasts of burden. While it is true that such systems sometimes impinge upon deep religious beliefs and legitimate emotional attachments of people for cattle, the real problems with animal traction tend to be technical rather than cultural. Modern animal traction systems are often erroneously thought to be simple and inexpensive. However, a successful animal traction program for an area like Abyei would involve procuring and maintaining thousands of rigs, each with an initial cost of about US \$300-\$1500. Farmers and animals need to be trained. The oxen need to be fed and exercised all year long to keep them in shape for the brief planting season. This necessitates, among other things, a system of collecting, storing, and protecting fodder. Additionally, such a program would demand an alteration in traditional law regarding cattle ownership and exchange rights. Like the tractor, the animal rig is limited in its ability to get onto the field for sowing immediately following a rain. Ox-plowing may be an "appropriate technology" for some regions of Sudan, but it should not be mistaken as a simple or a cheap solution. It is only successful if it is widely adopted and therefore it calls for a fairly extensive system for support, delivery, and training.

In addition to mechanization and animal traction, the Abyei Project did some initial trials of an agricultural system developed at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) at Ibadan, Nigeria, but never before tried in Sudan. This system is called "zero tillage" and it relies on a hand-operated jab planter for sowing, and a low volume of a mild herbicide applied with a battery-powered (size "D") hand sprayer for the weed problem. Trials indicate that the jab planter will allow larger areas to be sown during those scarce sowing days and that the uniform depth and

placement of seeds will improve germination. The herbicide helps cope with the weeding which might otherwise become a problem on the larger fields. In trials in Abyei this system produced yields greater than those of the farmers whereas tractors generally produce yields that are much less than those of traditional farming. Some yet to be worked out combination of jab planter, herbicide, and legume fodder rotation (to remove the parasitic striga) might provide the basis for economically viable farming systems in many rural areas of Sudan.

A great deal of work needs to be done to effect this or any comparable change in Sudanese traditional agriculture. Especially, much needs to be learned about the farming systems of rural people in other areas throughout the country. The traditional farmer may not always have the most precise scientific knowledge, but his farming system is usually the only successful long-term adaptation to that environment. The system we observed in Abyei is a measured response to subtle variations in topography, radical variations in rainfall, and gradual infestation of a parasitic weed. And at every stage the system conserves with careful stewardship the only factor over which people have any control: human labor. Rainfall patterns, soil types, topography, and weeds vary throughout the country (even within a single village) and the traditional farming systems of Sudan are flexible enough to respond to these micro-variations. Some of this "traditional" flexibility and "traditional" knowledge of subtle environmental factors needs to be incorporated into the "development" efforts to make the rural areas a contributing part of the national economic activity.

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## Independence

### and the Status of Nilotic Women

John W. Burton

The essays collected together in this special edition of *Africa Today* indicate on the one hand the breadth of academic and scholarly interests in the rich diversity of Sudanese culture and history. Concomitantly, each essay is implicitly inspired by and focused on some aspect of what we vaguely refer to as "social change", that elusive yet perpetual feature of human social relations. While the following observations and comments are specifically oriented around the changing status of women among the Nilotic-speaking peoples of the Southern Region, I believe these phenomena are inseparably related to the status of *all* Sudanese women. Indeed, there are similarities in the patterns of social change following independence in the modern Sudanese context which are mirrored in many other developing African nation states.

In order to appreciate the apparent direction and parameters of the changing status of Nilotic women in the post-independence era, it is necessary first to survey briefly their pre-colonial as well as colonial experience. Obviously, one cannot describe or understand what has changed without an appreciation of antecedent events. Thus, as a preface to the main contribution of this essay, I will summarize what appear to be the relevant data.

As Evans-Pritchard has observed, the nineteenth century explorers and traders who traversed the Southern Region rarely if ever penned ethnographic observations of any significance.<sup>1</sup> Such an avocation was incidental to their purpose and "it was in any case difficult to reconcile their plundering of the natives whenever they were able to do so without risk to

themselves".<sup>2</sup> To cite but two examples, Evans-Pritchard argues that most of what Brun-Rollet recorded is "all rubbish", and of Casati's monograph he says, "if the translation is faithful, it is not only nonsense but would appear to be invention".<sup>3</sup> In the Nilotic case, we unfortunately lack the Lafitau and similar meticulous observers of human society from whom scholars in other cultural areas have benefitted. There is in fact little we will ever know of Nilotic societies prior to the turn of the century, apart from the historical and mythical images conveyed through oral traditions.

Considering the intellectual climate of the time, along with the dominant concerns of the discipline of British anthropology, it is not surprising to note that when the Seligmans drew reference to the status of Southern Sudanese women,<sup>4</sup> they received only the most uncomplimentary review. In this case as well much of what they recorded as ethnographic fact is suspect, both by the methodology they employed and the questions which they sought to answer.<sup>5</sup> With the British "recapture" of the Sudan in 1898, the country was once again open to the moderately adventuresome traveller. In the main however the British trekking class was rather more interested in the variety of local flora and fauna than societies and indigenous custom. The travellers were, with but one or two exceptions, male. It was not until after the second world war that the British government permitted its white officials to reside with their wives in the Southern Region. As a result of these combined factors, the first century of alien accounts of Nilotic peoples are decidedly colored by a variety of male and imperial or colonial biases.

The scant reference to Nilotic women which can be found in these travelogues are uniformly disparaging. Millais is able only to opine that Shilluk women "are distinctly plain and uninteresting in appearance".<sup>6</sup> Wyndham deemed Dinka women to be "of purely animal consciousness" and "incapable of a continuous strain of thought".<sup>7</sup> His own perception of the world was evidently dominated by the physical features of local peoples, as indicated by his suggestion that Nuer women "are as comely and as naked as the men".<sup>8</sup> In spite of his physical attraction toward them, he nonetheless considered that Nuer women showed "a decided bitchiness toward the world in general". Of course Wyndham was not unique in this

2 *Ibid.*, p. 132

3 *Ibid.*, p. 143

4 C G and B Z Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932)

5 Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*

6 J G Millais, *Far Away Up the Nile* (London: Longmans, 1924), p. 72

7 R Wyndham, *The Gentle Savage* (London: Cassell and Company, 1936), p. 61

8 *Ibid.*, p. 53

1 E E Evans-Pritchard, "Sources, with Particular Reference to the Southern Sudan," *Cahiers D'Etudes Africaines* 11 1971 pp 129-179

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proclivity. He recalls a British official whom he befriended that had chosen to refer to Kajok, his Dinka wife, as 'Tits'.<sup>9</sup> However much Wyndham was repulsed by Dinka women he observed "emerging from their huts suckling their babies at revolting pendulous breasts" he still insisted that they could prove to be "perfect domestic pets".<sup>10</sup>

The unmasked sexism of these and many other related accounts of the same genre do not merit further discussion. One can observe however that since books such as these were widely read by an increasingly literate audience outside Africa, a significant facet of the stereotype of the reticent, passive "African woman" was the direct responsibility of these authors. As in their native countries, they perceived Nilotic women as necessary, but in the main inconsequential, members of society. Conversely, it is equally possible to argue that these travellers were keenly aware of the power and authority accorded Nilotic women. Thus, for example, Millais observes that ". . . the Dinka treats his wife or wives with great consideration, and it is a mistake to suppose that the latter have no voice in the affairs of life. On the contrary, they are often the prime movers in all things except wars".<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically, this may be the very fact why Nilotic women received so little attention in print. Based on more contemporary social anthropological research among the Nilotic Atuat Millais' observation, with little qualification, is fully vindicated.<sup>12</sup> Essentially the same state of affairs was casually called to attention by V.H. Fergusson with regard to the Nuer. "It is the girls that rule the people . . . Yes, it is true the girls here rule up to a point, but few of them have any idea of playing the game; their code of morals is so different from ours. However, in many ways they could set us a fine example".<sup>13</sup> Thus, while the popularly received image of women in "third world" nations is that of a class of subjugated and inferior individuals, the facts of the matter, at least in this case, entirely contradict that stereotype. Indeed, they verify Leacock's statement,

. . . in non-Moslem African cultures, women's and men's rights and responsibilities were conceived and institutionalized as parallel rather than hierarchical, and the activities and organizations of each sex, cross-cut both public and private life; second, women's status in sub-Saharan Africa has for

9 *Ibid.*, p. 61

10 *Ibid.*, p. 131

11 Millais, *op. cit.*, p. 154

12 Fieldwork among the Atuat was made possible through grants generously awarded by the Social Science Research Council and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, whose assistance is once more gratefully acknowledged. In taking credit for the substantive contributions of the present essay, more than academic standards make it necessary to thank L'Ana H. Burton for her most valuable insights on the issue addressed. See J.W. Burton, "Atuat Age Categories and Marriage" *Africa* 50 (1980), pp. 146-160, and J.W. Burton, "Women and Men in Marriage: Some Atuat Texts" *Anthropos* 75 (1980), pp. 710-720.

13 V.H. Fergusson, *The Story of Fergie Bey* (London: McMillan and Company, 1930), p. 194

the most part been seriously undermined by colonial policies.<sup>14</sup>

The latter passage from Leacock's comments invites a summary appraisal of the influence of British colonial policy on the status of Nilotic women. If Nilotic women shared an equivalent status with men prior to colonial rule<sup>15</sup> then the exogenous system of administration encouraged and ultimately perpetuated a system that made them entirely subordinate to men. At the time, local colonial officials and administrators were instructed to select the appropriate men to assume minor governmental roles as "chiefs", and these individuals were in turn directed to select one or a number of sons to be sent off to mission schools. In this setting they were instructed in English and in the rudiments of "civilization". These and a variety of other schemes envisioned to promote social change and "progress" necessarily excluded women from participating. Rural administrative centers became the focal points where the directives of colonial administration were delivered to newly created "chiefs". Immediately, women were forced into a status of second-class citizens in a world where equivalence was the norm. Even though there are now Nilotic women who are nuns, teachers, and medical assistants in addition to a tiny minority who have received secondary and post-secondary education, one would encounter imponderable difficulty in arguing that these ends were any way at all implicit in the aims of "native administration". Those who were able to successfully combine their traditional role as spokesman with the newly created status of "chief" necessarily developed strategies to further their own interests and power. It is perhaps proper at this point to emphasize how little mention is made of local women in colonial administrative archives. Among other things this indicates the blatant tendency on the part of British officials to simply ignore better than half the population they had defined in their own mandate to rule.

Factual as these comments are, however, there were positive advances made during the colonial period. For example the establishment of rural courts did serve to promote personal rights where these had been denied by customary law. Women were now able to press their claims with an over-arching legal sanction. Whereas traditional norms virtually precluded the possibility of a woman making a successful case for a divorce, or to claim possession of a child after an unsuccessful marriage, this

14 E.B. Leacock, "Introduction" in M. Etienne and E.B. Leacock (eds.), *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 11.

15 In some cases men were explicitly subordinate to them. See for example, R.G. Lienhardt, "Nilotic Kings and their Mother's Kin" *Africa* 25 (1955).

became increasingly possible and common. P.P. Howell, a former British administrator in Nuerland, likewise observes that "... Nuer took kindly to a system which enabled them to raise disputes which in the past would have had little or no chance of settlement, at any rate, without violence".<sup>16</sup> In addition to these factors, through the work of missionaries, women's rights, responsibilities and status were given wider recognition and emphasis.<sup>17</sup> In association with missionaries, women also were assured a measure of welfare for themselves and their children through the medical services offered by foreigners. In the main however, the most liberal and apologetic characterization of colonial policy toward women summarized as one of benign neglect. Underlying this, of course, was a more pervasive theme of chauvinism and sexism. I discuss in greater detail elsewhere the vital significance of Nilotic women in mythology and ritual as well as their implicit authority in the politics of marriage and bridewealth transactions.<sup>18</sup> It is sufficient to note in the present context the notable low incidence of divorce in Nilotic societies, (based on the survey I conducted among the Atuot, approximately 8 percent of extant marriages), which is but one indication of the authority women wield in both the domestic and jural domain.<sup>19</sup>

In summary to this point it can be observed that Nilotic women — at least prior to independence — were fully equal members of society, even while this was ignored or denied by colonial policy. Indeed, it was the colonial system that imposed a standard of inequality where there had previously been no standard of hierarchy. In the early years of independence, as a result, Nilotic women were no less well-off than before the advent of colonial rule.

One of the single most important advances Nilotic women have gained since independence stems from the combined influences of a cash economy and increased opportunities for education. Yet by the same measure, women's progress has at the same time been impeded. Some of these problems are painfully evident in the rural administrative centers of the Southern Region. In relation to women, a grossly disproportionate number of men have attained prominence in the contemporary political sphere. In addition to this fact, many men have received higher degrees

<sup>16</sup> P.P. Howell "Colonial Rule and Nuer Response" paper read at the S.O.A.S. seminar on "Colonial Rule and Local Response" Spring, 1976. p. 3 Cf. J.W. Burton, "British Administration and the Pastoral Nilotes", *Ethnohistory* (in press)

<sup>17</sup> See for example R. Huffman, *Nuer Custom and Folklore* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931)

<sup>18</sup> J.W. Burton, "Nilotic Women: A Diachronic Perspective" (unpublished manuscript)

<sup>19</sup> See also E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "A Note on the Courtship among the Nuer", *Sudan Notes and Records* 28 (1947): p. 126. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), and R.G. Lienhardt, "Dinka Representations of the Relations between the Sexes", in I. Schapera (ed.) *Studies in Kinship and Marriage* (London: Longmans, 1963), pp. 81-82

from the University of Khartoum (though notably insignificant in proportion when viewed along with the number of northern Sudanese enrolled) as well as from universities abroad. And here one must ask, where are the women?

In many instances the evolving strategies for survival in the Nilotic Sudan involve a combination of "traditional" and innovative life-styles. In those instances of polygamous unions (and these are very common among the current political elite of Nilotic Southerners) one wife typically remains in the countryside tending to the needs of children and the task of horticulture.<sup>20</sup> A second wife resides in the town where her husband is employed as a teacher, petty bureaucrat or politician. It is especially in the latter situation that women encounter modes of behavior and social values which are unrelated to expectations and experience. In the case of the significant minority of permanent Dinka residents in Khartoum, the adoption of "Arab" dress and Islam results in a stark separation of the sexes absolutely uncharacteristic of traditional life. A similar phenomenon is offered by an increasing number of Nilotic women who have married northern Sudanese. In this case, they must re-learn the status and responsibilities expected of a woman and are thereby forced into the same system of explicit inferiority. In the urban setting Nilotic women encounter circumstances more widely observed in the cities of developing nations: poverty and social insecurity, phenomena that are generally unencountered in the traditional setting. Nilotic women in northern Sudanese urban centers must also confront the implicitly racist stereotypes of some northern Sudanese. Whereas there has traditionally been no form of subjugation, Nilotic women confront a double social disparity, one that is partly a remnant of colonial policy favoring men, and the other in the subordinate position women are ascribed in Islamic society.

In the rural setting, marketing and trade have long been dominated by itinerant Arab men. On a smaller scale however, one is increasingly able to observe Nilotic women selling horticultural produce in rural markets. The small profits realized are used for paying elementary school fees, for paying the national household tax, for purchasing government controlled grain in times of need and for acquiring a variety of items offered for sale in Arab-dominated shops. The Nilotes in the main still consider trade and the affairs of the market to be an Arab vocation, one that is decidedly antithetical to their own norms and values. (The single woman living alone in hinterland towns is thus suspect. She is variously accused of having lost her personal integrity or prostitution.) Of course it must also be noted in a

<sup>20</sup> See also D. Parkin, *The Cultural Definition of Political Response: Lineal Destiny among the Luo* (London: Academic Press, 1979)

survey of the status of women among the Nilotes since independence that the seventeen-year-long civil war between Northerners and Southerners had a depressingly deleterious effect upon all Sudanese peoples.

When one views these data diachronically it appears that the only real baseline for observing a positive trend occurs in the post-civil war period. It is evident at the same time that the process of social change in the Nilotic Sudan is a multi-generational phenomenon. As of now there exists some equivalence in the sex composition of elementary schools, where as many young girls as boys are in attendance. One can only surmise that this trend will at some point in the future be reflected in an increasing involvement by Nilotic women in the realms of law, medicine, administration and politics. And on this score, even while the Sudanese Women's Union evidences a united concern for the advancement of women's issues, to date — and perhaps inevitably — Nilotic women represented in this forum have come from an elite strata of society. Nonetheless, this is a positive trend and represents a necessary first step. In the interim, one can only be assured that there are few if any silver-lined clouds on the horizon. As Obbo's recent study of women in peri-urban Kampala clearly demonstrates, participation in the modern sector of society is frequently a devastating personal experience.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, one should also indicate that with the signing of the Addis Ababa accord in 1972, a solid foundation for the advancement of women's issues was created. It is of course hoped that Nilotic women will attain an equivalent status with men in the spheres of occupational specialization, and that they will not have to be resigned to recall the days prior to Independence with a sense of sad longing.

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21 C. Obbo, *African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence* (London: Zed Press, 1980). Cf. also I. M. G. Schuster, *New Women of Lusaka* (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1979).

## **Kora:**

### **A Theme in Nubian Cultural History**

Jay Spaulding

The northern riverain Sudan is the home of one of the world's oldest cultural traditions, and scholarship from many disciplines has long testified to its richness and complexity. However, only recently has the idea gained currency that its history constitutes "a continuous narrative of the cultural development of a single people."<sup>1</sup> This perspective of continuity would suggest that evidence derived from diverse periods may be used — with appropriate caution — to illuminate the culture common to all. It is in this spirit that this essay offers some tentative reflections upon the significance of *kora*, a term found in Old Nubian manuscripts of a millennium ago and employed in diverse social contexts by speakers of Arabic and Nubian today.

Every society creates a set of customary rules to govern the conduct of basic human activities. Often these rules delineate fault-lines of social tension within the community, and they may sometimes themselves be perceived as creating points of stress. It is not uncommon for a society to establish certain institutionalized occasions for the legitimate transgression of otherwise-prevalent norms surrounding some of the more acute pressure points in the dominant system of belief. Examination of these established occasions of the legitimate exercise of license may help clarify the dominant ideological structure to which they constitute an exception. This essay offers the hypothesis that *kora* has been a term used by northern Sudanese to designate the occasional formal and institutionalized violation of (at least) two sets of cultural norms, one serving to maintain vertical hierarchy within the community, and the other governing the lateral exchanges of property, labor and family destiny that took place at marriage.

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1 William Y. Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* (Princeton, 1977), p. 5.

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The giving and receiving of food has long been a powerful idiom for the expression of hierarchical relationships in the northern Sudan. In medieval (Christian) times the unique supremacy of the high king was expressed symbolically by "the fiction that he never eats. Thus one brings him food in secret, and if any of his subjects sees him, he is killed instantly."<sup>2</sup> In the succeeding (Islamic) Nubian state of Sinnar the high king was still not seen to eat, and the rationale given for the subordination of subjects to his rule was explicitly couched in terms of food. A constitutional legend explained that before the coming of kingship the "great ones" of the day took what ever they wished to eat and left nothing over.<sup>3</sup> The first king "advised them, and it came to pass that when food came, it was set aside until the company was assembled. Then he would get up and distribute it among them, and they would eat." The superiority of monarchy is evident in the fact that when the king apportions, all eat — and one is further assured that a "remainder would be left over." The ideological sentiments found in this legend found tangible expression in the national system of royal granaries from which rulers could feed their subjects in time of need.<sup>4</sup>

At less exalted levels in the social hierarchy the patterns of commensal conduct emerge into plain view. For example, two travellers of the early nineteenth century described a meal at the court of a lesser nobleman in the following terms:

"At the foot of the divan upon which we were reclining, five or six of the principal servitors (high-ranking slave courtiers) of the king received the trays as they were removed from our table. After having eaten — which they accomplished with an incredible promptitude — they passed them to the twenty-odd slaves grouped in a circle outside the door."<sup>5</sup>

One may note the role of the lord as provider and distributor of food and the clearly-defined status levels among the subordinates, the slave functionaries who helped him govern his fief. This nobleman, unlike some of his more conservative colleagues, sat down to dine with foreigners; none, however, was so lowly or so liberal as to eat in the company of subjects.<sup>6</sup> Among ordinary folk "it was the custom for relatives who lived

near each other to take their meals in the house of the head of the family,"<sup>7</sup> and here as elsewhere dining customs reconfirmed the prevailing structure of authority. Within such a family gathering men separated themselves from women, and their superiority was confirmed by the fact that they ate first. As the men ate, the head of the gathering might demonstrate his rank by apportioning out foods of particular value to those whom he wished to favor:

"When supper was put on the table, he (the dominant man) took the plate of meat and put it on his lap, leaving the other food on the tray: and when we had eaten that, he took up the meat plate and handed with his fingers a portion to each of us, giving me the largest."<sup>8</sup>

When the men had satisfied themselves the residue was returned to the women's quarters so that they could eat.

The ceremonial or political dimension to dining might, under some circumstances, interfere with the essence of the activity itself, and patterns of avoidance evolved to forestall certain potentially stressful situations; for example, the same social logic which held that a man could not sit down in the presence of his father-in-law also maintained that the two could not eat together.<sup>9</sup> The full extent and implications of these avoidance patterns will not be pursued here.

In summary, the consumption of food in the early Sudan was fraught with social and political implications. Proper dining demanded a legitimizing social context, in which the position of each participant within the hierarchy was acted out and reconfirmed. Other, and as it were "promiscuous" eating — in public places, for example — was rather strictly prohibited through universal repugnance.<sup>10</sup>

On certain special occasions northern Sudanese communities gathered together for a meal on terms which violated virtually every restriction discussed above. Such a feast would be held in a public place; whoever was able to contribute food would do so, but all and sundry would be invited to partake. The feast would be attended by both men and women (sitting apart, but often within view of each other), by community members and strangers, and by high and low (though today, of course, no royalty is at hand). Since people would not necessarily sit together in household groups, individuals otherwise subject to commensal restrictions

2 Abd al Rashid b. Salih B. Nuri al Bakawi in Youssouf Kamal. *Monumenta Cartographica Africae et Aegypti* (Cairo and Leiden: 1928-51) Fascicle I.

3. Al Shahr Busayli Abd al-Jalil. *makhtutat Katib al-shuna fi ta'rikh al-sultana al-sinnariya wa'l-idara al-misriya* (Cairo, 1961) pp. 6-7. for a discussion of the source in which this story appears, and the translation employed here, see P.M. Holt. *Funi Origins: A Critique and New Evidence*. *Journal of African History*, IV, 1(1963), 39-56.

4. Jay, Spaulding. "Farmers, Herdsmen and the State in Rainland Sinnar." *Journal of African History*, XX, 3(1979): 329-347.

5. Ed. Cadalvene and J. de Breuvers. *L'Egypte et la Turquie de 1828 a 1836* (Paris, 1836) II, 334.

6. For an example from 1699 see the account of Charles-Jacques Poncet in William Foster (ed.), *The Red Sea at the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, vol. c (London, 1949), p. 100, and from the early nineteenth century, George Alexander Hoskins. *Travels in Ethiopia* (London, 1835), p. 211. In late 1969 the author personally observed similar conduct at mealtime by the senior member of the same noble family previously visited by Poncet and Hoskins.

7. Yousef Bedri and George Scott (trans.). *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri* (London, 1969) p. 141.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

9. R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding. *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), pp. 48-9.

10. John Lewis Burckhardt. *Travels in Nubia*, 2nd ed. (London, 1822) p. 259.

might mutually participate. An open communal meal of this type is said to be *kora*; in contrast to the ordinary customs governing commensality.<sup>11</sup>

The major festivals of the Islamic calendar are often celebrated on a *kora* basis, and the European compilers of Nubian dictionaries have been wont to translate the term as "Bairam" (The feast of fast-breaking).<sup>12</sup> This definition is too narrow in several senses. Firstly, as indicated by the foregoing discussion, it does not do justice to the full cultural implications of *kora* dining within northern Sudanese society. Secondly, the identification of the term as a lexical item in modern Nubian tends to obscure the fact that *kora* is also practiced by such diverse Arabic-speaking folk as the Shaiqiya, Arakiyin and Halawiyin; *kora* would seem to be a part of the cultural heritage of the whole northern riverain Sudan. Thirdly, the definition of *kora* as "Bairam" restricts its application to an Islamic context and therefore to a relatively recent historical period; this is improper because *kora* appears rather frequently in Old Nubian documents in reference to Christianity's special meal, the Eucharist.<sup>13</sup> Of course, one should not assume that *kora* was an innovation of the medieval period either, or that its meaning at that time was identical to the concept of the Eucharist as understood in any foreign country. Finally, *kora* has at least one other set of meanings which do not relate to the consumption of food, and which therefore demand further consideration.

A second set of usages described by the term *kora* concern a particular form of marriage.<sup>14</sup> *Kora* marriage resembles *kora* feasting in that it conveys the implication of a deliberate communal violation of otherwise-accepted norms for the purpose of social leveling and the fostering of community solidarity. An appreciation of the exceptional qualities of *kora* marriage therefore requires some comment upon these "otherwise-accepted norms."

11 Thus one of the definitions of *kora* (coreghi) given in the 1630s was "to arrange a meal" (accionciar cibi). See Jay Spaulding, *Arcangelo Carradori's Dictionary of Seventeenth-Century Kenzi Nubian* (Bergen: 1975). A 71 I am grateful to Mr. Hasan al Kabbashi for a description of *kora* feasts among the Arakiyin. My impressions rest largely upon a *kora* meal held at a certain Shaiqi village in February, 1970, a community member — a female and a minor — had been accused of a rather serious crime — and the very extended discussion of this case by the whole village and visiting dignitaries provided the occasion for the communal dining.

12 For example, see Spaulding, *Carradori's Dictionary*, F 136 and 137, S 570 and 571, and V 147. Further, Charles Hubert Armbruster, *Dongolese Nubian: A Lexicon* (Cambridge 1965) p. 128, Gertrude von Massenbach, "Wörterbuch des nubischen Kulluz Dialektes" *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalischen Sprachen zu Berlin*, Jahrgang XXXVI, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, SVIII, 1 (1928), p. 178 (modern Nubian definition). Muhammad Duli Badr, *iqra bi'l-lughah al-nubiya* (Khartoum, n.d.), p. 134.

13 For an introduction to this topic, see Zyhlarz, "Grundzüge," p. 178 and the texts cited therein.

14 Awn al-Shanf Qasim, *Qamus al-lahja al-amiya fi'l-Sudan* (Khartoum, 1972), p. 695. A contemporary account of *kora* marriage among the people of Tut Island and other Mahas communities of the Nile confluence region is given by Richard A. Lobban, Jr., "Class, Endogamy, and Urbanization in the Three Towns of the Sudan," *African Studies Review*, XXII, 3 (1979), 105-6. Useful comments on *kora* marriage among the Halawiyin of the upper Blue Nile (1929-30) may be found in G. B. Tame, "Legends of the Halawin of Blue Nile Province," *Sudan Notes and Records*, XVII, 2 (1934), 210 and footnote.

Any society creates rules which govern the transfer of wealth and status from one generation to the next. One common pattern decrees that wealth and status transfer at the death of a member of the senior generation to his heirs; from the perspective of an historian's preoccupation with sources, these social arrangements are apt to generate large numbers of wills or their analogues. In recent centuries, however, the northern Sudan exemplifies an alternative system in which wealth and status pass at the maturity of the junior generation, and very frequently at marriage; certificate recording the payment of bridewealth or outright gifts from living seniors to juniors are common, while wills are very rare. Since marriage was often the point at which the wealth and status of the succeeding generation was determined, it is not surprising that northern Sudanese parents devoted their best bargaining skills and diplomatic finesse to the advantageous matching of their children; the intensity and pervasiveness of this preoccupation are abundantly manifest in the oral literature of folktales through which (among other things) the norms of acceptable and preferable marriage choices were inculcated.<sup>15</sup> The variety of forms and range of magnitudes of bridewealth payments thus constitute important indices to the general economic conditions within a northern Sudanese community. Bridewealth rates fluctuated in response to natural conditions and market forces.

Of particular importance was the peculiar kind of prosperity which attended the periodic opening of the country to foreign trade. Commerce differed from traditional productive activities in that it brought wealth to some but not to others and introduced new, desirable and otherwise-inaccessible forms of bridewealth payment.<sup>16</sup> But while the periodic inflation of bridewealth rates and exotification of forms of payment might have diverse causes, the consequences were in all cases perceived as socially disruptive; it was felt that the birth rate declined,<sup>17</sup> that women<sup>18</sup> (or their fathers)<sup>19</sup> became too avaricious to marry, or that upstart outsiders were using mere wealth to unfairly buy their way into the community.<sup>20</sup>

15 F. C. Moore, "An Approach to the Analysis of Folk Stories from Central and Northern Sudan," in Sayyid H. Hurreiz and Herman Bell (eds.), *Directions in Sudanese Linguistics and Folklore* (Khartoum, 1975). Sayyid Hurreiz builds upon Moore's synchronic and ahistorical interpretation in the introduction to his *Ja'alayin Folktales* (Bloomington, 1977) and grapples with the question of continuity between the medieval and modern periods.

16 For example, a concise and forceful analysis of current conditions is given by Nadia Gfoun in "Migration: Passport to Marriage," *Sudanow* (February, 1979), pp. 53-4.

17 H. A. MacMichael, *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan* (Cambridge 1922), II, 376. Tame, "Legends," p. 210.

18 Richard Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam* (Oxford, 1970), p. 187.

19 Alfred Edmund Brehm, *Reiseskizzen aus Nord-Ost-Afrika*, 2nd ed. (Jena 1862), I, 172.

20 Lobban, "Class, Endogamy," p. 105.

*Kora* marriage was a response to these stresses. It may be distinguished from the standard matrimonial practices — which it otherwise resembled — through at least two important features. Firstly, *kora* placed strict limits upon the amount and forms of wealth allowed to change hands at marriage. Secondly, the decision to practice *kora* applied uniformly to a whole community; public group weddings of the obedient were common, while deviants were punished.<sup>21</sup>

The historical implications of *kora* marriage require consideration of a further question: at whose initiative did a community abandon standard marriage practices in favor of *kora*? In the community observed by Richard Lobban during the past decade, it was said that the decision had been taken through discussions on the part of "interested villagers" and popularized via a dramatic presentation at the Tuti Island Workers' Club, resulting in enough "popular enthusiasm" to effect the transition.<sup>22</sup> While this scenario may accord well enough with the ethos of the May Revolution, its utility as a model for the behavior of earlier days would seem to be somewhat circumscribed, for in at least some instances communities needed considerable prodding. For example, the mass *kora* marriages of 1929-30 among the Halawiyn recorded by G.B. Tame were performed at the instigation of a civic-minded merchant; in this instance the parental generation who held the matrimonial fate of their offspring in their hands were anything but eager to sacrifice their opportunity to win a profitable match, but were nevertheless coerced into adopting *kora* when the merchant — to whom all or most owed money — threatened to call in his debts and relocate his business elsewhere unless they complied.<sup>23</sup> In short, it would seem judicious to include some element of external initiative or even compulsion, as well as popular enthusiasm, in considering *kora* marriage as it may have been practiced in earlier times. The source of that initiative or compulsion was the precolonial government.

Sources from the period c. 1775-1900 document the role of successive governments in regulating bridewealth payments. While the term *kora* itself does not appear in them, it is reasonable clear that *kora* marriage was in fact the consequence of the acts described. For example, a late eighteenth-century nobleman was praised in these terms:

"Now Shaykh Abd Allah was a just ruler, an ardent follower of the faith and an observer of the Qur'an. During his rule he ordered that when women were married smaller dowries should be paid, and the result was an increase in the number of marriages and consequently of births."<sup>24</sup>

21 See the sources cited above in note 14

22 Lobban, "Class Endogamy," p. 105

23 Tame, "Legends," p. 210

24 MacMichael, *History*, II, 376 (spelling standardized by the present author)

An early nineteenth-century visitor to the province of Shaykh Abd Allah verified the fact that the province of Shaykh Abd Allah "conformed to that which was set by the local government."<sup>25</sup> An indication of how the precolonial government went about enforcing its bridewealth policies may perhaps be found in the allusion of the office of "Supervisor of Bridewealth" (*muqaddam al-mahr*) at the court of the sultan.<sup>26</sup> The functions of this *muqaddam al-mahr* probably resembled those of the itinerant marriage officer of the next generation, described with romantic flourishes in 1848:

"He is a man of religion and travels around the whole Sudan from village to village and from town to town. He finds out whether there are girls who are willing and able to get married and asks them whether or not they already have someone in mind. If the answer is YES, then the young man designated is fetched willy-nilly and married to her. He sets the bridewealth himself according to his own good judgment. So that he will not be disturbed in the discharge of his office, the government has given him a *khawas* or servant, who brings contrary-minded fathers back to reason, collects the appropriate marriage-fees for the *nazir* (official) and serves as his general assistant for worldly affairs."<sup>27</sup>

Thus the Turkish colonial authorities inherited from the kings of old the responsibility of the government — any government — to regulate bridewealth. Sometimes people appealed to them, as did the Halawi shaykh Muhammad Imam:

"Another tale told about Mohamed Imam is that he objected to the high price of wives, and that as the birth-rate was declining, he went to Khartoum and got permission to hold the *kora* among the Halawin. On his way back he brought with him Wad Eisa, the Aalim (holy man) of Masid to help make things legal. He then told each youth to take the damsel he fancied and merely to pay twelve piastres and a half and to provide a robe and a pair of slippers for the girl. He is said to have wed thus one hundred and ten couples in Sharafat village alone in one day and their offspring is believed to have totaled a hundred boys."<sup>28</sup>

On other occasions the Turkish authorities themselves took the initiative; a European traveller of the early 1830s described one colonial governor's moment of enlightenment:

"As the Pasha was passing through a village he was surprised that no children came out to see him and he asked the shaykh of that place why. The shaykh

25 G.B. Brocchi, *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne' viaggi in Egitto, nella Siria e nella Nubia* (Bassano, 1843), V, 183

26 Fadl walad Qasim, *muqaddam al-mahr* appears in a confirming charter of the *wazir* Husayn b. Muhammad Abu Likaylik dated perhaps incorrectly, 12 Muharram 1228: 15 January 1813, P.M. Holt, "Four Funj Land Charters," *Sudan Notes and Records*, I (1969), Plate IV

27 Brehm, *Reiseskizzen*, I, 172

28 Tame, "Legends," p. 210

said that the womenfolk of the village were extremely greedy and refused to marry unless they were paid much money, so much that few of them ever found husbands. The Pasha intends to issue an order under which any man will be able to marry a woman merely by paying a dowry of one roll of cloth, a blue shawl and 20 piasters in cash."<sup>29</sup>

Upon further consideration, however, the Turks did not pass any such ordinance, but rather reinstated the office of itinerant marriage-officer as described above. It is well-known that when the Mahdi came to power he proclaimed and enforced a radical reduction in bridewealth rates.<sup>30</sup> In the community of Tuti, the result is explicitly remembered today as having been the practice of *kora* marriage in the time of the Mahdi — though the element of state compulsion has been forgotten, along with the pre-Mahdist origins of the practice.<sup>31</sup> In summary, on the basis of data derived from the period c. 1775-1900 it would seem that among the traditional duties of rulers in the northern Sudan was the regulation of the payment of bridewealth; they did so by imposing *kora* marriage on those occasions when economic self-aggrandizement seemed to threaten the social well-being of a community.

Is it a tenable hypothesis that the concept of *kora* marriage, like that of *kora* feasting, may legitimately be projected backwards in time beyond the eighteenth century into the medieval period? Certainly the regulation of so vital a social institution as bridewealth would be consistent with what is otherwise known of the powers exercised by the medieval kings over institutions of comparable economic significance such as land tenure and foreign trade.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps it may be significant that while the term *kora* appears most frequently in Old Nubian documents in reference to the Eucharist, it is also employed to mean Confession;<sup>33</sup> therefore the broader definition "sacrament" — thus including Marriage — might be more accurate. The apparent association of the Nubian concept of *kora* with the Christian sacraments in turn invites constructive speculation upon the culture of the medieval period.

<sup>29</sup> Hill, *Frontiers*, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), p. 131.

<sup>31</sup> Lobban, *Class Endogamy*, p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> Adams, *Nubia*, Chapter 15. A more sophisticated analysis is offered by Ali Osman Muhammad Salih in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Economy and Trade of Medieval Nubia," Christ's College, Cambridge, 1978.

<sup>33</sup> This distinction is perhaps clearest in the portion of British Museum Oriental Manuscript 6805 commonly called the *Scene Canons*; see Zuhair, *Grundzüge*, pp. 144-54 (contrast paragraphs 19 and 20).

## **Shari'a Law in the Sudan:**

### **History and Trends Since Independence**

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

*Shari'a Islamiya* — Islamic law — in the Sudan constitutes a separate sub-division in the national judicial apparatus which administers Sudanese law within Civil and *Shari'a* sections. Popularly referred to as *el Ahwal Shaksia* (personal matters or relations), the *Shari'a* during colonial and post-colonial times has been relegated to the personal and family law of Sudanese Muslims, while the British colonial administration imposed a variant of the Indian Penal Code and a western-based civil law. The *Shari'a* law is based on the Koran and *hadith* and has been interpreted through a great literary and scholastic tradition dating back to the 7th century A.D. Although the *Shari'a* was given relative autonomy during the 56 years of British rule, it was only tolerated and was subjected to criticism, being viewed merely as a variety of "native" or customary law.

### **The Funj Kingdom**

Prior to its subjugation under colonial rule, the *Shari'a* had a very different status. Islam penetrated the Sudan through the Nile Valley, across the Red Sea, from the Maghrib, West Africa and the western Sudan through pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Although numerous scholars and missionaries made successful conversions in the Sudan prior to the 16th century, it was with the rise of the Funj Kingdom that real Islamization of the Sudan began. The Funj Kingdom attracted a number of Egyptian

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jurists and missionaries and, according to Dr. Yusef Fadl Hassan, it was these scholars who introduced the Maliki interpretation of the Shari'a into the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> Maliki traditions, once introduced, were reinforced by Sudanese pilgrims travelling to the Hejaz (where the school originated) and by the flow of migrants and pilgrims from the west, from Bilad al-Sudan, where Maliki law and custom had been established since the end of the 8th century. Prior to the introduction of formal instruction in Islam, "... there flourished neither schools of learning nor reading of the Koran; it is said that a man might divorce his wife and she be married the selfsame day without any period of probation (*'idda*)," as reported in the *Tabaqat*.<sup>2</sup>

In the early period of Islamic rule apparently justice was administered through the sultanate hierarchy, but a system of Islamic judges and courts evolved later through the development of the office of *qadi*.<sup>3</sup> During the reign of Sultan Rubat (1614-43 A.D.: 1023-52 A.H.) the first *qadi* (judge) of Sinnar, the capital of the Funj, appeared, however throughout the 16th century customary law, under royal administration, continued to be strong. The legal texts and commentaries in the best chronicle of the Funj, the *Tabaqat* (as studied by Spaulding and O'Fahey) indicate that the majority of Muslims in Sinnar followed the Maliki school and a small minority were *Shafi'i*. However, institutionalized Islam, including Islamic justice, catered to the needs of the merchant class who were, for the most part, expatriates. Spaulding indicates that these first Islamic justices contributed to the debate at the time over the use of tobacco and the continuation of certain marriage practices.<sup>4</sup> By the 18th century a Qadirate or judicial system existed with jurisdiction in all civil and many criminal matters. The *qadis* in Sinnar were responsible to the Great Qadi who was under the authority of the Sultan. Only capital offenses and disruption of the public order were the exclusive domain of the sovereign. There were annual gatherings of the *qadis* at which time the Great Qadi would receive gifts, perhaps as an adjunct to the appeal process as the Great Qadi could annul or sustain the decisions of the lesser *qadis*. Throughout the 18th century the national Qadirate remained an elite institution serving primarily the interests of the urban literati and the merchant class, but not the vast majority who were peasants. "It was very difficult for an unschooled farmer

without money to obtain justice from a court which presupposed literacy in Arabic and imposed cash fines and fees."<sup>5</sup>

### Turkiya and Mahdiya

In 1820 the Ottoman Turks occupied the Sudan, ushering in the modern historical period and imposing a single political and legal administration in the Sudan for the first time. The *Tanzimat* reform of 1850 in the Ottoman empire organized the administration of the law thusly: a commercial code largely of European origin and a criminal code were administered through a system of secular courts (*nizamiya*), while the Shari'a courts applying Hanafi law were confined to the law of personal status and family relations.<sup>6</sup>

The oppressive rule of the Turks coupled with a growing nationalist sentiment crystallized in the Islamic fundamentalist movement led by Mohammed Ahmed, the Sudanese Mahdi. Mahdist forces successfully repulsed British imperialist drives into the Sudan and established the first Sudanese government in 1884 under strict Islamic political and legal principles.

During the Mahdiya (1885-98) the only law in force was the Shari'a with a functioning Judiciary, Chief Justice and judges appointed to courts in Omdurman, Kassala, Northern Province, Kordofan and Sinnar.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the reign of the Khalifa Abdallahi, while the Judiciary functioned, albeit in a politicized context, decisions and decisions on appeal regarding civil and criminal matters were decided according to the Koran and Sunna. A major transformation in the class character of the legal administration occurred. The monopoly of the law by the trading class and the elites was overturned so that the simplest man could have his complaint adjudicated. In 1898 the British reconquest of the Sudan ushered in colonial rule, but the legal administration retained the model established in the Turkish occupation.

### The Colonial Era

After the reconquest and pacification of the Sudan, the British

1. Yusef Fadl Hassan, "Sudan between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries," in *Sudan in Africa*, Yusef Fadl Hassan, ed. (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1971), pg. 76. The Maliki interpretation is one of four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, including also the Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafi'i schools.

2. *ibid*

3. Spaulding, J.I., "The Evolution of the Islamic Judiciary in Sinnar," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1977, p. 413.

4. *ibid*, p. 413 fn. 19.

5. *ibid*, p. 426.

6. Anderson, J.N.D., "The Modernization of Islamic Law in the Sudan," *Sudan Law Journal and Reports*, 1960, p. 293.

7. El Fahal el Tahr Omer, "The Administration of Justice during the Mahdiya," *Sudan Law Journal and Reports*, 1964, p. 168.



promulgated the modern state of Sudan's first Code of Civil Procedure. In 1902, the colonial entity, the Sudan Government, issued the Mohammedan Law Courts Ordinance and in 1916 it issued the Mohammedan Law Courts Procedures which established the parameters and rules of practice under which the Shari'a judicial system was to operate under Anglo-Egyptian rule.

Original jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts included:

a) any question regarding marriage, divorce, guardianship of minors or family relationships, provided that the marriage was concluded in accordance with Mohammedan law or the parties are Mohammedans.

b) any question regarding *waqf*, gift, succession, wills, interdiction or guardianship of an interdicted or lost person provided that the . . . person is a Mohammedan.

c) any question other than those in (a) and (b) provided that all parties, whether Mohammedans or not, make a formal demand signed by them asking the court to entertain the question and stating that they agree to be bound by the ruling of Mohammedan law.<sup>8</sup>

The 1916 Mohammedan Law Courts Procedures mandates the Shari'a courts to apply "the authoritative doctrines of the Hanafia jurists except in matters in which the Grand Qadi otherwise directs in a judicial circular or memorandum, in which case the decision shall be in accordance with such other doctrines of the Hanafia or other Mohammedan jurists as set forth in such circulars or memoranda."<sup>9</sup> Here the British have followed the rule of law during the Turkiya in mandating the application of Hanafi law. Whether by ignorance or design, they did not recognize the Maliki traditions of most Sudanese.

British rule continued the Ottoman separation of the Civil law and the Shari'a with the latter being confined to personal and family matters only. Apart from overlapping or conflicting jurisdictions, the western-based Civil Division and the Shari'a Division had little interaction with one another. Customary courts, established by the Chief's Courts Ordinance of 1931 and the Native Courts Ordinance of 1932, operated in remote areas where the long arm of Anglo-Egyptian administration could not easily reach and these courts had autonomy in local affairs excluding major offenses and large land questions. Otherwise, any custom not contrary to "justice, equity and good conscience" nor altered or abolished by law or a competent court, was lawful.

The Shari'a Division of the national Judiciary, although autonomous in legal structure, nevertheless had its Grand Qadis appointed by the colonial government. During the 56 years of British rule, every Grand Qadi of the Sudan was an Egyptian national. Numerous other court officials were also Egyptian.

<sup>8</sup> Section 2, Mohammedan Law Courts Ordinance, 1902, Vol. 11, Title XXVII, *Laws of The Sudan*.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson *op. cit.*, p. 294

The courts were directed to apply the Hanafi Code of Islamic legal interpretation; here the British followed the base laid by the Ottoman Turks. Hanafi law has remained in effect from colonial times to the present and potential conflicts with Sudanese Maliki traditions have been avoided through the process of the issuance of Judicial Circulars from the office of the Grand Qadi.<sup>10</sup> The Hanafi Code has been adapted to conditions of life in the Sudan by stating, in the Judicial Circular, a preference for Maliki provisions over Hanafi law on particular questions. For example, Judicial Circular No. 34 (1932) adopts the Maliki provision in matters of child custody or *al hadana* permitting the extension of the period of custody for the mother from 7 years to puberty for a boy and from 9 years to the consummation of marriage for a girl. The change from Hanafi to Maliki law on this subject was felt to be more in conformity with Sudanese life and customs. Circular No. 35 (1933) preferred the more conservative Maliki principle that consent in marriage for a woman be exclusively the prerogative of the father or legal guardian. Numerous complaints of forced marriages led to the issuing of Judicial Circular No. 54 (1960) which rectified the harshness of Circular No. 35 by reasserting the Hanafi principle that the consent of the woman is sufficient and that consent must be expressly stated. Legislation in 1972 explained that consent may be either express or implied; taking up residence with a man without the woman having given express consent to the marriage is nevertheless viewed as implied consent. In the case of Circular No. 54, the Grand Qadi was reacting to growing public sentiment generated by groups of educated women and men and by the organized women's movement to reappraise the law regarding consent in marriage.

### The Shari'a Since Independence

After independence in 1956 the Sudanization of the Shari'a judicial system took place. The first Sudanese Grand Qadi, Sheikh Mohammed Abul Gassim, was appointed by the independent government. Sudanese nationals replaced Egyptians and other expatriates in the ranks of the High Court, the Province courts and the First and Second Class courts.

While the Shari'a had operated in relative juristic autonomy during colonialism, independence freed voices in the political spectrum which were previously unheard. Conservative, liberal and left-wing opinion was voiced on a variety of topics, including the laws regulating personal relations. Women, who had become politically active and aware around the nationalist question, turned their attention to matters related to the

<sup>10</sup> The Sudan Shari'a Courts Judicial Circulars and Memoranda from 1902 until 1979. *El Manshurat wa Muzakarati al Mahakim el Shari'a Sudan*, has been translated by Hatim Babiker and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, 1980 2nd Quarter, 1981

status of women in the newly independent society. The Sudanese Women's Union and its publication **El Sot el Mara** (The Voice of Women) began to campaign for the civil rights of women as well as rights in domestic affairs.<sup>11</sup>

### Change in the Applied Law

The question of guardianship in marriage became a controversial one. Prior to 1933 the Hanafi principle that the consent of the betrothed woman is sufficient to the validity of a marriage contract was in effect. In 1933 Judicial Circular Number 35 was promulgated which introduced the Maliki rule that the marriage guardian (*el-wali*), usually the bride's father, was the final authority in negotiating the marriage contract. The Maliki law on this point was cited in preference to the Hanafi code because it was said to conform more to Sudanese customs and traditions.

Under pressure from the Women's Union and growing public sentiment, the Grand Qadi in 1960, Sheikh Mahjoub Osman, reinstated the Hanafi legal principle that the consent of the bride-to-be is at all times an essential feature of the marriage contract; moreover the consent must be expressly stated. The role of the marriage guardian is still kept in place, and the apparent intent of this Circular was to give the right to refuse a marriage but not the right of full, free choice.<sup>12</sup> Still in Sudan today most Muslim marriages are conducted with the cooperation and consent of the marriage guardian as is customary. But increasingly the courts are witnessing the phenomenon of young women rejecting the will of their father or marriage guardian and seeking a judicial marriage with the Shari'a judge acting as the marriage guardian.

Discussion of this question has continued into the recent period with legislation passed in 1972 further clarifying the consent question. That legislation explained that consent may be either express or implied, for example the fact of cohabitation or the birth of a child imply consent to the union.

A further progressive step has been taken in the full recognition in Judicial Circular Number 59 (1973) of the Maliki ground for divorce because of cruelty (*talag el darar*). That cruelty is acknowledged to be both physical and mental and may be established in court with the testimony of witnesses, a confession, or official papers from the criminal courts indicating that the husband has been prosecuted for assault.

Change in the applied law regarding *waqf* (religious endowment) has been notable in the years since independence, reflecting a wider view in

the international Islamic community that such endowments must come under closer legal scrutiny. With increasing wealth and the growing concentration of that wealth in individual hands has emerged the potential for misuse of the *waqf* which stands outside the prescribed Islamic laws of inheritance.

Circular Number 57, issued in 1970, allows the revocation of a personal *waqf* while Circular Number 58 (also issued in 1970) addresses the question of the "Native" *waqf* which is a charitable gift made to certain designated heirs. Such *waqfs* need to be examined to ensure that they do not violate the Koranic laws of inheritance by exceeding the one-third allowable bequest or by attempting to disinherit any Koranic heirs. The courts are thus directed in this latter Circular to hear claims from heirs who allege that they were denied their just share of an estate through the illegitimate use of the *waqf*.

The period from 1973-1979, under the guidance of the Grand Qadi, Sheikh Mohammed el Gizouli, is an enlightened one from a social point of view. The clarification of *talag el darar* occurs at this time (Circular Number 59) and some of the complexities of this type of divorce are explored in Circular Number 61, issued in 1975. This latter Circular is a remarkable blending of legal theory and social reality as it sorts out the difficult issues involved with the woman who is seeking a judicial divorce because of cruelty and who is at the same time legally disobedient because she has fled the house of an abusing husband. Likewise Circular Number 62 (issued in 1979) speaks to the real problem of the maintenance of minor children who are the subjects of a child custody case, such cases often lasting a year or more. The Circular orders judges in these cases to issue a maintenance order at the outset of these long and sensitive cases.

### The Call for an Islamic Constitution

The termination of the colonial entity opened the way for the discussion of alternative forms of government that might rule in the independent Sudan. The call for a Sudanese constitution based on Islamic principles and the Shari'a was raised as a political issue tied to a segment of the nationalist movement. Indeed the issue of the Sudan as a predominantly Muslim country to be governed by Islamic legal and political principles has been a central and controversial theme in post-independence politics.

Seventy percent of the Sudanese population is Muslim; 25% practice indigenous religions and 5% are Christian. While the majority is Muslim, cultural homogeneity cannot be assumed. The Islamic regions cover a vast territory and a myriad of different cultural groups from the northern

11 For a fuller discussion see C. Fluehr-Lobban, "Agitation for Change in the Sudan," in *Sexual Stratification*, A. Schlegel, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

12 C. D'Olivier Farran, *Matrimonial Laws of the Sudan* (London: Butterworth, 1963) p. 39.

riverain cultivators, including Nubia, to the savanna midlands, to the western provinces with their nomadic and semi-nomadic populations and the eastern Beja groups which border Ethiopia. A substantial immigrant labor population from the western Sahara, especially Nigerian Muslims, is resident in the Sudan, particularly in the Gezira cotton growing scheme in the Blue Nile Province. These groups represent dozens of distinct languages and the historical paths which led them to adopt Islam are also quite different.

As early as 1956, the last Egyptian Grand Qadi, Sheikh Hassan Muddathir, proposed that the Sudan be governed by an Islamic constitution because "the Sudan is an Islamic country; its social organization is built on Arab customs and Islamic ways."<sup>13</sup> In 1957 a joint statement by leaders of the Umma and Khatmiyya political sects was issued which called for the Sudan to be an Islamic Parliamentary Republic with the Shari'a as the source of legislation. The military takeover by General Ibrahim Abboud in 1958 brought this process to a halt, however Abboud's policy to "unify" the country was to make official policy the spread of the Arabic language and Islam in the south.

Following the October Revolution which overthrew Abboud in 1964, the movement for an Islamic constitution continued with the National Committee to Establish a Constitution recommending that the constitution of Sudan should be derived from the principles and spirit of Islam and that the Shari'a should be the basis of all legislation.<sup>14</sup> Again political events halted the process with the coming to power of Mohammed Ahmed Mahjoub, who in 1968 dissolved the Constituent Assembly which had made the recommendation.

Jaafar Mohammed Numieri, who seized power in 1969, put into effect the longstanding position of the Sudanese Communist Party that the south should be an autonomous region with local self-rule. The 9th of June Declaration putting regional autonomy into effect was one of the first acts of the new regime. Nevertheless the May revolution supported a quasi-Islamic constitution with the Shari'a as the main source of legislation. The first gatherings of Numieri's single party Sudan Socialist Union's People's Assembly were marked by controversy over the preeminent legal position of Shari'a particularly critical were the southern Members of Parliament. The constitution which was adopted in 1973 reads: "Islamic law and custom shall be the main sources of legislation. Personal matters of non-Muslims shall be governed by their personal laws." Under Article 16 of the constitution, Islam, Christianity and "heavenly religions" are equally protected.

<sup>13</sup> Hassan Muddathir, "A Memorandum for the Enactment of a Sudan Constitution Devised from the Principles of Islam," Sudan Pamphlets 115, 1956, p. 1

<sup>14</sup> Sudanow, Nov. 1979, p. 12

Despite the official ceasefire and the end to the civil war which was negotiated in the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972, the sentiment for the Islamic constitution has remained strong and has advanced farther than at any time in the past in the years since the accords were signed. Recently, a number of highly specific bills introducing Islamic principles into aspects of Sudanese national law have been put before the People's Assembly. These bills are the work of a committee which was formed in 1977 by Presidential appointment to revise Sudanese laws to bring them into conformity with Islamic teaching. The first bills introduced dealt with the prohibition of the sale and use of alcohol and the making of *zakat* (originally alms, but broadly interpreted as tax money for social welfare) mandatory. Significantly, another bill sought to repeal Section 6 of the Code of Civil Procedure (1974) which allows a judge to apply "equity and good conscience" where there is no legal provision, and instead to base legal judgment on the Koran and Sunna. The "equity and good conscience" phrasing was introduced by the British, so the change to an Islamic interpretation would mean a fundamental break with the western-based law. Other legislation which is to be introduced includes the institution of the *hadd*, or the required Koranic punishment for theft including the cutting of hands, and the prohibition of usury, or the accumulation of interest on money loaned. With this type of specific legislation, based on Islamic principles, the process of moving toward an Islamic Republic has never been more advanced in this century.

Not surprisingly, criticism of the proposed Islamic constitution has come from segments of the non-Muslim Sudanese community, especially southern Sudanese. Historically the southern Sudan has not witnessed widespread conversion to or adoption of Islam, despite the efforts of some political leaders who have made it policy to do so.

The Shari'a remains a pivotal feature of Sudanese society taking on the added character of controversy in the modern nation-state of the Sudan. Its history through the various occupations of the Sudan is one where legal policy was determined for the purpose of colonial rule. With independence an indigenous course has been charted, one which has steadily moved toward the definition of the Sudan as an Islamic Republic to be governed by the principles of the Shari'a. The pursuit of this course has not been without its political risks and the future of the Shari'a in the Sudan will depend on the balance of forces yet to be played out between the secularists and religious leaders and regional forces, particularly in the dominant Muslim and minority non-Muslim areas of the Sudan.

# The Mahdist Correctional System

## in the Sudan:

### Aspects of Ideology and Politics

Mahgoub El-Tigani Mahmoud

The Mahdist State (1885-1898) still constitutes a living memory in the lives of many of the Sudanese people. The state's ideology, its bureaucratic structure, economic and political policies, military campaigns, and the attitudes and policies of its leadership comprise a significant part of Sudanese modern history and political sociology. This article focuses on how the following assumptions relate to the correctional treatment and penal institutions of the Mahdist state.

First, the Mahdist state was not in anarchy, as is often projected in colonial writing. Following the triumph of Mahdist revolutionaries over the foreign rule of the Turko-Egyptian administration, the state was built on the image of Islamic teachings and experiences together with administrative and social structures already established in Sudanese culture.

Secondly, the Mahdist correctional system was administered according to a traditional penal philosophy which emphasized deterrence more than correction. Yet Sudanese values played an intervening role which frequently allowed for a humane and sympathetic treatment of inmates in the prison population.

Thirdly, the characteristics of the correctional system in the Mahdist state were in part different from those of the prior Turko-Egyptian administration (1821-1885). This is due to the fact that the Mahdist state was both an indigenous product of Sudanese mentality and social reality, and a product of the Turko-Egyptian administration — a foreign and colonial construct imposed upon the Sudan.

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## An Historiographic Note

The assumptions in question touch upon the political character and ideology of the state, and they correlate with the indigenous cultures and their interaction and impact on the policies and programs of the Mahdist state. In addition, these assumptions relate to some of the attitudinal aspects of the Mahdist leaders and to the people in the Mahdist epoch. Research on this subject requires an historical note. These sources were mainly written by colonial partisans or representatives.<sup>1</sup> Most of these writers were either colonial administrators or captives of the Mahdist state, and consequently held strong biases and prejudices against the Sudanese experience. Unfortunately there are no published Sudanese writings concerned with the topics under study at that time. Moreover, as Farwell put it, "no prisoner likes his jailer."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is particularly important to note that Ibrahim Fauzi offered a remarkably fair and accurate depiction of the Mahdist state,<sup>3</sup> even though he was a captive of the state for thirteen years like Neufeld. Fauzi, unlike his biased fellow prisoner, highlighted many just and creative features of the Mahdist leaders.

Neufeld mentioned, for example, that the Khalifa Abdoullah (the successor of the Grand Mahdi) sentenced the son of Ibrahim Fauzi and sent him to Omdurman prison.<sup>4</sup> Neufeld then published a photograph in his book showing young Fauzi with his father in the prison. The purpose was to show that the Mahdist state incarcerated young children with adults. Contrary to Neufeld, Fauzi mentioned in his own book that the Khalifa Abdoullah did not send his son to the prison at Omdurman, but had instead ordered that young Fauzi be kept in the house of Emir Yagoub Ban El-Nagga Mousa, his secretary. The Khalifa also promised the son that he would release the elder Fauzi; a promise left unfulfilled because Slatin escaped from the prison and another spy was also captured.

1 Principal among these are Joseph Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp (1882-1892)*, translated and compiled by Major General F.R. Wingate (London: S. Lowe, Marston & Company Ltd., 1892); Charles Neufeld, *A Prisoner of the Khaleefa* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1899); Ibrahim Pasha Fauzi, *El-Sudan baina Yadda Gordon wa Kitchener* (Two Parts, in Arabic, in Records Office, Ministry of the Interior, Khartoum, 1900); R. Slatin, *El-Saif wa El-Nar fi El-Sudan*, Wingate Translation, in Arabic (Omdurman, Maktabat El-Hureiah, 1935. Also available in English as *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Account of Fighting and Serving The Dervishes — 1879-1895*, translated by Major F.R. Wingate, (London: E. Arnold, 1897); Giuseppe Cuzzi, *Fifteen Years Prisoner of the False Prophet*, translated by H. Sharma, (Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press, 1968); Na'oum Shougar, *Gographia't wa Tarikh El-Sudan*, in Arabic (Beirut: Dar-El-thagaffa, 1972).

2 Byron Farwell, *Prisoners of the Mahdi: The Story of The Mahdist Revolt Which Frustrated Queen Victoria's Designs On The Sudan, Humbled Egypt, and Led To The Fall Of Khartoum, The Death Of Gordon, and Kitchener's Victory At Omdurman 14 Years Later*. (1st U.S. ed., New York: Harper, 1967), p. 103.

3 Fauzi, op. cit.

4 Neufeld, op. cit.

5 Fauzi, op. cit. p. 347.



## The Turko-Egyptian Correctional System

The characteristics of the Turko-Egyptian correctional system in the Sudan (before the advent of the Mahdist State) are not documented in widely circulated publications. There are only a few passing statements in this connection.<sup>6</sup> Although few in number they do demonstrate clearly that the main characteristics of the political and economic policies of the Turko-Egyptian rule in the Sudan were based on exploitation, repression, and intimidation. The main objectives were to recruit men as slaves and for military aggrandizement, and to collect taxes to finance the expansionist policies of Mohamed Ali Pasha and his successors in Egypt.

The Turko-Egyptian administration in the Sudan was a military government, ruling with military justice and authority. The governors in the provinces were all military officers, and, as such, Sudanese chiefs and indigenous leaders were deprived of their traditional power and authority. The people were humiliated. Tax collection was, in particular, an especially painful experience to the Sudanese peoples since it was executed through brutality, torture, and injustice. The slave-trade was widely practiced and encouraged through a stratum of slave-traders created by trade-licenses issued often by bribery. Corruption of the bureaucracy came, therefore, as a natural outcome of the preceding factors, which in turn built a correctional system based on perversion and dehumanization. Debtors' prisons were widely established to detain those unable to pay taxes. Execution by hanging and shooting was applied for the first time. Lashing and whipping were quite common. Confiscation of private property and exile to remote areas in the country were also implemented. The Turko-Egyptian rulers were afraid of, and hated, the Sudanese people, especially after the Ga'alyien's rebellion against Ismail Pasha (son of Mohamed Ali) whom they burnt alive with his soldiers in Shendi, their capital town.

Shougair noted that the *Jihaddia's* (i.e., Sudanese soldiers') rebellion in Kassala against their Turkish leaders was ruthlessly crushed. The rebels were classified into two groups. The members of the first group were bound, lined up next to a big hole, shot, and buried. A small hill was thus built over them. The other group was sentenced to hard labor for life, and used to rebuild the houses which they had destroyed in their rebellion.<sup>7</sup>

Another visible aspect of the penal treatment of the Turko-Egyptian administration was its utilization of heavy chains to shackle prisoners.

6 For example, Maki Shibaiko, *El-Sudan ibn El-Goroun* (Beirut: Dar El Thagaffa, 1964); Basheir Kouko Homaida, *Safhat min El-Turkiyah wa El-Mahadiya*, in Arabic, (Khartoum: Dar El-Ishad, 1969); Richard Lobban, "National Integration and Disintegration: The Southern Sudan," *Association of the Arab-American University Graduates, Publication No. 13*, 1974; Gabriel Warburg, *Islam, Nationalism, and Communism in a Traditional Society: The Case of the Sudan* (London: Frank Cass, 1978).

7 Shougair, op. cit., p. 553

Williams mentioned that he saw sixty heavily chained prisoners in the courtyard of the Governor's palace in Suakin. Their camels had been confiscated because they were not able to pay taxes. Williams did not recall their alleged crime, but he said that they would have been in prison for an indeterminate sentence had it not been for the intervention of a "kind" Governor who amended their penalty. Williams also reported that the prisoners were obliged to feed themselves at their own expense, and unbelievably were also required to pay for their jailers.<sup>8</sup>

## The Mahdist State

The Mahdist state was based on authoritarian rule by its very nature, as a *Jihad* (i.e., religious war) state. It was highly centralized. The Khalifa retained high political and executive powers in his hands. He was also the Imam (i.e., religious leader). Fauzi stated that the Sudan was divided into two parts with respect to taxation.<sup>9</sup> The first part included the Emirs (i.e., governors) who were quasi-autonomous in the administration of their regions.<sup>10</sup> These Emirs had great powers within their jurisdiction. They could issue sentences of death and exile in their capacities as military leaders, but they also had civil and religious authority over several provinces. Each had a special treasury, a prison and police for his region. However, Ohrwalder mentioned that the *Emir of the Beit El-Mal* (i.e., the Treasury) used to report daily to the Khalifa about the total revenue and expenditure. The *Sheikh* (i.e., chief) of the market prepared a daily report on the market for the Khalifa as well. Ohrwalder stated that the Khalifa was very concerned with, and conscious of, establishing the state on a strong basis of finance and administration.<sup>11</sup> This information indicates that the Khalifa and his aides were concentrating major powers in their own hands.

Concerning the judiciary, Shougair states that the Khalifa abolished the deputies whom the Grand Mahdi nominated before his death.<sup>12</sup>

8 Josiah Williams, *Life in the Sudan* (London: Remington & Co., 1883) - the records office - ministry of the Interior (Khartoum)

9 Fauzi, op. cit., p. 171

10 i.e. the Emirs of the Eastern Sudan (Osman Digna and his successor) of the El-Galabat Region (Hamdan Abu-Anga and

11 Ohrwalder, op. cit., p. 282

12 Shougair, op. cit., p. 1262



Instead, the Khalifa made one court under the supervision of the *Kadi El-Islam* (Islamic Chief Justice). The magistrates were ordered to follow the Qurannic commandments, the Mohammadan teachings, and the proclamations of the Grand Mahdi.<sup>13</sup> The Khalifa strictly implemented penalties for theft, adultery, and smoking tobacco.<sup>14</sup> The Kadi El-Islam was required to report fully to the Khalifa on the important cases which came before him. Once each month, the Kadi or his representative would visit the prison at Omdurman to view the prisoners and to convey recommendations for their release to the Khalifa, except for the political prisoners. Shogair noted, in particular, that the Khalifa instituted a tradition in the mosque for the people to air their complaints.<sup>15</sup> This was a direct way for the people to voice their opinions, in a tradition deeply rooted in the Islamic heritage.

The preceding commentary highlights a very significant fact about the Mahdist state, namely that the state was not in anarchy as was often projected by non-Sudanese observers. The Mahdist state was a systematic political organization with an objective material base and executive apparatus. The political leadership of the state realized the fundamental rules of separating the branches of the government. Thus, the judiciary, the regional executives, and the central political power were recognized and differentiated even though extreme diversity resulting from the administration's internal conflicts and the multi-ethnic composition of the population made it difficult for them to function as designed.

### The Mahdist Penal Philosophy and Correctional System

In contrast to the examples of the Turko-Egyptian correctional administration mentioned earlier, the Mahdist state had its own characteristic policies and practices. Basically, the prison was considered a correctional institution. As such, the prisoners were seen as deviant persons who were in need of correction to return as healthy persons to society. The right means to achieve that goal centered on Islamic teachings and Sudanese values. For example, convicted women were segregated from male prisoners in a special prison. They were also less chained than men were.<sup>16</sup> I have mentioned earlier that children were not kept in prisons

13 Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Saleem, *Manshourat El-Mahadiya*, In Arabic (Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press 1969)

14 Ohrwalder, op. cit.; Cuzi, op. cit.

15 Shogair, op. cit., p. 1262

16 Neufeld, op. cit., pp. 120-126; Ohrwalder, op. cit., p. 365

with adults, but they were treated according to the Islamic rule which attributes to the parents or guardians the responsibility of disciplining children.

An important aspect of the Mahdist correctional system pertains to the treatment of political prisoners and captives. Slatin wrote about the existence of informal relations within the bureaucratic system of the prison at Omdurman.<sup>17</sup> He mentioned that the leader of the prison guards, (Emir Wad El-Saier) allowed him to speak with prisoners and reduced his chains, even though Slatin was a political prisoner. Slatin also mentioned that Emir Abu Anga invited him for dinner when he was taken captive.<sup>18</sup> Neufeld tells that Emir Mohamed Hamza El-Ingiryabi (who had captured him) protected him from torture by one of the Emir's guards.<sup>19</sup> Slatin, moreover, was recognized as an Emir and he acquired a prestigious position as a pro-Mahdist person after his captivity.<sup>20</sup> Fauzzi described his meeting with the Grand Mahdi after the downfall of Khartoum. He said that the Grand Mahdi met him with a "smiling face," and saved his life despite his strenuous fighting as a top general in Gordon's army against the Mahdist forces, and treated him as a Mahdist member.<sup>21</sup>

The stories mentioned above provide some evidence regarding the maturity, responsibility, and values of the Mahdist leaders. Lord Kitchener, the commander of the British forces, for example, earned the contempt of the Mahdist leaders when he executed captured Sudanese soldiers on the Karari battlefield and left thousands wounded on the dusty plain.<sup>22</sup>

Contrasted with both the Turko-Egyptian and the British colonialists' treatment of political prisoners, the Mahdist leaders appear as tolerant figures, humane, confident, and consistent with their beliefs. As revolutionaries and believers in Mahdism, they endeavoured to assert "a new ethic for human relationships" as Hodgkin put it.<sup>23</sup>

The correctional system of the Mahdist State was different from that of the Turko-Egyptian administration. Ohrwalder mentioned that the

17 Slatin, op. cit., p. 149

18 *ibid.*, p. 149

19 Neufeld, op. cit., pp. 38-40

20 Neufeld, op. cit.

21 Fauzzi, op. cit., op. cit., pp. 11-12

22 Farwell, op. cit., pp. 305-314

23 Thomas Hodgkin, "Mahdism, Messianism, and Marxism in the African Setting," in Peter Gutkind and Peter Waterman (eds.) *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977)

Khalifa was most concerned with correcting prisoners and educating them the "right way."<sup>24</sup> It appears that the underlying objectives of the correctional treatment were mainly directed to change deviant into normative behavior by means of imprisonment. Religious programs were imposed for every prisoner. They were expected to conform with these regulations and were obliged to say their prayers. Recommendations for release were closely connected to the remarks and evaluations of the Emir of the prison and his staff to the magistrates on their visits to the prison. The prison Emir, in particular, was also responsible to the Khalifa concerning the cooperation of political prisoners. Thus, his reports on those prisoners were directly conveyed to the Khalifa.

The Mahdist state formulated a classification system of prisoners according to their crimes and sex. Fauzi stated that Mahdist imprisonment was classified into two categories, "heavy" and "light." "Light" imprisonment related to those prisoners who were sentenced due to fines and for criminal cases such as murder or theft. "Heavy" imprisonment was applied to the political prisoners, usually detained by the orders of the Khalifa himself.<sup>25</sup>

The Mahdist prison also supported prisoners' rights in terms of visits. Ohrwalder stated that relatives and acquaintances were allowed to visit their kin and friends in the prison.<sup>26</sup> In so doing, familiar relations were maintained notwithstanding imprisonment.

The correctional system of the Mahdist state was not, however, a perfect model. There were infringements against the prevailing norms by some guards in the Omdurman prison such as the acceptance of bribes to reduce the difficult conditions of imprisonment, and the excessive use of force in many cases. Similar to the Turko-Egyptian correctional policies, prisoners were used to construct both public and private utilities. Slatin mentioned that the prisoners made public wells for water in Omdurman.<sup>27</sup> Most particularly, executions of Sudanese political prisoners were exceptionally cruel, for example, Emir El-Zaki Tummul and Kadi Ahmed Ali were segregated in closed cells and starved to death.<sup>28</sup>

The Mahdist state was basically preoccupied with and devoted to the *Jihad*. There was not, therefore, ample time for the Mahdist leaders to

24 Ohrwalder op. cit., p. 348

25 Fauzi op. cit., pp. 320-321

26 Ohrwalder op. cit., p. 348

27 Slatin op. cit., p. 273

28 Cuzi op. cit.; Fauzi op. cit., pp. 320-321

improve the bureaucratic structure and the functioning of the state's machinery. On the other hand, the state was contained within its own boundaries due to the wars that broke out between the Sudan and the neighboring countries of Egypt and Ethiopia, and concurrently with the imperialist powers (mainly Britain). The resultant internal disruption naturally had a significant effect on the consistency and solidarity of the state. This is contrary to Warburg's view that the downfall of the state was not due to internal conflicts and the inconsistencies, but to the military superiority of the invading Anglo-Egyptian armies.<sup>29</sup> In fact, there was a growing political opposition among the vast majority of the Sudanese people against the developing bureaucratization of the state. As time passed, the internal political conflicts and economic difficulties constituted a concrete foundation for the encircling and invading powers to destroy the state. Indeed, the Shukriya, the Kababish, the Ga'allyien, the Bataheen, and the Ashraf groups (among others) were already standing against the Khalifa despite the fact that their resistance was suppressed by force before Kitchener won the decisive battle of Karari and took Omdurman. Despite these internal conflicts, the Sudanese cultures are capable of establishing their own political and economic systems based on their own mentality and social realities. It shows, on the other hand, the ugly face of colonialization, foreign intervention and conquest, and imperialism.

In the case of the correctional system, it appears that the Mahdist state inherited some measures formerly used by the Turko-Egyptian administration such as hanging, heavy shackles, and confiscation of private property. Although Sudanese values were allowed to articulate in the Mahdist period more than in the Turkiyya, the Mahdist correctional system seems to be parallel to the Turko-Egyptian system in terms of cruel practices. Such practices occurred especially as the state began to disintegrate prior to the Anglo-Egyptian invasion.

In relation to the history and sociology of knowledge of Sudanese leadership, it is clear that the Mahdist leaders were men of talent and honor. Despite its distortion in the colonial writings and captives' references, the Mahdist state and its elements shine as a heroic Sudanese movement for national liberation. It appears that the Mahdist state maintained a coherent political and ideological system on the basis of national unity versus external intervention. However, serious divisions occurred

29 Warburg, op. cit. (footnote 6), p. 17

among the political groups whose coalition had successfully carried out the Mahdist revolution. Many leaders were deprived of their authority and their followers were also repressed. Given the international and regional realities at that time coupled with the internal economic and political problems of the State, the legitimacy of the Mahdist state was already in danger prior to its downfall. It would have been possible for the Mahdist state to maintain its power versus foreign intervention, had the political legitimacy by offering consistent participation in decision-making for those groups in the opposition. Those groups constituted significant sections of the Sudanese people.

In the Sudan today, national unity is essential to sustain both political and social progress. It is precisely toward the achievement of this end that the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Sudan's independence reminds the Sudanese people to perpetuate the modern forms of the heroic struggle of their predecessors as it appeared in the Mahdist state.

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## ***The Law of Elephants***

### ***and the Justice of Monkeys:***

## ***Two Cases of Anti-Colonialism***

### ***in the Sudan***

Richard A. Lobban, Jr.

Working as an urban anthropologist in the Three Towns capital area of the Sudan I sometimes uncovered unexpected material, including two known cases of Sudanese opposition to British colonial rule, which are presented in this paper. So often the English language literature accepts the "civilizing" mission and "even-handed" governance of the colonial authorities. My research has shown that such judgments are difficult to support. Since this special commemorative issue of *Africa Today* is celebrating a quarter century of national independence of the Sudan I have sought to use the case study method to reconstruct something of the perception of colonial rule from the eyes of the colonized rather than colonizer.

Although it should go without saying, the British forces arrived in the Sudan as a result of military conquest with battlefields anointed in Sudanese blood. Despite the hardships of the latter days of the Mahdiya, no case can be made for any broad section of the Sudanese population which sought redress of the difficulties in the uninvited imposition of Pax Britannica. Two cases from the colonial period are offered here for your consideration. The first relates the story of the trials and tribulations of Mohammad Amin Hodeib, the second relates the events leading to the birth of the Tuti Island "Republic."

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## The Case of Mohammad Amin Hodeib<sup>1</sup>

In the years following World War I, imperial states were still reeling and worried from the shock of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the British rulers, in particular, had been stunned by the 1919 assassination of Lee Stack, the Governor General of the Anglo Egyptian Sudan, who represented the highest colonial authority along the Nile valley. This was a period which would also see the glorious White Flag movement break out in the Sudan in 1924 launching Abdel Fadil el Maz and Ali Abdel Latif into their historical orbits for their valorous resistance and self-sacrifice in attempting to remove the colonial shackles from their country. Such were the heady days of Mohammad Amin Hodeib, a man of Egyptian extraction, but carrying the highest forms of Sudanese pride. Hodeib's anger at colonial rule was also generated by a deep sense of insult for which there is acute sensitivity in Islamic society. An educated man, Hodeib was a captivating orator who expressed himself easily and with gripping conviction. His ability to articulate his anti-colonialism with Sudanese folk idioms and with Islam compelled the British to block his access to the popular forums he held in the Omdurman mosque. He was arrested in early 1919 and in June sentenced in the Khartoum Mudir's Court to three years in prison under the notorious Section 96, of the British-constructed Sudan Penal Code, "for attempting to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in the Sudan by means of a speech delivered by you in the Omdurman mosque." At the expiration of this sentence Mohammad Amin Hodeib was to be deported from the Sudan.

The following day, 2 June 1919, M.A. Hodeib wrote to the Mamur of the Central Prison, Khartoum North. "Now, that I know his (Sudan Government's Governor General) evil intention, I raise my complaint against him to the proper authority for his insulting me and for his using this barbaric despotism. I request a re-opening of the case before a new court. The trial should be public." Hodeib then asked to be judged by his fellow nationalists whom he listed by name and then said, "In case it is proved that I am guilty, I shall be pleased if the sentence is doubled and if I am not guilty, I shall reserve the right to raise an action against the Government which sentenced me so rashly."

On the same day Hodeib attempted to transmit the following message to His Majesty The King of Great Britain: — "I submit the following to Your Majesty: I, Mulazim Awal Mohammad Eff. Amin Hodeib, made a speech in the Mohamedan Institute at Omdurman and the Government arrested me and I was tried in a barbaric manner and sentenced to 3 years imprison-

<sup>1</sup> I published portions of this case in the *Nile Mirror*, 29 April 1971, p. 4 for which certain assistance was generously offered by Dr. Beshir Ramli. The source material was located in stacks of old court cases found in the then defunct Sudan Law Project Faculty of Law, University of Khartoum while I was a research associate at the University between 1970-1972.

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ment and deportation from the Sudan. I send this to reserve my rights and inform Your Majesty of the doings of Your people who still aspire to mastery while they are in the utmost stupidity." In order to be heard, similar messages were addressed to President Wilson of the United States, to His Excellency Hussein Rushdi Pasha of Cairo, and to Hamid Bey Shukri, Cairo Civil Judge.

In a communication to the Khartoum Chief Justice on 8 June 1919 the Director of Prisons said "I am of course taking no action as regards the despatch of the telegrams." He did, however, point out that Hodeib had been complaining of ill treatment at the jail. Two days later the Chief Justice responded by saying that Hodeib's status should be changed from 3rd class prisoner to 2nd class prisoner.

Prisoner Hodeib would not be silenced by stone walls nor by the colonial Government. On 18 March 1920 he wrote directly to the Chief Justice in Khartoum. He said,

"Justice will flourish if it lasts but it does not. Injustice will ruin if it lasts but it does not . . . I beg to state that every person who is tried by law has to lose a part of his rights but not all. Supposing that the law is perverted and even the Judge is perverted and they deprived him of all his rights outside prison. Nature would, no doubt, give him certain rights which she binds to him, so that if he loses some of them he would be frightened and cry to the authority concerned to return to him what he has lost, which neither the perverted law nor the perverted judge could deprive him of . . . you may judge in accordance with the British honour and the liberality of the liberals as we hear and not as we believe."

Hodeib then proceeded to relate how the British government had destroyed his house in Kassala.

"Kassala Province Government stated that they spent on my behalf sums incurred in the demolition of my houses . . . The expression is the strangest I ever heard from a Government which cannot look at the results of things. It is officially admitted by Kassala Province Authorities that they pulled down my houses from a public health point of view. Well, where are the roofing of the 12 rooms of which my houses were consisting of? Again, where are the bricks — nearly 12,000 in number? . . . I wish also to point out to your honour the story of the lion who used to eat the off-spring of animals as mentioned in *Kalila and Demna* and what he met with in his old age, so that he may follow the tracks of the ascetics and avoid ruining families and countries. The tyrants shall know what their doom will be: is it not that God is the most just of rulers."

The cleverly worded remarks of Hodeib were beginning to cause headaches for the colonialists. On 18 May 1920 a "strictly confidential" letter was sent by the Chief Justice to the Private Secretary. "The Director of Intelligence thinks Mohammad Amin Hodeib may be insane and I have called for a medical report . . . His imprisonment has not changed his opinions; on January 31st he submitted to the Director of Prisons for submission to the High Commissioners a long rambling report about his own

wrongs and the wickedness of the British Administration in Sudan." The streams of petitions did not stop and on 20 May 1920 another was written in eloquent Arabic called "The Extraordinary Justice in Division by a Balance" addressed to the Chief Justice. He began,

"I searched for the Law and Justice under which I was imprisoned and my houses pulled down but I could not find them except in the Law of the Elephants and the Justice of the Monkeys.

"The Law of the Elephants is that under which an elephant trampled the nest of a lark and killed its small birds; the lark appeared before the King of the Elephants and with due respect, enquired from him about the reason for killing birds and whether the action was with or without intention. It received no answer but roughness and disregard to its complaint. It then left the case for the Almighty.

"The Justice of the Monkeys it is told there was once a crow and a hawk who were in dispute over a piece of cheese so they decided to appoint a monkey to divide the cheese equally among them. He swore on his honour to exercise perfect justice. He then brought a balance and divided the cheese into two pieces, one larger piece of course brought its side down, so he cut and swallowed a portion of it by which it became lighter than the other than he treated it similar to the first one and went on doing the same thing. When the two adversaries saw that in the end there will be nothing left of the cheese, one of them said to Judge Monkey, 'Sir, I have no objection to take this small piece and my adversary will take the larger one.' But Judge Monkey said, 'Justice would not allow this and you should get equality by this balance'. They were suffered to see their cheese eaten by the monkey in the above way. Myself and house with the Sudan Government are how between the Law of Elephants and the Justice of the Monkeys. This law and justice do not exist in any country but they are nearly similar to the Law and Justice of Sodom who always gave adverse judgments. God then destroyed his city and peoples with stones hurled from heaven. It will now be noticed that the Almighty has now replaced stones with bombs from Essen which are being hurled from Zeppelins.

"I now submit this report to inform you that in asking for my rights, I got results as the lark from the elephant and the two adversaries from the monkey. I am now waiting to get my rights from the Sudan Government when the opportunity permits by the Irish Kingdom coming into force and the Labourers taking the place of the Liberals who I ask God to grant power to relieve us from the tyrants. 'The tyrants shall know what their doom will be.' It seems that my reports receive no consideration but they are being put away owing to the pride and self-concept of the Sudan Government Officials who are like the people of Ad about whom God said in his book that they were proud and despotic and He therefore severely chastised them. Is there any worse tyranny (than tearing down) houses and attributing this to Law and Justice? For the above reasons, I am not satisfied with this Sodom rule which is executed by the force of elephants under the justice of monkeys. I am awaiting the fulfillment of God's promise 'Be not discouraged if tyrants overpower the land, it is only for a time, their final abode is in Hell'."

The war of words was being escalated and the bewildered officials could only think of insanity as the excuse; certainly not real complaints about repressive colonial masters. In a note submitted to the Chief Justice

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the Director of Prisons said that from his experience with Hodeib and especially his written statements, "I am inclined to think he is extremely neurotic. He is doubtless a Political Maniac." Unfortunately, on the same day the Prison Medical Officer submitted his report saying "I have medically examined Amin Hodeib and found that his state of health and mental condition are good."

By this time the British officials were beginning to be worn down and the Chief Clerk, in charge of translations at the Prison, wrote to the Chief Justice when sending another petition from Hodeib. He begged, "would you kindly instruct us whether in future to refuse to forward statements of this kind. It is a waste of time translating and typing such rubbish." The Chief Justice quickly responded, "... I do not think that it is necessary that you should translate any more of these productions but I think they had better be sent on in the original; they afford a certain amusement which I shall be sorry to miss." One month later the haughty judge received another petition described by the Director of Prisons as a "masterpiece of insolence and aberrational logic." And three weeks after this Hodeib devoted an eight page manuscript to the "Illusory-Nature of the Mirage Government of the Sudan." A year and a half after Hodeib had been sentenced the British colonialists were suffering from verbal machine-gunning from the Khartoum North prison. The Chief Justice pleadingly corresponded with the Director of Intelligence. "Mohammed Amin Hodeib," he said, "sentenced in June to imprisonment for three years for attempting to excite feelings of disaffection to the government is a person of warped intelligence who should not be kept in prison longer than is necessary. The court recommended him for deportation to Egypt on the completion of his sentence and if political affairs had been a little calmer it is probable that he might already been released."

Hodeib has passed away as has British colonialism vanished from the territory of the Sudan. The reader may judge his remarks for him or herself but to me we have the necessary proof of establishing the heroic, if not historic, stature of this early Sudanese patriot who did what he could to expose the true nature, from the Sudanese perspective, of colonial rule.

### The case of the birth of Tuti "Republic"

At the confluence of the White and Blue Niles at the dead center of

<sup>2</sup> This second case comes from various records in the Central Records Office from contemporary newspaper accounts and especially from my own research in Tuti Island which began in 1970-72, with a short restudy in 1975, and a full scale restudy in 1979-80. For those visiting the Sudan it is likely that Khartoum will be your chief stop and a walk along *Shari a Neel* is likely to prompt curiosity about the life on Tuti Island just across from the Grand Hotel. Tuti Island has an odd reputation in the Three Towns, many Sudanese never venture there because of unfounded, subjective fears of its 'encapsulated nature'. Long ago I lost track of the number of my friends there, the island where I am known by the name Abdel Fadil - the memory of the patriot of the 1924 White Flag Revolt.



of the quarrels which the colonial administration had had with Tuti Islanders the proposal finally went forward in January of 1944 with Tuti Island as the preferred site.<sup>4</sup>

As more details seeped out, Tuti Islanders found that not only were 350 feddans of arable land to be taken outright for this "research and education" but members of the community would have to lease these lands rather than own them, as they had since first occupying the island some 500 years earlier. Another 540 feddans were to be expropriated for a forestation project. Copies of the plans of the Director of Agriculture were sent to the Director of Education, the Legal Secretary and to "His Excellency the Governor General." Further consultation brought additional copies to the Khartoum Town Planning Board, the Councils of the Three Towns and to the Rural Council under which Tuti Island was administered. In turn the Khartoum Medical Officer required that consideration must also be given by the Central Board of Public Health. The plans had just been approved by the Board of Public Health and steps to negotiate with Tuti landowners were about to be taken when the **Sawt El Sudan** newspaper published an article saying that the scheme had been dropped. Since this was in contrast to what was actually being discussed, another paper, **Sudan El Gidid** called the *Mudiria* Information Officer to discover what, in fact, was the truth. He learned that the plan was still under active consideration and published this news in the paper. Rumors reached Tuti Island instantly and the community leaders met at the Tuti Club to organize a petition to protest their possible removal from their ancestral island. A six-man delegation appeared at the *Mudiria* Headquarters on 14 April 1944 on a fact-finding mission. The authorities insisted they had no plans to remove people, although they might want to "realign the existing muddle of houses on the Island." This was just what had been feared and rather than having anxieties calmed the reverse took place.

Moments after the delegation reached the street a well organized, shouting crowd converged in support of the community protest. Seconds passed and they surged into first floor offices, passed the several police guards, and damaged some of the interior of the *Mudiria* building. Mounted and foot patrol officers were called and eventually were able to clear the building, passages, and courtyard of the demonstrators, in the course of which seven police were injured, four of them seriously. One demonstrator had attacked a police horse and was being arrested for his efforts when several of his allies intervened to rescue him and block his arrest. A struggle ensued during which a police shotgun was fired, killing a demon-

4 See Central Records Office, CIVSEC 57 C 3 81 Province Diary, Khartoum, 1944

strator and injuring two policemen.<sup>5</sup>

Almost instantly, this incident was heralded by the Sudanese national movement as a stiff challenge to colonial rule. Britain was preoccupied with the war in Europe and hardly needed more problems in the colonies. Other strikes, protests, and demonstrations were already taking place with many more to come. The Civil Secretary reported that there was an "immediate and regrettable sympathy with the forces of disorder." Telegrams in protest were received from as far as the Northern Province as the news travelled widely and quickly.

From 20-27 May 1944 the trial of the Tuti Island defendants was held in the Khartoum Minor Court.<sup>6</sup> Colonial justice was a foregone conclusion, and the twenty accused were all found guilty and fined from five to twenty pounds and served sentences from 3 to 12 months in prison. The leader of the original Tuti Island delegation, Mustafa Khalid, was given the maximum sentence. He was, at that time, about 56 years old and a retired government official who enjoyed a position of great respect and influence on the Island. Since he did not try to "restrain the rioters," he was found guilty of "promoting unlawful assembly which committed rioting." Promptly, Mustafa Khalid became a *cause celebre* and generated a flurry of additional protests including a joint telegram from Dawood Mustafa Khalid and Zein el Abdin Khalid dispatched from Merowe on 29 May 1944 to Mr. Bennett, Chief Justice, Khartoum. Among the points in its text are:

"We believe that the mistake is the Governor's and that the conviction of this innocent man, Mustafa Khalid, was bluntly made to conceal the Governor's mistake

"We therefore believe that the decision of the Minor Court was political and not judicial.

"Public opinion is also anxiously awaiting your fair decision."

Reaction to the telegram by Mr. E.M. MacIntosh, Governor of Khartoum, states that he considered the telegram itself as dangerously close to "contempt of court" by claiming deliberate prejudice and perjured evidence by police witnesses. MacIntosh noted laconically that "it appears to me that this appeal transcends the bounds of fair comment!"

When Mustafa Khalid was released from prison on 26 February 1945 a number of prominent members from the Tuti Island community invited members of the Ashigga party of the Graduates Congress to the festive reception. Ismail el Azhari, then President of the Graduates Congress, and subsequent Prime Minister of the independent Sudan, made a speech at the reception which was considered "remarkably informed" in the co-

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed Yousif Hashim, "The Sad Events of Tuti Island" *Grada El Neel* (in Arabic), 16 April 1944 No. 3615

<sup>6</sup> See Case No 2, 1944 Tuti Island Case, Khartoum Minor Court, 20-27 May 1944, Mr. K. Hayes, Presiding Judge, Document collected by the Sudan Law Project AC/Gen./2-14

lonial record.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the Graduates Congress itself was one of the spearheads which ultimately pointed towards the end of colonial rule in 1956.

Moreover, the British plan was never implemented. Its principal results were an effort to organize official land registry and in 1946 to organize the Tuti Development Company, wholly administered by Tuti Islanders themselves. In fact, in that same year the Nile flood reached dangerous levels and the British authorities said that the island must be evacuated for reasons of public safety. Suspicions instantly reappeared and the people stayed put. The British conceded the point and provided burlap sand bags to protect the village. Twenty-four hour patrols and careful maintenance of the dike saved the village, and another victory fell to the Tuti community.

These events gained widespread repute and the steadfastness of the island's citizens generated the unofficial but popular claim that Tuti had become a sovereign "Republic" deserving this title in its resistance to colonial and natural forces. In 1968 the Tuti Club in the Tuti "Republic" staged a dramatization of the 1944 events. The play has subsequently been performed on other occasions at the Club, as has prose and poetry been written and published for the historical record.

## Observations

The cases of Mohammad Amin Hodeib and Mustafa Khalid and his twenty co-defendants are not major events in the history of the Sudanese anti-colonial struggle, but they are clearly contributors to this movement. Their anger and their efforts to protest were not successful in the short run, but they offer concrete proof of the depth and extent of structural antagonism of British colonialism and Sudanese national independence. I believe that the focus for this article makes it easier to understand the irresistible force of hundreds of thousands of Hodeibs and Mustafa Khalids. This special publication of *Africa Today* is a celebration of their lives and of all Sudanese who played their roles in the historical process of ending exploitative systems and the Law of Elephants and the Justice of Monkeys.

<sup>7</sup> Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, February 1945

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## Art and Dialectics: A Sudanese/American Experience

Sondra Hale

with art work by Mohamed Omer Bushara

In an attempt at cross-cultural conversation Mohamed Omer Bushara and I worked in constant conjunction with each other. In our collaboration he used the language of graphics, I, the language of poetry. We attempted to form an artistic commune, to finish each other's lines. For many reasons there was an unlikelihood of such a collaboration, and it is here where we transcended the dialectics of our existence and, by adding experience to theory and practice, forged the beginning of a synthesis. We saw the dialectics in our different ages; in the male/female contradiction; in "black" and "white"; in "Christian" and "Muslim" cultures; in "Third World" and "First World"; and in American and Sudanese. We attempted to break down the dualism seemingly inherent in these identities. And we could do that by adding experience to theory and practice. The experiences we shared were our poor backgrounds and our visions of the oppressed. In order to communicate and survive, we have embraced the language of Marxism to produce within a bourgeoisie world.

The Bushara/Hale dialectical relationship is salient in this following poem with companion drawings. The idea of "returning", with its dialectic of attraction and repulsion is expressed in "The Return". Bushara, too, had also returned to Sudan after two years in England, and expressed in these pieces and in another set entitled works "Series of 14", a similar attraction and repulsion. Both our works suggest a feeling of suffocation through being embraced, at the same time there is the alienation from the environment.

In a longer collaborative work (poems and drawings) entitled **Seasons of Discontent**, the Bushara/Hale experience takes the form of socio-political statements in Haiku pieces with graphic statements. Below is excerpted approximately one-sixth of the total work:

Mohamed Omer Bushara, Sudanese graphic artist/journalist, was the subject of a one-person show at the African-American Institute in New York (February 20-May 31, 1981). He is an African Arts first prize recipient, a frequent international exhibitor, and a graduate of The Slade in London. He and Sondra Hale have collaborated on two books and several other pieces.

Sondra Hale is an American anthropologist and art critic who spent six years in Sudan. She wrote the catalog for **The Vision of Mohamed Omer Bushara**. She is currently the Director of the Women's Studies Program, California State University, Long Beach.

2nd Quarter, 1981

## THE RETURN

by  
Sondra Hale

It was the year of my return:  
The streets of Khartoum were peopled  
by the images of another time . . . .

I looked into the faces  
and saw a whole other era  
simmering there — timeless,  
and yet obsolete.  
Even the faces of the young  
were remnants of the forgotten.  
Who has forsaken them?

It had been over a decade  
since I had lived among them,  
truly feeling their bodies  
and mine as one.  
Our skins had touched,  
colours shading into one tone.  
The voices had lingered there  
together: a monotone  
Who has forsaken whom?

I walked among them now  
a stranger — not touching —  
aloof, afraid, suspicious:  
cynical even of the beggar child.  
They look at me  
but with eyes averted,  
or empty — with shifting,  
shallow eyes.  
Their eyes are cold  
when they touch me  
why is my skin so cold?  
It is damp, sweating  
from a coldness of heart,  
whose heart?  
Who has forsaken whom?



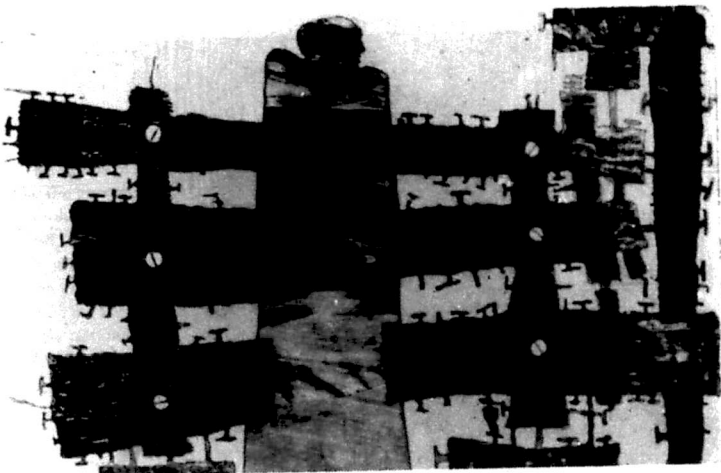
And the people, those people  
with whom I had felt one  
looked at my face,  
saw into my eyes  
and knew my love. Yes.  
Who has forsaken whom?\*

But who could understand  
such an abstract love?  
Could I expect it of them:  
the colonized,  
the dominated,  
the oppressed?

Why should they love me now?  
My skin is white.  
I fought in Vietnam.  
I bombed Hiroshima,  
invaded Cuba,  
and infiltrated the Third World.  
Did I?  
Did they?  
Did we?  
Who has forsaken whom?

Do cadavers that embrace  
feel the mutual death?  
Can a heart removed  
keep pounding — repeating?  
Can a body removed  
return again?  
Who has forsaken whom?

I was Sudanese: they said it  
as they transfused my blood.  
I was Sudanese: they wrote it  
in the newspapers:  
'You are one of us.'  
(they said).  
'We will always keep you  
among us: drink the waters  
of the glorious Nile.  
Return to us: we are one.'



As the waterwheels  
groaned and the hawks  
circled the mosques,  
the ubiquitous goats  
nodded assent. Yes.

Those who embraced me  
a decade ago —  
What are *they* doing now?  
They have built extensions  
to their city —  
the Grand Amarat.  
They call it 'progress':  
They run their own business now  
and sit in their Mercedes  
behind a driver —  
racing through the crowded streets:  
passing the beggar —  
the farmer —  
the workers  
passing the shanties.  
Who has forsaken whom?

Those who embraced me  
built iron bars  
around their university.  
Doctors patch their pockets  
with the sores  
of a wounded people  
and the fruits  
of a woman's labour.  
Comrades meet and talk:  
Comrades meet and talk.  
Those who embraced me  
in that decade  
now hold a gun.  
They call it 'stability'.

Do cadavers that embrace  
feel the mutual death?  
In our senselessness  
we *are* finally one.  
Who has forsaken whom?

(Khartoum)



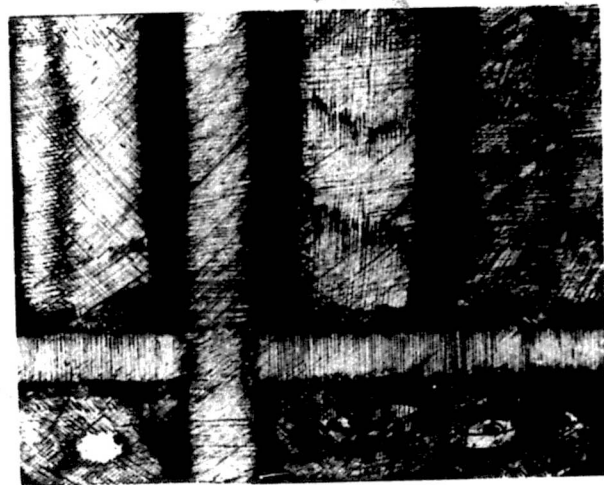


Six Haiku with companion drawings from **Seasons of Discontent:**



Bushoro  
Feb 75

1. We all drain ourselves  
away in tears and torpor,  
languishing in heat.

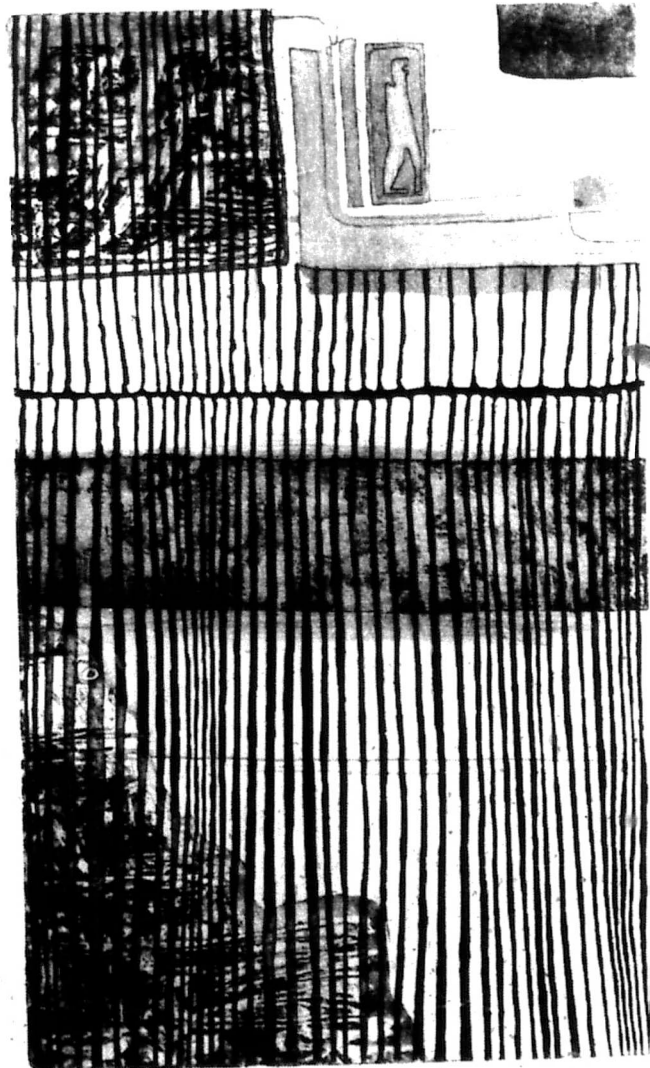


2. A man, so thirsty  
drowned in a tebaldi tree.  
Now he needs nothing.



3. The sheikhs and sayyids  
in Parliament gloated, brains  
shrunk in their emmas.

4. These thin black lines  
cannot say how we feel:  
grotesque figures.





5. Your death fills our hearts  
and your blood becomes our tears:  
the noose is our chain.



6. There are many pawns.  
We line up in rows to face  
the taller pieces.





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## ***The Contours of Sudanese Literature***

Constance E. Berkley

In the Sudan, as in other Third World Countries, an inherent respect for the spoken word has created an awareness of the intimate links between language, literature and social reality. The awareness of how language affects the self in interaction with others is close to the surface consciousness of all Sudanese writers, whether they write in English, Arabic or in another Sudanese language. This awareness of the intimate links between language and society causes the Sudanese writers' conception of literature to be more holistic than the view of his western counterpart. It is believed that "Art" has always been in the service of man. Thus most Sudanese literature tends toward an apparent mimeticism in that the literary product of each individual writer usually reflects — with varying degrees of authenticity — the prevailing socio-political of the period during which the author is writing, as well as the specific oral and written cultural concepts of the ethno-linguistic and regional group of which each individual author is a part.

Most of these authors' audiences tend to expect erudition, moral edification and instruction from their writers. To a certain extent this expectation stems from the fact that most people in 'The Third World' are just becoming accustomed to accepting 'fiction' in a form and structure which has become commonplace to most people in western societies. At the same time, their appreciation of allegory and parable is probably more sophisticated than their western counterparts. In a recent interview, the well known contemporary Sudanese writer, El Tayeb Salih says:

Up until now the Arab reader has not been accustomed to reading creative work. The Arab reader is still incapable of distinguishing between Art and Reality.<sup>1</sup>

This emotional reaction toward artistic reality and social reality, on the part of the reader, arises because traditional African and Arabic prose narrative

1. 'Adeb. "Hiwar Fi Kulli Shai Ma'a El Tayeb Salih." "An in-depth Conversation With El Tayeb Salih," trans. Constance E. G. Berkley, revised and edited by Osman Hassan 'Ahmed, al-Fajr (Nov. 15, 1976), in C.E.G. Berkley, *The Roots of Consciousness Molding The Art of El Tayeb Salih: A Contemporary Sudanese Writer* (New York: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York Univ., 1979), Append. B., p. 1xii.

Constance E. Berkley is Assistant Professor of African, Islamic and Afro-American literature at Fordham University. She is also the Executive Coordinator of the Sudan Studies Association. Dr. Berkley's dissertation concerned the literature, life and thought of El Tayeb Salih. Her article on El Tayeb Salih's *Wedding of Zein* recently appeared in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*.

— whether oral or written — tended to rely upon symbolic characterization rather than the psychological complexities of purely fictional characters. Those symbolic characters were created in order to give moral edification. Thus the prose narrative describing the hero was more epic than individual in tone.

In addition to being the major conscious form of communication between one man and another, language is the dominant factor, among other socio-cultural stimuli, which arouses men's perception of political reality, thereby creating

the cognitive orientation of the community and individuals within that community, that is, their feeling of attachment, involvement or rejection of political objects and beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

When the Christian British administrators began their rule of the Sudan in the beginning of the 1900s, the only books available for education were those written in Arabic. In the northern provinces there was little tampering with the traditional Islamic/Arabic educational system, though a system of public education, in English, was established. During the process of establishing an English language education based upon a British model, controversy arose around those Islamic principles which have been imbedded in the Arabic language for more than a thousand years. This was especially true in the southern provinces of the Sudan where education was completely in the hands of the Christian missionaries, who felt it their moral duty to Christianize the "heathen" tribes.

The use of Arabic as the *lingua franca* of the southern provinces, limited though it might have been in its pidgin form, had to be abolished. Politically speaking, if the people had no common means of communication, then the nascent sense of national identity generated during the early period of the Mahdist rule would dissipate and there could be no unified resistance to the Condominium rule. The revived and intensified nationalist fervor that swept the country during the White Flag Movement of 1924, led by the southerner 'Ali 'Abd el Latif, caused the British to codify stringent rules for ensuring physical and cultural separation between the North and the South.

Since the aim of the missionaries was conversion and the introduction of Christian cultures, one can then understand why language policy had removed completely and firmly the Arabic language from the sphere of education in the multilingual southern Sudan, despite the fact that the local vernaculars possess very little literature of their own. No Arabic was ever taught in the southern schools during the first half of this century.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Mansour Khalid, "The Socio-Cultural Determinants of Arab Diplomacy (Washington D.C.: Office of The Cultural Counsellor, The Embassy of The Democratic Republic of The Sudan, n.d.) reprinted in George N. Atiyeh (ed.) *Arab and American Culture* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute For Public Policy Research, 1977), pp. 123-142.

<sup>3</sup> Sayyid H. Hurreiz and Herman Bell, *Directions in Sudanese Linguistics and Folklore* (Khartoum: Khartoum Univ. Press, 1975), p. 13.

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Condominium language policies, with regard to the southern Sudan, began to be altered in 1949, during the beginning phases of Sudanization of the Condominium government. By that time, however, the enforced cultural-linguistic separation between the North and the South had been in existence for almost fifty years. Arabic was the *lingua franca* of the North. In the South, though English was the second language only of a small educated minority, it was the *lingua franca*.

Just prior to and immediately after Independence, personal identification with, and allegiance to the political and cultural symbols implicit in either the Arabic or the English language helped create hostility toward attempts to unify the Sudanese nation because the newly Sudanized government was dominated by Arabic speaking northerners, who had been favored by the Condominium government. Most of the educated elite in the southern Sudan were English speaking Christians, who reacted violently when the Abboud military regime (1958-64) determined to Arabize the southern regions by force, and thus alter the southerner's cultural-linguistic identity. Language was an area of intense controversy in the South during the 17-year civil war which ended with the Addis Ababa Accord of 1972.

The Addis Ababa Accord was the culmination of the search for identity. Since 1972, all Sudanese have accepted the fact that, as a matter of convenience, English is to be used in the transaction of national and international communications, whenever it is necessary to do so, and the South has accepted the fact that the official administrative and literary language of the Sudan is Arabic.

Since Independence, in 1956, there has arisen a growing body of English language literature, much of which is being published in the semi-official magazine, *Sudanow*, since 1977. Though these two languages are most prominent, Arabic and English are not the only spoken and literary languages in the Sudan. Indeed, the one and a half million Dinka speaking people are the largest single ethno-linguistic group in the Sudan, and there are other major ethno-linguistic groups, each of which has its own body of folklore, or oral traditions. Here it is assumed that oral literature has as much validity as written literature, particularly in the developing countries where oral and written literature and education co-exist harmoniously.

Since Independence, Sudanese scholars, assisted by other concerned scholars, have felt an urgency to recover, analyze and preserve the historical connections between the numerous indigenous languages — all of which possess an abundant oral literature—currently co-existing alongside Sudanese Arabic. Some of these languages such as Ki-Nubi, Juba



Arabic and Swahili have very large sub-stratums of vocabulary which have been borrowed intact from Arabic. The vocabulary of modern Nubian is about thirty per cent Arabic. Tu-Bedawi has absorbed a large number of Arabic roots and grammatical structures.

Some of the other major languages of the Sudan which possess both oral literature and written material, either in grammars, dictionaries, or recently compiled dual language folkloric texts are Dinka, Fur, Nuer, Shilluk, Azande and Bari. These texts, like Dr. Francis Mading Deng's **Dinka Folktales**, have been compiled by native speakers of the particular language in question. Most of these native speakers of the language have an intuitive sense of the literary nuances imbedded within their own languages.

Heated debates about the "national language" and the "national literature" have concerned all writers on the African continent, especially since Independence. Virtually all African states are multi-lingual and multi-ethnic, but the Sudan is the most representative of all African states, in that almost every ethno-linguistic group on the African continent is represented within its borders. What then is a national literature? Chinua Achebe says:

A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. An ethnic literature is one which is available to one ethnic group within the nation.<sup>4</sup>

The multi-ethno-linguistic character and the obvious racial and cultural admixture in the Sudan have created a unique Sudanese cultural ethos which is at the same time both African and Arab to a degree unparalleled in its other sister Sudanic states with which the Sudan has the most in common.<sup>5</sup>

Sudanese Arabic is the one language which is available for communication among all Sudanese. According to Alan S. Kaye it is closest in form and content to Egyptian Arabic.<sup>6</sup> Thus Sudanese Arabic can also be understood wherever Egyptian Arabic is understood. At the same time Sudanese Arabic has its own distinctive features and has been undergoing a continuous process of development and Sudanization for over a thousand years. During the process of becoming localized, Sudanese Arabic has absorbed syntactical, phonological and idiomatic elements of every indigenous Sudanese language with which it came in contact.<sup>7</sup>

4. Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), p. 75

5. Francis Mading Deng, *Dynamics of Identification* (Khartoum: Khartoum Univ. Press, 1973), see Introduction.

6. Alan S. Kaye, *Chadian and Sudanese Arabic in the Light of Comparative Arabic Dialectology* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of California at Berkeley, 1971). The author believes that a complete study of Chadian and Sudanese Arabic is essential for a full understanding of the Arabic Koine.

7. See 'Awn al-Sharif Qasim, "Some Aspects of Sudanese Colloquial Arabic," *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XLVI (Khartoum: 1965), pp. 40-49

To date, the influence of purely "African" languages, whose imprint on Sudanese Arabic is evident in such sounds as "nya" and "cha," has been the least examined. The words of purely African origin which have survived did so because the social customs which they describe are those which arose from the indigenous cultural patterns stemming from the local ecological conditions of the earliest Sudanese people. Today, Sudanese Arabic reflects the cultural contributions of all the various ethno-linguistic groups who either originated in the area, migrated there, or have held administrative power there. Thus Sudanese Arabic is a very rich language capable of expressing almost every nuance of the dynamics of most Sudanese people.<sup>8</sup>

Sudanese Arabic literature has links with all Arabic literature, both past and present. At the same time it is valid in its own right. Among the Sudanese, as among other African and/or Arabic speaking people, poetry is the preferred literary form.

The period of the Funj kingdom from 1504-1821 was the one which saw the consolidation, growth and expansion of Islamic-Arabic institutions in the Sudan. This period also witnessed the first flowering of Sudanese Arabic literature, a great deal of which was religious in nature. The *Tabaqat Wad Dayf Allah* is the principal preserved record of this cultural awakening, which embraced most, if not all, of the northern Sudan. The divided and defeated rule of the Funj was taken over by the Ottoman Turks in 1820. From the beginning of the Ottoman administration up until about 1898 the Sudan was "literally" cut off from the world.

Under Turkish rule there evolved a new class of Sudanese learned men (*'ulama'*) who had managed to receive extensive legalistic, religious and classical Arabic education either at al-Azhar in Cairo, or in Mecca. These learned men, who identified with the Turkiyya, were alienated from the ordinary people. Their poetry was mostly of a classical religious nature and its repetitive, decorative style reflected the lowest ebb of Arabic poetry created during the Egyptian Mamluke period. Colloquial Sudanese poetry, on the other hand, remained the medium of the ordinary people who were more inclined toward the local religious orders under the guidance of the local Sufi Shaykh.

The Mahdist revolution of 1882 provoked a significant change in the *'ulama'* poetry. Though most of the learned men were opposed to the revolution, their poetry, whether pro or con, began to reflect the realities of the new political struggles in the Sudan. The abrupt death of the Mahdi in

<sup>8</sup> Even those people who do not now read Arabic are becoming familiar with the Arabic script because the oral traditions of such languages as Dinka, Zande, Bari, Mursi and Latuka are now being written in Arabic script in dual language texts. The while fluency in the mother tongue will be maintained, comprehension of the Arabic language will become easier at a later date. See Hurrez and Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

1885 as abruptly stilled the spate of poetry which had sprung up around the revolution. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium defeated the Mahdist forces of the Khalifa 'Abdullahi, at Omdurman, in 1898.

Both the nature of the education and actual political events in the Sudan, under Condominium rule, served to awaken a sense of Sudanese nationalism. The 1924 revolution, which was brutally suppressed, was the culmination of this fervent nationalism — a nationalism that swept through the entire Nile Valley. During the decade that followed the defeat of the 1924 revolution, students who went to Gordon College (Khartoum University) experienced extremely harsh treatment by their British masters. The plight of these nationalist intellectuals required an effective outlet. "Since organized political and, of course, military action was out of the question, the required outlet had to be social and literary in character."<sup>9</sup> The patriotic poem became the vehicle for the expression of the nationalists' fervent sentiments.

Khalil Farah, the most popular singer of that period, was not a college graduate. But he was well educated in classical Islamic Arabic literature. Through the popularization of songs halfway between literary and colloquial Arabic, he was able to communicate the feelings and sentiments of the newly educated Sudanese to the non-literate masses.

Since most of the hostile references to Britain and the loving allusions to Egypt were allegorically expressed and could be interpreted in more than one way, Farah, it was felt, was personally safe vis-a-vis the Intelligence Department. For the same reason, and because it was not easy to trace the origins of popular songs composed in a basically colloquial form of Arabic, the authors remained practically anonymous and equally safe.<sup>10</sup>

During this period short-lived but lively journals such as *El-Sudan*, *El-Nahda* and *El-Fajr* sprang up. Of these journals *El-Fajr* was the most important. Writers like El Tijani Yusuf Beshir and Muhammad Ahmed Mahjub made their initial appearances in *El-Fajr*. The *Fajr* group believed that there were problems in Sudanese society which were expressly different from those in other countries — Arab or not. They were aware of their hybrid cultural tradition and the various historical currents which had made it unique. Thus they sought to arrive at artistic, linguistic symbols which could express a national identity rather than individual ethnic identities.

Muhammad Ahmed Mahjoub was one of the leading literary spokesmen who, in an article in *El-Fajr*, expressed the idea of a Sudanese literature "written in Arabic but infused with the idiom of our land because this (idiom) is what distinguishes the literature of one nation from another."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Muddathir Abdel Rahim, "Early Sudanese Nationalism, 1900-1939," *Sudan Notes and Records* (Khartoum, 1966), p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Abdel Hai, *Conflict and Identity: The Cultural Poetics of Contemporary Sudanese Poetry* (Khartoum: Khartoum Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 21.

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Thus, "the *Fajr* group was the beginning of a ceremony of belonging and rediscovery of the communal roots of identity and creativity,"<sup>12</sup> which finds its first real expression in the work of Muhammad el-Mahdi el-Majdhub.

Muhammad el-Mahdi el-Majdhub was the first poet whose work reflects the poetic consciousness of belonging to both the "Negro" and Arab tradition. In his poem "el-Sairah" (*The Wedding Procession*)

the subject matter captures a cultural reality, which is the result of a long historical process of fusion of elements — pagan and Islamic. Indeed, these elements are treated in the poem in such a way that gives them the deeper significance of a cultural wedding taking place in the poem — as a ritual.<sup>13</sup>

Muhammad el-Mahdi el-Majdhub has been one of the forerunners of the contemporary movement which uses traditional Sudanese culture as the source of their poetic inspiration. He has been considerably less influenced by outside forces, including literature from other Arabic speaking countries, than the poets who constitute the school of "socialist realism."

This school arose immediately after the Second World War and had an enormous influence on all Arab writers who saw the socialist camp as an ally in the struggle against western imperialist domination. The most famous of this group of poets is Muhammad Miftah el-Fayturi, who spent the major portion of his life in Alexandria, Egypt.

In the nineteen sixties there emerged in the Sudan a new group of poets, matured by the experience of their predecessors. These contemporary poets speak in an "authentic voice of Afro-Arabic identity." For these poets there is no longing for a fusion of the twin thread of African and Arabic culture. Rather, they are convinced that, "on the poetic level, things are already reconciled."<sup>14</sup> These poets are also finely attuned to the intellectual and cultural currents of the contemporary world, in particular Africa, the Arab world and the rest of the "Third World." Thus, like their forerunners, beginning with the late twenties, these new poets have been very involved with the political movements in the Sudan. They were especially active during the struggle for Independence.

Those among this group who have had collections published are Salah Ahmed 'Ibrahim, *Ghabat el-Abanus* (*The Forest of Ebony*); Mustafa Sana, *el-Bahr el-Qadim* (*The Ancient Sea*); Muhammad al-Makki 'Ibrahim, *Ummati* (*My Nation*); Muhammad Abdel Hai, *el-Audah*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

ila Sinnari (Sinnar, A Homecoming); and el Nur 'Uthman, *Sahw, el Kalimat el-Mansiyyah* (The Awakening of The Forgotten Words). Their poetry blends the imagery of Africa and Arabic, the twin origins of their culture.

In this poetry, the Sudanese poet has for the first time, come to terms with himself and his landscape, his history and his tradition. Although the language is Arabic, the new poets feel free to reforge it according to the nuances of their own sensibility. Indeed the new Sudanese poetry has created a language within (the) Arabic language.<sup>15</sup>

For the future, it is difficult to anticipate what trends Sudanese poetry will follow. Poetry in the Sudan, as in other Arab and African countries, and the world at large, is no longer the sole, or major, literary genre which occupies the talent of the "cultural alchemists."

During the thirties and forties, under Condominium rule, the growing concern for a national Sudanese literature again caused the use of "folk" tales to become popular. Often these tales were interwoven into the fibre of stories written in standard Arabic prose style. The technical term for all of these prose tales is *hikaya*, which is, in essence, a sustained narrative account of a particular event. The short story is distinguished from the *hikaya* in that the short story goes beyond the sustained narration of a single event, or sequence of events.

The Sudanese short story made its appearance in the nineteen twenties, without going through a period of translation. Sudanese writers were inclined toward the form of the Arabic short story which was available to them through the medium of Egyptian newspapers. And, because they were receiving their formal education in the English language, they were also exposed to examples of English short stories. Initially, there was some elementary writing in English. But the most acceptable form from which to adopt was the Egyptian short story written in Arabic.

Sudanese short story writing has been pursued as an implicit and an explicit social protest. Most of the writers have adopted a form which could demonstrate their political and social views, whether it was criticism of existing social relations in the society, or ridiculing the society by describing the victims of oppression, the poor and the innocent victims, who are unable to protect themselves. Or, the writers concentrated upon the changes which the foreigners brought in customs, traditions and values, through their impact upon Sudanese social reality. Though most Sudanese short stories are characterized by a certain measure of realism, not all of them are social in their tone. Up until the present, the Sudan has produced many more accomplished short story writers than it has

15. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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novelists. It is even possible that the form of the short story is more akin to that of traditional Sudanese narrative, lyric poetry, and thus it is more acceptable to the average Sudanese.

Recently, Osman Hassan Ahmed has edited *A Short Anthology of Sudanese Literature and Sixteen Sudanese Short Stories*,<sup>16</sup> both of which include short stories from the southern provinces, where creative writing has received a new spur since the Addis Ababa Accord of 1972. The southerners write in English. Their stories reflect their roots within a rich cultural background which is different than the Islamic Arab one. Though their surface roots are radically different than the Arab/Islamic culture the stories reflect the gap which is maintained between the younger and the older generations throughout the Sudan. The inclusion of short stories written by southerners in both of these anthologies — and of poetry in the earlier anthology — reflects official Sudanese cultural policy which is attempting to create a unified sense of cultural identity which is drawn from the rich, diversified, ancient traditions of all Sudanese.<sup>17</sup>

Novel writing in the Sudan can be divided into two distinct periods. There is the pre-Independence period and the post-Independence period.

The novel of the period prior to Independence dedicated itself to the search for an effective combative identity at the individual and the collective level. The post-Independence novel has attempted to grant us our profound and deeply rooted historical identity, with its negative and positive sides.<sup>18</sup>

In the first category we find such works as *Innahum Bashar* (They Are Men) by Khalil Abdullah el-Haj; *Ghurbat el-Ruh* (The Banishment of The Spirit) by Dr. 'Ibrahim Hardello; and *Bida'ya el-Rabi* (The Beginning of Spring) by 'Abi Bakr Khalid, published in 1958, just two years after Independence.

'Abi Bakr Khalid's novel presents a history of the beginning of fiction writing in the Sudan, during the nineteen thirties and forties. It discusses the life and works of such writers as el-Mahjoub, Muhammad 'Ashri el-Siddiq, Hamza al Malik Tambal, el Tigani Yusuf Beshir and Mu'awiyya

16. Osman Hassan Ahmed, (ed.), *A Short Anthology of Sudanese Literature* (Washington D.C.: Office of The Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of The Democratic Republic of The Sudan, 1978) and O.H.A. (ed.), *Sixteen Sudanese Short Stories* (Washington, D.C.: Office of The Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of The Democratic Republic of The Sudan, 1981).

17. For a more inclusive analysis of the development of Sudanese Arabic prose literature see: Mukhtar 'Ajuba, *al-Qissa al-Hadith fi al-Sudan* (The Modern Narrative in The Sudan), (Khartoum: Khartoum Univ. Press, 1972); Muhammad Zaghul Salam, *al-Qissa fi al-'Adab al-Sudanīya al-Hadith* (The Novel in Modern Sudanese Literature), (Cairo: 1970), and C.E.G. Berkley, *Dissertation*, op. cit.

18. al-Nur Osman 'Abkar, "Riwaya Ma Be'da al-Istiqal: al-Baht 'an Hawliyya Tarikhiyya Hadariyya 'Inda El Tayeb Salih wa 'Ibrahim 'Ishaq," (The Post-Independence Novel: The Search For an Historical Cultural Identity with El Tayeb Salih and 'Ibrahim 'Ishaq), *al-Ayyam* (February 18, 1977); reprinted in *Majma'at al-Thaqafa al-Sudanīya*, No. 3 (May, 1977), p. 30.

Muhammad Nur, all of whom still exert considerable influence on the style and thought of the contemporary Sudanese novelist.

The novels *Hadatha fi el-Qariyya* (It Happened in The Village) and *'Amal el-Lail wa el-Balda* (Chores of The Night and The Town) by 'Ibrahim 'Ishaq 'Ibrahim, along with El Tayeb Salih's *'Urs al-Zayn* (The Wedding of Zein) and *Bandar Shah* are considered to be those post-Independence novels which attempt to project both the negative and positive aspects of the Sudanese' historical identity. El Nur Osman 'Abkar also believes that El Tayeb Salih's novel *Mawsim al Hijra ila al-Shamal* (Season of Migration to The North) not only depicts the negative and positive aspects of the contemporary Sudanese' cultural and political situation but it is a novel which is concerned with all mankind.

The artistry with which the author handles both the theme and the linguistic structure of *Season of Migration to The North* has earned El Tayeb Salih the title "A New Genius of The Arab Novel." The novel differs from other Arab novels also dealing with the theme of the "Encounter Between The East and The West," in that *Season of Migration* depicts the experiences and traumas of a black East African — born of an Arab father and a southern Sudanese slave mother — who after spending a large portion of his youth and adulthood in England returns to his village on the Nile where he attempts to give back to the villagers that knowledge which he has learned abroad.

Though the apparent mimeticism of the novel tends to cause the reader — on the first reading — to believe that Mustafa Sa'eed actually existed, that mimeticism in no way dominates or controls the artistic structure of *Season of Migration*. Rather the reader finishes the novel believing that he has a deep, artistic understanding of the psyche of the contemporary Afro-Arab Sudanese society where the complex African and Islamic/Arab traditions are being put to trial, at this historic moment, as a result of the very intricate social and political developments in the Sudan beginning with the period of the Condominium and extending up to the period of Independence and after.

## **A Look at Books**

### **A new approach to the study of Sudanese nationalism**

Ahmed E. El-Bashir

Peter Woodward, *CONDOMINIUM AND SUDANESE NATIONALISM*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980) 221 pp., hardcover \$22.50.

This book represents a positive step in a new approach to the study of the political development of modern Sudan. The author utilizes the "collaborative approach" which he defines as "not only examining in detail the breakdown of the relationship between imperialists and collaborators which was central to the Sudan's attainment of independence, but the earlier period during which they had developed." (Preface, p. x.)

The precursor in the application of the collaborative approach to the study of the beginnings of Sudanese nationalism was the late Dr. Gaafar Bakhit in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation entitled, *British Administration and Sudanese Nationalism, 1919-1939*, University of Cambridge, 1965.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Woodward's study, though original in its own right, brings the study of the subject up-to-date. Both Bakhit and Woodward have successfully combined political science and historical training to produce a most revealing and appropriate approach to a multi-racial, multi-cultural society as found in the Sudan. Orthodox disciples of both disciplines may hesitate to give it their blessing.

The shift from the old chronological and descriptive approaches to the constitutional development and the rise of nationalism was long overdue. However, the shortcomings of the collaborative approach remain to be overcome before a definitive work is produced.

Woodward's emphasis on the interaction of the main actors, Sudan Political Service, the Umma Party, tribal chiefs, the Co-dominion, and later, the southerners and the United States, leads to the neglect of the economic and social developments and their modifying impact on the roles played by the participating actors. It also leads to the minimization of the significance of the impact of the resisters and boycotters, i.e., Ashiqqa, Khatmiya, and the communists and their several fronts. For example, though the number of communists was small, and their participation nonexistent in institutions created by the colonial administration, they played a great role in the radicalization of a receptive Sudanese public opinion in the urban centers. The role played by Nasser's mass media was equally effective in this respect.

1. Although a translation of the dissertation in Arabic was published in Beirut in 1972, the English original was not published for one reason or another.

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The collaborative process and its success in the Sudan could easily be gauged by the extent of the pressure of economic and social changes on one hand, and the organization and intensity of the resisting and boycotting groups on the other.

The most serious shortcoming of the collaborative approach is that it reduces the struggle for national liberation to a mere game of self-interest between the collaborators and the colonial masters, simply involving coaching, outmaneuvering, and betrayals.

Dr. Woodward, however, was able to overcome these shortcomings in varying degrees in his superb conclusion. In it the author was able to tighten most of the loose ends and to provide rare insights into contemporary Sudanese political dilemmas. The footnotes contain a wealth of material and useful leads for further investigation and follow-up. His heavy dependence on Sir James Robertson's book and papers is noticeable, as is the absence of Egyptian secondary and primary sources. Nevertheless, the chapter entitled "Egypt's Challenge, 1946-1947" is one of the best written about the subject. Paradoxically, it contradicts the collaborative approach in the sense that Egypt, a non-collaborative actor, played an important role in the development of Sudanese nationalism.

The chapters entitled "International Complications, 1950-1952," "Egypt's Success, 1952-1953," and "From Self-Government to Independence, 1954-1956" are well executed, but written in such a way as to make the Americans, the Egyptians, and the Sudanese collaborators appear as the aggressors, while the British government, the Sudan Political Service and the southerners appear as innocent victims. In spite of that, Dr. Woodward has written a scholarly and timely book.

## **Politics of the Waters of The Nile**

Derek Winstanley

John Waterbury, **HYDROPOLITICS OF THE NILE VALLEY**  
(Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1979) 301 pp.; \$20.00

Water as a natural resource is often taken for granted. Increasingly, however, concerns are being expressed in many parts of the world about future availability of water at a reasonable price. Although there is not a global shortage of water, nor is there expected to be such a shortage in the foreseeable future, there are aspects that do create cause for concern. At regional, national and local levels there are problems of water availability and of water quality and some of these problems threaten to increase in magnitude in the future. Although there is not an overall shortage, there are problems related to the harnessing of water resources and to delivery systems and these involve both physical and social factors and concerns.

The major physical problem is to determine the water resources that will be available in the future. With the exception of non-rechargeable aquifers water supply is dependent primarily upon rainfall and other climatological factors. A

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traditional method of determining future water supply is to use historical records of rainfall and river discharge as a guide to future expectations. In many developing countries a major problem is the short period and questionable accuracy of available records. This raises questions as to the extent to which these records can be considered representative of a longer time series and, hence, indicators of future water availability.

The harnessing of water resources involves costly engineering projects and decisions must be made not only as to their economic and technological feasibility, but also their political desirability. Often, financial and political considerations assume greater importance than the technical ones.

The result is that resource utilization often falls short of the 'optimal.' In the case of a river valley the interests of other riparian states must be considered in national policy-making and in some instances international authorities have been established to reduce inter-state conflict in river basin development. Major water resource projects are costly and the fact that many developing countries require external financing for their development projects involves further political considerations, in this case of a geo-political nature.

Using Egypt and the Sudan as a case study, it is these types of problems and issues that John Waterbury examines with respect to the utilization and management of the Nile River. His presentation is in chronological order. He records the historical developments in water utilization and management of the river system and then analyzes the present situation in context of the political and economic conditions in Egypt and the Sudan. Lastly, he looks ahead and attempts to project water supply and demand. While acknowledging the uncertainties involved in making such projections, the balance obtained by confronting the projections of supply and demand leads the author to conclude that the present system is approaching the outer limits of what it can provide and that a water deficit is highly likely in the next decade.

Although he states that the problems are not insoluble, he does express strong skepticism as to the likelihood of overcoming many of them. His main recommendation is to pursue a policy of internationalism in resource management in the hope that this will prevent the occurrence of problems that result when sovereign states act in their own self interest. He also advocates closer links between technocrats and politicians and stresses the need for institutional and procedural changes.

This is an interesting, informative and well-written book. The fact that John Waterbury has traveled extensively in the Nile Valley and has first-hand experience of many of the problems about which he writes is evident in his authoritative style of writing. The inclusion of 33 tables, 10 figures, 8 maps and an extensive bibliography greatly contribute to the substance of the book.

I would have liked to have seen in the book more discussion on Ethiopia, the country that is the source of over 80 percent of the water in the River Nile. On page 19 there is one technical error in that an isohyet is not a belt, but rather a line connecting places with equal rainfall.

As pressure on resources becomes more intense, the management of transnational resources will become increasingly important. This excellent case study will be of interest and value to a wide range of students having interest in, for example, the Middle East and Africa, resource management, river control, environmental studies, development, the relationship between politics and technology, and also to policy makers.



## Sudanese Literature in English

Mary McDavid

Osman H. Ahmed, ed., *SIXTEEN SUDANESE SHORT STORIES* (Washington, D.C.; Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, 1981), free. (\$1.00 requested for postage and handling).

Contemporary Sudanese fiction has not been readily available in the United States in English, either for an academic or a general audience, with one or two exceptions. That roadblock has been at least partially removed, however, with the publication of *Sixteen Sudanese Short Stories*.

This slim volume (81 pages) is a treasure trove of vignettes of changing life, customs and mores in Africa's largest country, one with both Arab and African antecedents. Twelve of the selections have been translated from their original Arabic; four, written by Sudanese from the South, originally were composed in English. The selections, published by the cultural office of the Sudanese embassy in Washington, D.C., exemplify the diversity of peoples and the enormity of cultures in a land that is, as cultural counselor Osman Hassan Ahmed remarks in his introduction, "ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous, inhabited by Arabs, Nilotics, Furs, Beja, Nubians, Nilo Cushitic and more than five hundred other tribal groups who speak more than one hundred different languages."

Sudan's master raconteur, al-Tayeb Salih, is well represented with his brilliant "The Cypriot Man," a gripping tale of a Sudanese man's brinksmanship with Death. Replete with sophisticated literary references, its subtlety and complexity mesmerize totally, as readers worldwide have come to expect from the author of *The Wedding of Zein* and *Season of Migration to the North*.

Relationships between men and women, rural/urban cultures in conflict and a traditionally rich reservoir of folklore, religious and family values in conflict and a traditionally rich reservoir of folklore, religious and family values form three major strands that course through these stories.

The Southern writers, Jacob Jel Akol, Atem Yaak, Agnes Poni-Lako and Francis Philip, offer particularly poignant, albeit ultimately violent, looks at men and women grappling with a new situational ethic poised against traditional communal norms. Equally enticing are stories from the Arabic North, by al-Tayeb Zarroug, Eissa Al-Hilu, Mohamed al-Mahdi Bushra, Salah Hassan Ahmed, Ali ak-Mak and others. Flavored by a fullness and richness of life that may be uniquely Sudanese, these stories transport the reader from the banks of the Nile to an urban factory, from the cries of the muezzin in the mosque to those of an anguished actress on stage.

Those exposed for the first time to Sudanese literature, or, for that matter, to Arabic in translation, may sense, here and there, the loss of the full connotation of a word or phrase. That is a small price to pay for the privilege of gazing inside the Sudan, using the eyes, ears and creative resources of writers as diversified and pleasurable as is the Sudan itself. This volume deserves to be read — and reread — by both old friends and new acquaintances of the Sudan.

Mary McDavid is a journalist for Sudanow based in Washington, D.C.

## Southern Sudan in transition?

Richard P. Stevens

Dunstan M. Wai, *THE AFRICAN-ARAB CONFLICT IN THE SUDAN* (New York and London: Africana Publishing Co., 1981) pp. xxvi, 234; \$35.50 hardcover.

The resolution in 1972 of the civil war which raged in the Sudan for seventeen years resulted "in a new era of relations between its two historically antagonistic peoples," according to Dunstan M. Wai in this recently published work. While this is the theme of the penultimate chapter, the final chapter seeks to establish that the regional autonomy achieved in the Addis Ababa accords is essentially transitional in character, "a point of departure upon which viable consensual relationships can be built."

Essentially *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan* is a rehash of the Southern Sudanese secessionist movement. Aside from an informative chapter on the role of the World Council of Churches in bringing about the peace agreement, the book presents no new information. On the contrary, the author's efforts to clothe his historical recapitulation in social science jargon scarcely adds to our understanding of the new political system which, Wai argues, must be pursued. Given the continued absence of the author from the Sudan it is perhaps inevitable that the book lacks those insights which might otherwise be expected from an outstanding southern Sudanese academician. Despite nearly a decade of peace, Wai is reluctant to admit the existence of "Sudanese" independently of ethnocentric labels — "African" or "Arab." His primary concern is to reaffirm as a unilateral right, "the right to self-determination of a sizeable group of people in a geographically concentrated area within a sovereign state . . ."

Notwithstanding the fact that Wai enables the reader to understand the attitudes and grievances of a portion of the Southern elite, in the final analysis the book is a disappointment. The absolute dichotomy reflected not only in the title but reiterated throughout the book falsifies the total Sudanese reality. Indeed, the assertion that northerners are "Arabs" because they so identify themselves fails to take account of numerous objective and subjective factors. In the context of Wai's exposition the very existence of such Sudanese as Abel Alier and Francis Deng is almost improbable. While generous in his praise of the Vice-President's role as a spokesman of the Khartoum government in the peace process, Wai does not give adequate attention to those southerners who rejected statehood for the South. If it is true that northern Sudanese can only be identified as "Arabs," by what objective and subjective criteria can southerners be identified by any label except tribe? Wai alludes to the presence of tribal animosities hindering a unified Southern stand until the emergence of General Lagu as the dominant regional personality in the secession movement but he

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does not deal with tribalism in terms of the "right to self-determination of all peoples." In looking towards the future it surely must be considered that the permanent residence of a large number of southerners in the north is an objective element in the Sudanese polity. This migration is accounted for not only by economic pressures. It reflects personal goals of upward mobility and social satisfaction which can only be achieved in the larger Sudanese political framework.

The author's assertion that tensions flowing from differences of culture must be accommodated cannot be disputed. At the same time, however, given the total African reality, it is obvious that the "primordial" loyalties which so concern Wai must also be transformed in the modernization process. As Wai plaintively notes, it was only Dr. Hastings Banda of Malawi, of all African leaders, who came to the vocal support of the secession movement. But it is difficult to make an African legitimizer out of the champion of African diplomatic ties with South Africa and Israel and one who has ruthlessly crushed political and religious dissenters at home. That Dr. Banda should so obligingly categorize the Sudanese conflict as an Arab war of extermination against Africans speaks more of the Malawian leader's surrogate role than of his perception of Sudanese affairs.

In speculating upon future internal political arrangements in the Sudan which might assure a greater degree of popular participation, it might be worthwhile to consider more precisely the advantages which diversity offers all Sudanese. Thus, the resistance of many Sudanese Muslims to the ambitions of those who would sacrifice personal liberties in the name of an Islamic state is strongly reinforced by the presence of the South in a united Sudan. The Republican Brothers, a uniquely Sudanese expression, is a vibrant testimony to the uniqueness of the Sudan in the Muslim world. At the same time, the Southern Region, as part of the larger Sudan, is undoubtedly saved from the fate which has befallen neighboring Uganda, a country with many parallels to the southern mosaic. One must hope that Sudanese academicians of every background will lend their talents to overcoming the "primordial" concerns so abundantly reflected in this volume.

## ***Recalling the past to reform the present***

Thomas J. Loughrey

Francis Mading Deng, *AFRICANS OF TWO WORLDS: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) xx-238 pp., hardcover \$15.00.

Dr. Deng's book, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan*, essentially deals with how his own ethnic group, the Dinka, perceive the progress made by the Sudan in integrating the Arabic north and the African south into a modern, unified nation-state. Through the eyes of the Dinka, who are the largest ethnic group of Sudan's highly diversified southern population, Dr. Deng traces the historical development of the south's relationship with the north.

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The book is unique in that Dr. Deng largely bases his study on his extensive interviews with 16 chiefs and elders from all over Dinka-land. It is through the perceptions of these chiefs and elders that we gain insights into the history of the Sudan which has shaped the modern-day conflicts between the north and the south over the process of Sudanese nation-building.

Through the oral traditions of the Dinka chiefs, first of all, we acquire an anthropological understanding of the Dinka historical, cultural, and moral makeup. The second section of his book deals with the Dinka's historical contact with the outside world. While we learn of the negative perceptions the Dinka have for their Turko-Egyptian and Mahdist rulers, we find that the Dinka considered British rule to be much more humane and pleasant, comparatively.

We are then led through the period in which Sudan gained a rather hasty independence in 1956 but was soon followed by a bitter, bloody civil war between the north and south which lasted 17 years. It has been this latter aspect of Dinka history which remains vivid in the minds of the Dinka. The interviews clearly show how the civil war left a deep distrust and hatred for the largely Arab north among not only the Dinka but by the majority of the southern population. The Dinka and their southern neighbors feel that independence for them has only been a means by which the north could continue its domination over the south politically, economically and culturally. It is exactly this perception by the south which Dr. Deng believes must be changed if Sudan's future is to be peaceful.

The third and final section of the book considers some of the important measures needed to be taken by the Arab north and the Sudanese government in order that the past bitterness and distrust between the north and south may be seen as only a bad memory. Dr. Deng believes some of the measures involve a sincere effort on the part of the Sudanese government to increasingly involve the south in the political life of Sudan. The government must also recognize that the quality of life both economically and educationally must be improved before the south will consider national integration as a value. And thirdly, Deng sees it is extremely important for the Sudan to begin emphasizing the cultural similarities rather than the differences between the north and the south as a way of slowly integrating rather than assimilating the south with the north.

Throughout the book, Dr. Deng is very optimistic concerning Sudan's future. It is a curious optimism considering the fact that the majority of the chiefs he interviewed were if not deeply pessimistic, at least "doubting Thomases." Deng, however, while realizing this, considers a number of factors that may nevertheless give cause for optimism. Deng points to the peace settlement reached in 1972 between the north and the south. This peace still exists today and according to Dr. Deng, is an indication by both sides of the desire to reconcile their differences through peaceful means. Secondly, there will be a great deal of pressure exerted by the OAU and the international community against any movement bent at splitting the Sudan into autonomous political units. Finally, Dr. Deng considers the south's great respect, (and in some cases, awe) for the personality and leadership abilities of President Nimeri as an extremely important factor in reconciling the bitterness, distrust and fear the north and south have for each other.

In conclusion, though the book can at times drag due to the number of interviews presented, it is still an interesting and valuable study on how the Dinka

view the north/south conflict in the Sudan. In addition, after reading Dr. Deng's book, one is basically left puzzled as to whether one should concur with Deng's optimism, or with the rather skeptical tone of the Dinka chiefs as to the future of the north/south relations in the Sudan. We may find hope in the fact that positive change has taken place between the north and the south since the 1972 peace settlement. We also need to be aware, however, that the past has not been forgotten by the south and its distrust for the north still lingers. An unexpected death of President Nimeri or the now faltering Sudanese economy may well spark off another bloody conflict between the north and south.

The situation is still explosive and not unlike what we witness now in Northern Ireland and Lebanon.

## Seven Interviews with Dinka Chiefs

John W. Burton

Francis Mading Deng, *DINKA COSMOLOGY* (London: Ithaca Press, 1980) 348 pp., £ 18.50.

*Dinka Cosmology* is Francis Mading Deng's seventh monograph on aspects of Dinka society and culture. By any measure, this is a remarkable achievement, and since this has been accomplished without the ambience and relative comfort of an academic appointment, this is all the more notable.

The present volume is best seen as a detailed appendix to his last volume, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan* (1978 Yale University Press). Each of the 13 chapters of *Dinka Cosmology* is a verbatim transcript of interviews with various chiefs, which provided the substantive arguments of *Africans of Two Worlds*. Hence the present volume is more a primary source book rather than a contribution to any specific body of academic knowledge. In light of this it is unfortunate that the book was published without an index. The only guide to its contents is provided by the chapter headings which, in principle, abstract the essential message of each chief. Whereas the title of the monograph suggests it is an addition to the classic books by Lienhardt and Evans-Pritchard on Dinka and Nuer religion, respectively, Deng employs the term cosmology with far less precision. Here, cosmology includes Dinka attitudes toward the President of the Sudan, a clearly Christian inspired view of creation as well as reasons for taking to the forest during the civil war.

Possibly because of its atypical format and contents, *Dinka Cosmology* will enjoy a wide reading outside the field of anthropology and Nilotic Studies.

John W. Burton, of Wharton College (Mass.) is more fully identified on page 54.

## Life on the Margins

Werner J. Lange

M. Lionel Bender (ed.), *PEOPLES AND CULTURES OF THE ETHIO-SUDAN BORDERLANDS* (East Lansing: Committee on Northeast African Studies, African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1981) pp. ix, 214; 8 maps; 9 photos; 6 diagrams; 8 tables; paperback, \$10.00.

This, the 10th monograph of the "Committee on Northeast African Studies" at Michigan State University, represents a welcomed effort to bring linguistically-related peoples (Nilo-Sharan) separated by the Ethiopian-Sudanese border and historical experiences together in a single volume. However, it promises more than it delivers — an unavoidable condition when only seven peoples (two of which are extinct) in one of Africa's most heterogeneous culture areas are portrayed within a scant 214 pages (two of which are identical) by six separate authors with divergent analytical approaches.

Each of the contributions, to be sure, significantly diminishes the ethnographic lacunae of the region. Each is impressively based upon primary data gathered in the region over the past decade and each (with the exception of Wallmark's disjointed article on the Bega) surpasses a mere descriptive level of analysis. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect is cacophonous.

Thematic unity — a major problem for any edited book — was not, despite the editor's claim to the contrary, achieved. Indeed the editor's own comparative analysis of the Meroitic language, however interesting and ambitious, simply does not fit (least of all as the opening chapter) within a text which aspires to have as its (somewhat nebulous) unifying theme "how people cope with their environments and each other" (p. 2). Furthermore, the invocation of Marvin Harris' ideological circumlocutions and George P. Murdock's classificatory ossifications simply does not suffice for theoretical orientation; neither scholar is that relevant to the basic subject matter of the text and should, like the "Meroitic Problem," have been reserved for a more appropriate setting.

1. "The Meroitic Problem" by M. Lionel Bender; "The Omo Murle Enigma" by Serge Tornay; "Ideology, Kinship, and Cognatic Descent among the Gaam (Ingessana) of Eastern Sudan" by Harold M. Launer; "The Bega (Gumuz) of Wellega: Agriculture and Subsistence" by Patrik Wallmark; "Dar Mesalit Today: Dynamics of Ecology, Society, and Politics" by Dennis Tully; "The Nyangatom: An Outline of Their Ecology and Social Organization" by Serge Tornay; and "Myths and Rituals of the Ethiopian Bertha" by Alessandro Triulzi.

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That subject matter was, in my estimation, inadvertently identified by one of the contributors. In his insightful article on Nyangatom social organization, Serge Tornay (p. 168) concludes that a promising line of research would be the study of peoples at "the margins of larger cultural domains" with an emphasis on resultant cultural change. His analysis of the Omo Murle, now fully assimilated into Nyangatom society, provides an example of precisely such a study. Similarly, Triulzi effectively analyzes the historical interaction in the ideological sphere between the Bertha, Funj and other peoples in a convincing demonstration of possible lines of cultural assimilation. The other contributions, since each also deals with a people historically on the fringes of a more expansive and established class society, cannot avoid this theme altogether; but they do not fully develop its implications. A more vigorous pursuit of inter-ethnic relations, cultural change and especially assimilation processes among the peoples discussed in this text would have made its contents even more relevant for contemporary Africa — particularly Sudan and Ethiopia. To gain greater insight into traditional African processes of assimilation (which certainly do not duplicate those experienced by peoples in capitalist or white supremacist societies) would perhaps alleviate unnecessary tensions associated with nation-building in the rapidly changing multi-ethnic environments of Ethiopia and Sudan. A modicum of such insight can be gained from this text only after considerable effort.

Its major contribution, however, is — as was evidently intended — to the ethnography of Nilo-Saharan-speaking peoples. As such, it provides a great deal of new information on the traditional life and ideology of four vigorous peoples near the Ethiopia- (not Ethio-) Sudan border and one, oddly enough, along the Chad-Sudan border; it provides traditional social anthropologists, extant cultural ecologists and budding cultural materialists with another tangible reference; and it provided its editor with an outlet for his bulky data on Meroitic. But what does it provide for contemporary Ethiopians and Sudanese? I am honestly not sure. But I am certain that the science of anthropology can no longer afford — in this era of ever deepening decolonization — to ignore or belittle questions of relevancy to such immediate needs (of peoples studied, not careers pursued) and hope to remain a viable science.

One final note on the African Studies Center at Michigan State — its publications have provided scholars with invaluable references, especially on Northeast Africa, but it desperately needs the services of a good proof-reader. Any typographical error is irritating (e.g. "kingdon," p. 182, 188; "oromo," p. 111); some dilute scholarly value (e.g. reference cited but unlisted, p. 56, p. 114; misspelled name of a great Ethiopianist, p. 203); and others cheapen the whole work terribly (e.g. p. 134 duplicated as p. 135). Similarly, a good cartographer could have raised the sophomoric level of some maps (p. 6, p. 62) to those of others (pp. 180-81) in this text. Despite these shortcomings, however, the monograph certainly makes — as its editor hoped — a "modest contribution." It deserves modest acclaim.

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