

Past, present, and future

FIFTY YEARS OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN SUDAN

Munzoul A. M. Assal
Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

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P.O. Box 6033
N-5892 Bergen
Norway

cmi@cmi.no

CMI CHR.
MICHELSEN
INSTITUTE



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Notes on contributors

Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil is Associate Professor of Social Anthropology and Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs at the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies at the University of Khartoum. His research and publications have focused on the areas of ethnicity, migration, customary law, customary land tenure, and traditional mechanisms for conflict management. His recent published works include: “Darfur Land Tenure Issues: Features, Problems, and Prospects for Sustainable Peace,” in *Darfur’s political economy: a quest for development*, edited by Hamid Eltigani Ali (London: Routledge, 2014), and “Nomad-Sedentary Relations in the Context of Dynamic Land Rights in Darfur: From Complementarity to Conflict,” in *Disrupting territories*, edited by Jörg Gertel, Richard Rottenburg, and Sandra Calkins (Suffolk: James Curry, 2014).

Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Khartoum, Professor in Development Studies at Ahfad University for Women, and affiliated Senior Researcher at Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway. His previous appointments include Director of the Economic and Social Research Council in Sudan (1976-1977), Dean of Juba University, South Sudan (1977-1978), Director of the Development Studies and Research Centre at the University of Khartoum, and Executive Secretary of OSSREA—the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (1992-2002).

Ahmed Al-Shahi (M.Litt. D.Phil. Oxon) is a Research Fellow and co-founder of the Sudanese Programme at St. Antony’s College, Oxford University. He taught social anthropology at the Universities of Khartoum and Newcastle and has conducted anthropological research among the Shaygiyya tribe of northern Sudan. Among his many publications on the Shaygiyya, Sudan and the Middle East are: *The Arab World and North Africa*, 1973; *La Republique du Soudan*, 1979; *Wisdom from the Nile*, 1978 (in collaboration with F.C.T. Moore); *Themes from Northern Sudan*, 1986; *The Diversity of the Muslim Community: Anthropological Essays in memory of Peter Lienhardt*, 1987; *Islam in the Modern World*, 1985, re-issued in 2013 (in collaboration with Denis MacEoin); *Middle East and North African Immigrants in Europe* 2005 (in collaboration with Richard Lawless).

Osman Mohamed Osman Ali is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, University of Khartoum. His research interests include sociological and anthropological theory, methods of social research, community development and systems of belief, rural communities, Islamic and

Middle Eastern societies, and peace and conflict. In recent years, he was part of research projects on Shari'a in different African countries and roadside and travel communities in Africa (Sudan and Ghana). His most recent books include: *Perusal and Verification in Ladislav Holy's Book: Religion and Custom in a Muslim Society: The Berti of Sudan* (in Arabic, 2013), and *Theories of Sociology and Anthropology* (in Arabic, 2013).

Munzoul A. M. Assal is Professor of Social Anthropology and Deputy Director of the Peace Research Institute at the University of Khartoum. Prior to his current position he was the Director of Graduates Affairs Administration (2009-2012) at the same university. His research focuses on refugees, internally displaced persons, humanitarianism, and citizenship. His major publications include: *Sticky labels or rich ambiguities? Diaspora and challenges of homemaking for Somalis and Sudanese in Norway* (2004); *Diaspora within and without Africa: homogeneity, heterogeneity, variation* (2006 co-edited with Leif Manger); *An annotated bibliography of social research on Darfur* (2006); and *Multi-dimensional changes in the Sudan 1989-2011: reshaping livelihoods, political conflicts and identities* (2015 co-edited with Barbara Casciarri and François Ireton).

Barbara Casciarri holds a PhD in Ethnology and Social Anthropology from the EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) in Paris. She did fieldwork focusing on economic and political anthropology issues among pastoral Arab-speaking groups of Sudan (1989-2013) and on the relationship between Berber-speaking pastoralists and Arab-speaking farmers in South-Eastern Morocco (2000-2006). She has been the coordinator of the CEDEJ (Centre d'Etudes et Documentation Economique et Juridique) in Khartoum between 2006 and 2009. Since 2004 she is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University Paris 8 and researcher at the LAVUE-UMR 7218. She edited with A. M. Ahmed a special issue of *Nomadic Peoples* 13, 1 "Pastoralists under pressure in present-day Sudan" (2009) and with M. Van Aken a special issue of the *Journal des anthropologues* 132-133 "Anthropology and Water(s)" (2013). She has been the scientific coordinator of two ANR projects in Sudan: WAMAKHAIR (2008-2012) and ANDROMAUE (2011-2014), and since 2009 she is, together with M. Assal, the referee of the scientific agreement between the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, UoK, and Paris 8 University.

Idris Salim ElHassan is Associate Professor at the International University of Africa, Sudan. He obtained a BSc. and MSc. in anthropology from the University of Khartoum, and a PhD in anthropology from the University of Connecticut, USA. Formerly, he taught at the Universities of Khartoum (over thirty years), King Saud (Riyadh), Addis Ababa, and International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (International Islamic University, Malaysia). He was visiting Professor to the University of Bergen, Norway, and the University of the United Arab Emirates. He is the author of several books including *Religion in Society: Nimerie and the Turuq* (1993) and *Sudanese Visions in Science, Knowledge and Culture* (2003)—in Arabic. He published many articles on gender, education, conflict, culture and religion in various journals and edited collections. He has been a member of many national and regional academic and professional organizations; for example, chair of the Sudanese Sociological Society, chair of the UNESCO National Committee for Culture, and member of the executive committee of the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA); as well as being a frequent contributor to local and international media.

Fahima Zahir El-Sadaty was Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Khartoum until she retired in 2009. After she graduated from Khartoum, she took her MA and PhD from the Universities of Manchester and London, respectively and was the second Sudanese anthropologist to join the department after completing a PhD abroad. She was head of the department in Khartoum between 1995 and 2005. Her research focuses on urbanization, poverty and migrants' adjustment in urban areas.

Abdalla Mohammed Gasmelseed has a PhD in sociology and is working at the present time as a project leader at Peace Quest International. He worked as a lecturer and a researcher for social sciences in several research centres and universities in Africa, Arab countries and Sweden as well as for international organizations in Sudan and Afghanistan. He published several books and scientific papers related to development, poverty eradication gender issues, peace and conflict.

Ellen Gruenbaum is Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology at Purdue University in Indiana, USA. She lived in Sudan in 1974-79 (Khartoum and Wad Medani) with her husband Jay O'Brien, and taught Sudanese Communities and other courses in the Department at the University of Khartoum, served on the Jonglei research team of the National Council for Research, studied social services in Gezira for the Ministry of Social Affairs, and focused on health and development in Gezira for her PhD dissertation for the University of Connecticut. She has returned for shorter periods of research several times. In the United States she is best known for her ethnographic work on female genital cutting, including her book *The Female Circumcision Controversy* (2001).

Gunnar Haaland is Professor Emeritus at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen. His first anthropological fieldwork was as a consultant for the FAO Jebel Marra project in Sudan. This experience fundamentally affected his anthropological work, particularly in the importance of combining basic and applied work; of discovering the interplay between local and global processes; of searching for the interconnections between material causality and cultural meanings; of the importance of comparative fieldwork; and of the importance of joint teaching and research projects with staff and students from various countries. For about fifty years he has been involved in teaching at the University of Bergen, University of Khartoum, Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Fudan University in Shanghai and Yunnan Nationalities University in Kunming. He has been engaged in applied work for various development agencies in Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique, Botswana, Nigeria, Mali, Yemen, India, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Bhutan. His basic research has focused on a) ethnic relations; b) pastoralism; and c) culture-historical developments—with over seventy publications on these themes.

Sondra Hale is Research Professor (Emerita), Anthropology and Gender Studies, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), former co-editor of *The Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* (JMEWS), and former chair of Islamic Studies and Women's Studies. She received her PhD in Anthropology from UCLA and has published *Gender Politics in Sudan* (now translated into Arabic), co-edited Sudan's Killing Fields (forthcoming), and contributed many articles and book chapters on gendered conflict, social movements, international gender studies, the politics of memory, and diaspora studies in Middle East and Africa. She is an activist academic who has received many awards for research, teaching, and

“diversity” work, including an award for 50 Years of Support and Commitment to the Sudanese Women’s Movement, a Life-Time Scholarly Achievement Award from the Association for Middle East Women’s Studies (both in 2011), and in 2013 was given a life-time award for Distinguished Scholarship from the Sudan Studies Association. Her articles have appeared in *Urban Anthropology*, *Cultural Dynamics*, *JMEWS*, *Feminist Economics*, *North-east African Studies*, *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, and *New Political Science*. Book chapters are in *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa*, *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East*, *Race and Identity in the Nile Valley*, *Female Circumcision and the Politics of Knowledge*, *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, and *Gender, War, and Militarism*.

Enrico Ille is Assistant Professor at the Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIGDPR), Ahfad University for Women, Sudan, and a member of the LOST Research Group at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Halle, Germany. His current research focuses on food supply chains in Sudan. Previous research fields were history, economy and political conflicts of the Nuba Mountains. Recent publications include his PhD thesis *Projections, plans and projects* (2013) and articles on drinking water, agriculture and gold mining.

Wendy James is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. She first studied geography, and then social anthropology in Oxford. She held a Lectureship in the University of Khartoum from 1964-69, and carried out fieldwork in the southern Blue Nile Province. She later taught in Aarhus and Bergen before returning to Oxford. Further research took her to Ethiopia (1974-75), to Juba (1982-83), and from 1992 onwards to the Ethiopian refugee camps for Sudanese. She has published on general anthropology as well as on Africa. Her latest book is *War and Survival in Sudan’s Frontierlands: Voices from the Blue Nile* (OUP, paperback, 2009). She holds an Hon. D.Sc. from the University of Copenhagen, is a Fellow of the British Academy, and was honoured with a CBE in 2011.

Leif Manger is currently Professor of Social Anthropology at the Department of Social Anthropology in Bergen and former (2007-2010) Research Director at Uni Global, a research division for development and global studies linked to the university. Manger’s early research is related to the Sudan. A later research interest developed by Manger relates to concepts such as diaspora, globalization and civilizational studies, and comparative studies of large regions. One of his latest edited books is a co-edited volume (with Munzoul Assal) on *African Diaspora, Diasporas Within and Without Africa. Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation* (NAI, Uppsala 2006), with case studies including Muslim communities in Africa and African Muslims in Europe and the United States. Manger has, since the 1990s, been conducting anthropological research on the Hadramaut Valley of South Yemen and on the migration of the Hadramis throughout the Indian Ocean region. This work has been published with the title *The Hadrami Diaspora. Community-Building on the Indian Ocean Rim* (New York: Berghahn, 2010). Manger has also done work on Palestine and the Levant, within the project *Global Moments in the Levant. Towards an Understanding of a Contact Zone Between Peoples, Cultures and States*, where he was the project leader and has co-edited (with Øystein La Bianca) a book with the same title. Leif Manger is presently in the early phases of starting research on Muslim borderland communities in China, with links to Central Asia and mainland Southeast Asia.

Jay O'Brien taught at Purdue University until his untimely death from cancer in 2013. He taught at the University of Khartoum from 1974-78 and at the University of Gezira from 1978-79. He was strongly influenced to study Sudan by his PhD mentor at the University of Connecticut, James C. Faris. O'Brien taught anthropology at several universities, in Wisconsin, Sweden, California, Botswana, New York, and Indiana. The themes of his paper in this volume were explored in his textbook *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment: An Introduction* (with Salah Shazali, Khartoum, DSRC 1979), *Economy and Class in Sudan* (with N. O'Neill, Avebury 1988), and *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History* (with W. Roseberry, U. of California Press 1991).

Gunnar M. Sørbo is Senior Researcher and former Director (1994-2010) of the Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway. Before joining CMI, he was i.a. Chair of the Department of Social Anthropology and Director of the Center for Development Studies, University of Bergen. A social anthropologist by profession, Sørbo has been involved in collaborative research and capacity building programs with Sudanese universities for more than forty years.

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Preface

The collection of articles in this book is the result of a conference held in Khartoum in October 2008. The conference marked the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Khartoum. All the articles in the book, except the one by Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, were presented at the conference and therefore pre-dated the referendum in the South, and the secession of South Sudan on July 9, 2011. While a separate update is not necessary since some of the processes that followed the referendum and South Sudan secession are actually a continuation of the old challenges facing Sudan, it is imperative to make a few points about post-secession developments and also about the things that happened at the level of the department; the loss of some people who were part of its history.

Following the secession of South Sudan in 2011, war broke out in the Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains. These were two important ethnographic areas in Sudan and three contributions in the book (those by Wendy James, Leif Manger and Enrico Ille) focus on these areas. In June 2011, war broke out in the Nuba Mountains, ending almost six years of peace in the area and shattering hopes for Nuba people to return after long years of displacement and exile. People from the Nuba Mountains were forced into displacement inside Sudan and some took refuge in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan. The same happened in the Blue Nile where war broke out in September 2011. Some people returned to the Blue Nile during the years that followed the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 between the Sudan Government and Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). Many of the returnees to the Blue Nile have since been displaced again; some crossed the border to South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The secession of South Sudan was a remarkable event and its implications will be far-reaching for people in the two countries—Sudan and South Sudan. Already much scholarship and anthropological work has been directed to post-secession issues. Two of the contributors to this book, Gunnar Sørbo and Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, have recently edited a volume that addressed lingering challenges and continuing conflicts in Sudan. For Sudan and South Sudan, readers may look at Gunnar Sørbo and Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed's (2013) *Sudan divided: continuing conflicts in a contested state*, Thomas Otieno Juma and Ken Oluoch's (2013) *South Sudan: A New Path?*, and Hilde F. Johnson's (2011) *Waging peace in Sudan: the inside story of the negotiations that ended Africa's longest civil war*.

Over the past ten years, the department lost many of its staff members, nationals and expatriates who served in the department many years back. Between 2004 and 2009, the department lost five of its staff members. Alia Ali Abdelrahman, Fadwa Omer Egemi, Fatima El-Rasheed, Paul Wani Gore, and Taj El-Anbia Ali El-Dawi died. These were great losses for the department and for the Sudan. Taj Al-Anbia Ali El-Dawi became the first Sudanese head of the department upon his return with a PhD from Manchester in 1970. He served in the department continuously until his untimely death in June 2009. The late Paul Wani Gore also served in the department from his return with a PhD from the University of London in 1980 until his death in April 2008.

A tribute goes to two prominent expatriate staff who served the department in Khartoum during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and who died in 2013. These are Ian George Cunnison (1923-2013) and Jay O'Brien (1947-2013). Ian Cunnison came to Sudan in 1959 and became the first professor of anthropology and the first head of department in Khartoum. He edited *Sudan Notes and Records*, which he transformed from a vehicle with random jottings by British colonial officials to a respected academic journal. Upon his return to Hull, he established the department of sociology and anthropology where many Sudanese anthropologists went for their training during the 1970s and 1980s. Ian Cunnison retired in 1989 and died in July 2013. Two months before Ian Cunnison, Jay O'Brien died in May 2013. He was influenced by his PhD supervisor, James Faris, to come to Sudan where he taught at the universities of Khartoum (1974-1978) and Gezira (1978-1979). Jay developed a passion for Sudan and was present at the Golden Jubilee of the department where he presented his article in this book. This book is dedicated to those who left us over the past ten years.

Munzoul A. M. Assal and Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

Bergen and Khartoum, November 2014

Chapter 1

Introduction

Munzoul A. M. Assal
Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

This book marks the celebration of the golden jubilee of the department of sociology and social anthropology at the University of Khartoum (1958-2008). The papers, now chapters in the book, were presented at the conference “Anthropology in Sudan: past, present and future—celebrating the Golden Jubilee,” 25-26 October 2008, Khartoum. The conference brought together anthropologists from different countries: Sudan, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and France. The participants at the conference represent different generations of anthropologists who at some point in time either taught at the department in Khartoum or had some sort of connection to it. Some of the participants taught anthropology at the department during the 1960s and 1970s, and they represent different traditions of anthropology. British, American and Norwegian anthropologists were part of the department staff during the early days and brought different experiences and traditions of anthropology to Sudan. Their involvement in both teaching and research directed the orientation of the discipline in Sudan and influenced Sudanese anthropologists. The chapters in this book therefore illustrate the diversity and dynamism of anthropology in Sudan and also show how the discipline developed in relation to the specificities of a developing country like Sudan. Through teaching and research, foreign and Sudanese anthropologists contributed to development efforts in Sudan to the extent that the topics with which they engage are relevant to local development needs. Many contributions hence directly talk to the necessity and importance of knowledge generation to human development and societal progress.

Chronologically speaking, the development of anthropology in Sudan can be conceptualized through three phases. Ian Cunnison outlines these stages as follows:

It is quite easy to recognize three periods of anthropology in the Sudan. In the first there was research by expatriates under an expatriate government. This period began about 1910 with the work of the Seligmans and went through Evans-Pritchard, Nadel, Lienhardt, Buxton and one or two others, to end at independence. The second began then or perhaps better in 1958 when anthropology started to be taught at the University

of Khartoum. The teachers and researchers were still expatriates but they were working in a Sudanese institution, under a Sudanese government. This period lasted until 1971. Then, with the return of the first anthropology students from abroad with higher degrees, the direction of the department was Sudanese, as was the bulk of the staff; and shortly afterwards the Economic and Social Research Council came into existence, giving further scope for the employment of Sudanese anthropologists. (Ahmed 2003, 13)

According to Ahmed (2003), after the third period, a line of thought emerged, questioning the relevance of the discipline and its usefulness in the process of development. For Ahmed, “the concern was to use the methods of anthropology, rather than the ideology behind such methods, so as to generate knowledge that could express concern about the rural poor and create awareness about the state of their livelihoods ... it was under such circumstances that Sudanese anthropologists considered anthropology a useful tool for generating knowledge of relevance to the development process underway in the country” (ibid., 13-14).

The idea of celebrating fifty years of anthropology came at a turbulent juncture in the history of Sudan. Long years of civil wars and protracted political instability characterized the post-independence years and affected the course of development in the country. In 1990, structural changes were introduced; economic liberalization policies were adopted leading to profound changes in the Sudanese economy and society. The effects of these structural changes were brutally manifested in higher educational institutions and policies. The medium of instruction switched from English to Arabic and there was a dramatic increase in the number of universities and other higher education institutions. The number of students also increased substantially. These changes corroborated serious challenges for both teaching and research (El-Tom 2006; Assal 2007). Changing the medium of instruction to Arabic without proper planning and neglecting English not only disenfranchised Sudanese students in public universities from making use of external scholarships, but also deprived them of scholarly sources written in English and other live foreign languages. The increase in the number of higher education institutions and students' intake came at the cost of quality (El-Tom 2006).

The second civil war in southern Sudan (1983-2005) and the crisis in Darfur (2003-to present), in addition to other mild conflicts in the country, and the deteriorating economy, created a humanitarian situation that warranted international intervention. While international interventions go back to the mid-1980s with the influx of international NGOs to provide relief food in Western and Eastern Sudan, such interventions became more conspicuous after 2003, with the escalation of the crisis in Darfur. Anthropologists were of course involved in these humanitarian interventions either as direct NGO employees or as consultants whose expertise on local community issues was needed by NGOs embarking on local humanitarian and development interventions. The graduates of the department in Khartoum thus found employment opportunities through which they could use their knowledge and put it to the service of the community. However, humanitarianism in Sudan, despite the opportunities it provides for anthropologists, is not without problems. Due to the low paying positions at the university, professors do consultancy work almost as a full-time job to be able to put food on the table for their families. The time they could devote to research is given to those who seek their expertise as consultants. With this type of involvement, anthropologists are not in a position to set the agenda; they rather respond to the demands of a complex environment that imposes certain concepts that are not neutral (Gledhill 2005; see also Casciarri

in this volume). It should be noted that at the national or university level there are no funds for independent research anyway, and if such funds exist, they are too small to enable the production of solid research. Production of solid anthropological knowledge is, as a result, decreasing alarmingly.

To cope with the challenges posed by higher educational policies introduced in 1990, the department has been active in recent years in revitalizing its international bilateral relationships. Celebrating the golden jubilee is one important event in the revitalization process. Being part of externally funded research projects, student and staff exchange programmes, and the organization of conferences and workshops represent some of the activities in which the department is involved. While these engagements are in a way conventional, their novelty is that they come at a time when there is academic stagnation, so to speak, that is brought by dire economic conditions and an unfavourable political environment. Sudan has for long been seen as a pariah state and was under sanctions since the mid-1990s. Before introducing the chapters in this volume, a brief historical background about the department is in order.

The department in Khartoum

The department of sociology and social anthropology (originally named anthropology and sociology) and the department of economics were the two principal departments when the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies was established in 1958. Prior to that date, social anthropology and economics were taught in the Faculty of Arts. The founder and first head of the department was the late Professor Ian Cunnison, later of Hull University, UK. The degrees offered by the newly established Faculty of Economic and Social Studies included a BS (general) in economics and sociology, a BS (honours) in economics, and a BS (honours) in social anthropology and sociology. The first batch of students graduated in 1963.

Over the years, the Faculty of Economic and Social studies developed to include the departments of political sciences, econometrics and social statistics, and business administration (which later became a school). At a certain point in time, the faculty also included the Development Studies and Research Centre (DSRC), which later became an independent institute. Additionally, the Health Economics Centre was established in 2000. The underlying philosophy of the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies adopted by the founding father (the late Saad El-Din Fawzi) is that Sudan as an independent country very much needs the contribution of modern social sciences in order to promote its development objectives. The new faculty was modelled after the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. The department of social anthropology and sociology was among the few departments that existed at the time in Africa, and as such it attracted a great deal of attention, part of the independence euphoria in Africa.

During the first decade after its establishment, the department attracted teaching staff of an international calibre including Fredrik Barth, Talal Asad, Ian Cunnison, Wendy James, James Faris, Farnham Rehfisch, Lewis Hill, Neville Dyson-Hudson, Peter Harries-Jones, Ahmed Al-Shahi, Nizam Ul-Din Ahmed, Gunnar Sørbo, Gunnar Haaland, Sondra Hale, Andrew B. C. Ocholla Ayayo, Richard Lobban, Rida Habib, Lena Fruzetti, Akos Oster, Jay O'Brien, Ellen Gruenbaum, and many others who taught at the department throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This group of expatriate anthropologists were instrumental in

training nationals who took over teaching and research in the department, such as the late Taj El-Anbia Ali El-Dawi and Fahima Zahir, who were the first Sudanese to join the teaching staff at the department after receiving their degrees from the Universities of Manchester and London in the early 1970s. They were followed by Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed (Bergen), Abbas Ahmed (LSE), Hassan Mohamed Salih (Hull), Belghis Badri (Hull), Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil (Edinburgh), and Idris Salim El-Hassan (Connecticut). Many pace-setting anthropologists renown internationally participated during that period, contributing their lot as external examiners; e.g., Evans-Pritchard, J. C. Mitchell, Paul Baxter, James Littlejohn, Godfrey Lienhardt, and Ioan Lewis.

Since its establishment, the department was oriented towards studying development-related issues. Examples of such studies include: nomadic pastoralism, the Jebel Marra rural development project, the Jammuiyya development scheme, the Geneid sugar factory, the Gezira scheme, the Khasm Al-Girba scheme, the savannah project, etc. An important development that came with the establishment of the department was the new interest for study groups outside southern Sudan, which dominated early anthropological studies. The fieldwork tradition enabled both staff and students of the department to become acquainted with the main characteristics and conditions of the population of Sudan at large. The teaching staff and graduates of the department became subsequently involved in many practical problem-solving activities, promoting the applied side of their profession. Researchers from Europe, the United States and elsewhere continuously visited and studied Sudanese communities mainly in affiliation to the department in Khartoum.

One thing that characterized the department from the beginning, and remains to this day, is the blending of sociology and social anthropology to the extent of almost diminishing the boundaries between the two disciplines. Regarding this disciplinary co-existence, a new development is now in the making whereby the University's senate has approved the curricula for social work degrees to be offered by the department. As a matter of fact, since 2007, the department is also responsible for teaching a post-secondary diploma in social work. Apart from this, the degree structure has also changed recently (since 2003) where the "pure anthropology group" has been abolished and students are admitted to the honours class according to their performance in the general BS degree. This is part and parcel of an academic reform that introduced the semester system whereby the year is divided into two semesters and students sit for exams at the end of each semester.

As for post-graduate studies, new options have been added to the already existing MS And PhD research degrees. The added options include a postgraduate diploma in applied sociology, a postgraduate diploma in social work, and a master's degree in social work. Over the years the department has awarded over sixty master's degrees and over fifteen PhDs in social anthropology and sociology. Plans are underway to introduce a master's degree in sociology by courses. As was the case during the early years of its establishment, the department continued to facilitate research work of anthropologists coming from abroad; notably, from Germany, Norway and, in recent years, France. This facilitation has been made possible through cooperation agreements between the departments and their foreign counterparts, departmental level agreements, and framework agreements between the university of Khartoum and European universities. Over the past two decades, academic cooperation agreements, at the institutional levels, were affected by political currents in the

country and the negative image Sudan attained within the international community. The civil war in southern Sudan, the Gulf war and in recent years the crisis in Darfur affected the Sudanese academia at large. While external relations were not completely stopped, they were substantially reduced, especially at the institutional level. Institutional relationships with British and North American universities ceased to function. Nonetheless, relationships with Norway (the University of Bergen) continued informally and young Sudanese anthropologists got the chance to go for their postgraduate studies, while few Norwegian anthropologists could come for their fieldwork in Sudan.

The Norwegian involvement in the development of the discipline in Sudan is perhaps the most important one. Apart from the involvement of Fredrik Barth during the 1960s and Gunnar Haaland during the 1970s, two projects warrant mentioning: the Savannah project; and the Red Sea Area Programme (RESAP). While the Savannah project mainly provided training for anthropologists during the 1970s, the RESAP was an interdisciplinary programme in which the geography and botany departments in Khartoum were involved during the 1980s and 1990s even though RESAP was formally discontinued in the mid-1990s. Although it was short-lived, RESAP was a programme that provided avenues for Sudanese anthropologists and their students to work with colleagues from other disciplines, thus bridging disciplinary divisions and forging ties that give Sudan anthropology its character.

Relationships with German universities (especially Bayreuth and Halle) are steadily thriving at the level of student exchange, facilitation of fieldwork in Sudan for German professors and students, and study grants at the PhD level for Sudanese anthropologists to pursue their degrees in Germany under the supervision of Kurt Beck, Günther Schlee, and Richard Rottenburg. In recent years, there have also been research projects in which Sudanese and German anthropologists are involved. These collaborative projects include *Sharia Debates* and *Traveling Models* and brought Sudanese anthropologists, senior scholars and students, to collaborate with their German counterparts mainly at the universities of Bayreuth, Halle, and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. A number of teaching assistants from the department are enrolled for their PhDs in German universities; they will be back with their PhDs to join the staff at the department.

Regional collaboration is also something the department promotes. In 2013, the department in Khartoum, in collaboration with anthropology departments in Bergen (Norway), Makerere (Uganda) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), won a five year project titled "Borderland Dynamics: anthropological capacity building in East African Universities." The project, which is coordinated by the department in Khartoum, runs during the period 2014-2018 and provides scholarships for MA, PhD students, and post-doctoral research. It will provide training for ten PhDs and thirty MA students. The project also involves staff and students exchange, local and regional conferences, and conversations with policy makers and civil society on borderlands issues, thus, making anthropology relevant to peace and development efforts.

The department had a bright past, is experiencing an uneasy present, and will have a potentially bright future. At the present time, there are nine teaching assistants completing their doctoral degrees, some abroad and some in Khartoum. There are also two newly recruited ones that are already enrolled in their MS studies, and the plan is to recruit additional teaching assistants and professors for the social work stream that has already started. The

department is expanding, in terms of programmes, community outreach and also in terms of getting into cooperation projects with regional anthropology departments; e.g., in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Makerere (Uganda). Finally, Sudan anthropology has been important for world anthropology. The seminal contributions of E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Fredrik Barth, Ian Cunnison, Talal Asad remain classics in anthropology. The department also occupies a prestigious position in the region: it played important roles in establishing an anthropology department in Ethiopia, and teaching anthropology in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The structure of the book

In addition to the introduction, this book contains seventeen chapters, representing papers delivered at the Golden Jubilee of the department, except for Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed's chapter. The contributions in the book represent different generations of anthropologists connected to the department, and as mentioned, their connections span over a period of five decades. The contributions bring different experiences and traditions, and reflect on fieldwork done by Sudanese anthropologists and their colleagues from abroad. Each chapter attempts to describe a certain aspect of the discipline in Sudan. Some authors combine solid fieldwork material with a personal take on how working in Sudan shaped their anthropological outlook, while others bring perspectives from different ethnographic regions. And yet others point to the relevance of anthropology for conflict analysis and peacebuilding in Sudan.

Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed's chapter, *The state of anthropology in the Sudan*, addresses the development of the discipline in Sudan by looking at issues of commitment, ethics and ideology. Ahmed looks at the development of anthropology in Sudan since the colonial era in four distinct periods. The first period starts with the visit of Seligman in 1910 and continues up to independence. During this period anthropologists supplied reliable information about native systems of social organization to the colonial administrators (see Bushra's contribution, this volume). The second period starts in 1958 when the department was established and anthropology started to be taught at the University of Khartoum. One of the features of this second period was that staff members were foreigners and there was little interest by students in the discipline, although anthropological teaching and research became development oriented and structural functionalism was the dominant theoretical orientation during this period. The third period starts with the coming of first Sudanese anthropologists with higher degrees from abroad during the early 1970s. During this period, anthropologists continued looking at problems of a practical nature although there was a departure from structural functionalism to a radical Marxist orientation towards the end of the 1970s. The third phase witnessed the establishment of anthropology in research institutes and universities, something that created an opportunity for anthropologists to prove that their training and knowledge could contribute to development. The final period is seen by Ahmed as an extension of the third, where Sudanese anthropologists started to question the relevance of some of the concepts used by expatriate anthropologists in the Sudanese context.

With a focus on personal experiences of doing ethnographic work in Sudan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and China, Gunnar Haaland's article, *Rethinking ethnicity: From Darfur to China and back; small events, big contexts*, provides fascinating anthropological insights of an anthropologist who started his anthropological career in Sudan and ended it in China. Haaland moved

east gradually (from Sudan to Bangladesh, Nepal and China) but the Sudan experience has always been with him and a reference point for his work. Sudan had a profound impact on Haaland's career. It was in Sudan that he did his first fieldwork, it was on the basis of that fieldwork he wrote his most quoted articles on ethnic processes (Haaland 1969), and it was his experience as a teacher at the University of Khartoum that convinced him that academic life was not too bad after all. When he came to Sudan in 1965 to work for FAO, the first thing Haaland did was to go to the anthropology department where he met prominent scholars like Ian Cunnison, Talal Asad, and Wendy James, who at that time had just started her lifelong work with the Uduk.

Haaland's contribution is a reminder to anthropologists of the importance of event-focused fieldwork, giving attention to cultural variation and curiosity-driven research and the importance of comparative studies. Influenced by Fredrik Barth's emphasis on "variation," Haaland argues that anthropologists should have what Popper calls love for our discipline's subject matter, which is the life-worlds of people living under specific circumstances, and while he urges for the use of theoretical perspectives, Haaland guards against theoretical fetish: it is not the theoretical tools we should fall in love with, these tools we should be prepared to discard as soon as better ones are available. By way of emphasizing the importance of comparative studies, Haaland brought ethnographic materials on Santal identity in Bangladesh; to show how his initial approaches and assumptions on ethnic processes developed out of fieldwork in Sudan were challenged. Moving on from Bangladesh to Nepal, Haaland reminds us about the importance of "event methodology," developed by Andrew Vayda (Vayda 1996), and that through following a single event of an individual nature we may end up unlocking larger interaction systems of national or global nature. Again, ethnic processes observed by Haaland reveal a combination of primordial attachments and instrumentalism.

For Haaland, in the 1960s it seemed that processes on the Fur-Baggara boundary were primarily channelled by economic structure and ecological setting, and this made him focus on instrumental aspects of identity change; in the Santal-Bengali case the importance of symbolic constructions in fostering commitment to Santal identity was clear; in the case of the Nepalese singer in Burma, attention was drawn to the importance of the way micro-level events shaped an individual's experiences of self-identity and how this stimulated him to produce a rich corpus of songs that articulated the value of Nepalese identity; in the Chinese case the importance of macro-level politico-economic conditions was obvious. Haaland offers some suggestions as to how the department in Khartoum should direct its attention: globalization ought to be given an important place in the teaching at the department, south-south cooperation should be strengthened, and students and staff should participate in applied work, but not to the extent of being full time development specialists.

Wendy James's chapter, *Strategic movement: A key theme in Sudan anthropology*, seeks to show how work by anthropologists, both Sudanese and others, has focused increasingly on the central importance of *movement* in the social life of Sudanese communities. Older studies, from the first decades of the twentieth century, tended to portray homelands in line with the setting of administrative boundaries, sometimes at the expense of patterns of movement which were "traditionally" part of local subsistence and often accompanied by relatively peaceful, or at least manageable, relations between neighbours. The 1960s saw increasing emphasis on labour and urban migration, patterns of movement which became

increasingly long distance and often international. Displacement as a result of conflict and struggle over resources, of a kind Sudanese have faced since the 1980s especially, has been a particular challenge for anthropologists, with their commitment to a humane understanding of historical experience through “local” fieldwork.

Wendy James reviews some recent efforts to apply the qualitative insights of the discipline to a field often left to the number-crunchers. One of these insights is an appreciation of the way that a sense of belonging, a sense of “home,” does not necessarily disappear in circumstances of displacement, even in extreme refugee cases. Particular illustrations were given from James’ own research in the Blue Nile borderlands.

Against the background of massive dislocation, James asks: What will the future relevance of the “Malinowskian”-style intensive fieldwork in one place (or at least with one language) be? And what about the cultivation of personal friendships in the field and the gaining of trust as a basis for writing accounts of a truthful and lasting quality? Are these accounts that the people or their grandchildren will recognize as their own history? How should anthropological methods seek to engage with the long-term world of the displaced and the ways they are forming new communities? How should academic anthropology respond to the dominantly bureaucratic, managerial style of information gathering so commonly found in the short-term work of the development and humanitarian agencies? Wendy James urges anthropologists to demand the backing, bureaucratic and financial, to build on this research legacy, even though today’s conditions are a bigger challenge than ever.

The issue of urbanization and social change in Sudan is tackled by Fahima Zahir El-Sadaty’s contribution, *Urbanization and social change in the Sudan*. El-Sadaty’s chapter is a critical engagement with conceptual and methodological issues surrounding “urbanization” and “social change.” She argues that there is an insurmountable confusion and methodological polemic in the literature of urbanization. For her, the polemic is not yet concluded not so much for the lack of theoretical paradigms but rather for the varied nature of urbanization and its manifestations. In her perspective, social change denotes transformation of structural forms as well as institutional arrangements of qualitative and quantitative nature.

El-Sadaty is critical of the failure of students of African urbanization to see that earlier forms of urbanization in Africa have been the result of a different set of historical forces, not similar to those in Western societies, and yet urban. Their failure stems from the fact that they have attempted to treat the city as a static, super historical entity, by elevating various concrete historical features to abstract universals. In discussing urbanization in Sudan, El-Sadaty looks at it through the different historical periods noting that prior to, and during, the Turco-Egyptian rule few settlements, which were active in trade and commerce, were referred to as urban settlements. This means that those settlements, which were classified as towns, were mainly commercial or administrative centres or both. Towns like El fashir, Shendi, Berber, Arbaji, Suakin and Kobe played such a role and were considered urban centres. During the colonial rule, certain towns sprang up as a result of initiatives such as the Gezira Scheme and the Gedarif durra cultivation, and later on, the white Nile pump Schemes, Managil and other mechanized agricultural schemes, resulting in temporary or permanent rural unemployment and rural poverty that forced people out of the land. National governments

in the post-independence period did not change colonial policies that impoverished rural producers and increased town-ward trek.

Idris Salim El-Hassan's contribution, *Old Omdurman and national integration: The socio-historical roots of social exclusion*, emphasises the importance of urban anthropology and the question of identity through the interaction between old-timers and new-comers. El-Hassan discusses a special case in Sudan where social exclusion is not related to an official social policy *per se* but rather due to the development of structural, socio-economic and historical factors, leading part of the urban population to not recognise others as co-citizens. The former think they are the "true" citizens while the latter are "outsiders." Another dimension is how social exclusion relates to national integration. El-Hassan argues that the two aspects are closely interlinked through how urban identity is defined on the basis of socio-historical criteria.

El-Hassan concentrates on social exclusion with regard to citizenship where one section of the population denies the citizenship of the other sections and on the impact this has on national integration. For him, social exclusion does not have concrete expression in political or social policy matters; i.e., the "excluded groups" are not prevented from participating in all aspects of political, economic or social life; they are not "misfits." On the contrary, some of them are very rich and occupy prominent social and political positions. The excluding group does not have any power to influence social policies that might affect the other groups. There are no physical or social confrontations between the two groups. The excluding group, old Omdurmanis, identify themselves as the "real" citizens of the national capital Omdurman by the mere fact that they are the old-timers. By doing so, old Omdurmanis ideologically appropriate the historical, national image of Omdurman to themselves. This raises the question of how Omdurman, once seen as a model of national integration, can be affected when it cannot maintain social integration within itself by denying some of its citizens the right of having shared in the creation of that national image. El-Hassan argues that Old Omdurman's model is not conducive to fostering the sense of national integration since it is exclusionary in nature.

Gunnar Sørbo's contribution, *Anthropology and peacebuilding in Sudan—some reflections*, poignantly brings interesting insights relevant to the development of the discipline in Sudan, particularly for the present and future of the country. Sørbo argues that while most anthropologists will agree on the relevance of our discipline for understanding issues of war and peace in Sudan, the following two questions are likely to elicit somewhat different answers: What would be the main features of an ethnographic approach to war and peace in Sudan? How would it be relevant for current efforts at peace facilitation and peacebuilding? When it comes to the relevance of anthropology for peacebuilding, Sørbo argues that anthropologists will agree on the following: (a) an ethnographic approach goes against the kinds of "broad-brush" explanations that have dominated much of the literature (ethnic hatred re-emerging after the Cold War; greed, not grievance; conflicts generated by environmental scarcity); (b) anthropologists have learned (since Evans-Pritchard) that there is no sharp categorical distinction between "war" and "peace," and that "peace" may sometimes even be more violent than "war." When applying a war-peace continuum as a vantage point for research, what may appear as original and "root" causes may change over time. Also, if some conflicts never really end, the aim of peace facilitation may not be conflict "resolution," but conflict transformation; (c) details matter and understanding the intricacies of particular

conflicts is decisive for the choice of intervention; (d) related to our local, people-centred perspective, one of anthropology's key tasks is to emphasize or explore the local potential for peace (peacebuilding from below); and (e) local and regional conflicts are becoming increasingly global in character. In "warscapes" like Darfur, contemporary experiences meet and intermingle, locality meets and fuses with trans-locality, the global is manifested in the local, exiles and diaspora groups are involved for political or humanitarian reasons, as are foreign agents and interest groups.

Using mostly examples from the growing anthropological (and other social sciences) literature on Darfur, Sørbo shows the relevance of such points for peace facilitation and peacebuilding. The story of Darfur is one of increasing complexity and intractability; it is about dramatically changing political and livelihood landscapes and changing power constellations; about growing links between many different conflicts (including the chronic conflict in Chad and the proxy war in which Chad and Sudan have been engaged through rebel groups and militias); about shifting alliances; and about the consequences of Khartoum's divide-and-rule strategies, including growing subcultures of ethnic violence. It is also about changing causes of conflict—amidst continuities—over time. There may be no other conflict area in the world where an ethnographic (and historical) approach to war has equally dominated at least the academic, and partly also the diplomatic, discourse.

Pastoralism as a theme in Sudanese anthropology has received conspicuous attention; either as a topic in itself or studying groups that practice it (Cunnison 1966; Asad 1970; Ahmed 1974; Salih 1976; Mohamed 1980; Casciarri 1997; El-Hassan 2001; Osman 2013). Barbara Casciarri's contribution, *The predicament of management and access to resources in globalized Sudan: Some notes on Arab pastoralists in the Butana and Southern Kordofan*, goes in this direction and illustrates Casciarri's engagement with this theme in Sudan for over two decades. The chapter focuses on the topic of natural resource use, livelihoods and access to resources among rural (notably pastoral) Sudanese groups. Being a classical topic of economic and political anthropology—that is Casciarri's approach—this domain has increasingly become a relevant issue in the context of deep and rapid transformation upsetting both urban and rural communities in the recent years in Sudan.

Casciarri's chapter is based on two ongoing research projects on Arab pastoral groups: the Ahâmda camel and goat herders, located on the western fringes of central Butana; and the Hawazma (Baggara) cattle herders of Southern Kordofan. The analysis focuses on different but related dimensions of the socio-economic dynamics emerging among these groups in their attempt to cope with several factors and actors of change (sedentarization, urbanization, economic liberalisation policies, wage labour, war, etc.). The chapter is preoccupied with three main dimensions. The first dimension concerns the "new" settings for technical and social management of resources adopted by groups affected at the level of production and social reproduction. The second dimension deals with the ongoing processes of *de-socialization* of resources; that is the striking material and symbolic transformation following the spreading of a dominant liberal market economy and its concomitant ideology. The third dimension concerns the question of growing inequalities and stratification and the encounter, on the political arena of local institutions, between parts of a small-scale society whose conflict is increased by the mentioned transformations.

Casciarri's theoretical inspiration draws from the French tradition of Marxist anthropology and its analysis of the modes of incorporation in the capitalist system of rural African societies, the "renewal" of Polanyi's thought promoted by anthropologists and economists in their study of globalization processes, the assumptions of some radical anthropologists working on the "new liberal order" and its effects in African countries (Duffield 1981).

An important point made by Casciarri is that not only the societies we study are crisis-ridden, but so is anthropology. She argues that the suggestion to enlarge our debate on the role and engagement of anthropologists in crisis-ridden societies is a stimulating and necessary challenge. Nonetheless, we cannot attempt it properly without admitting that we, and our discipline, are somehow also in crisis. Our profession is in crisis, because in most countries today, due to the liberal restructuring of the research domain and of a dominant utilitarian vision of knowledge, our studies are often not considered profitable and useful, hence, worth being duly funded and academically supported. Global capitalism pushes us to overcome such an impasse by becoming consultants for projects whose scientific limits are well known to us, by proposing research programs focusing on fashionable topics, by putting ourselves at the service of certain "study promoters" who are quite different, in aims and nature, from the environment needed to guarantee free and autonomous research. Casciarri alludes to the material and intellectual constraints facing anthropologists, with an obvious fetish for some catchy notions like governance, civil society, poverty reduction, gender, etc. (Gledhill 2005). For Casciarri, to confront the crisis in our discipline, we need to be critical. Through our criticism, we could unveil the ideological support underlying globalization and heavily conditioning the space and environment of our contemporary research, and, finally, better define with which change we need to be involved if we want to be "concerned anthropologists."

Leif Manger's contribution, *Conflicts on the move- looking at the complexity of the so-called "resource-based conflicts" in Western Sudan*, sums up his anthropological engagement with issues of traditional farming, resource management, trade, identity, and practical development interventions in Sudan (Manger 1981, 1984, 1994). For Manger, it is important that policy-makers and planners alike have information on various types of problems related to the working of production systems in rural areas of the Sudan and that the various policy options dealt with by such people be based on realistic assumptions about the driving forces behind existing patterns of utilization. Some of the pertinent questions Manger asks in relation to resource utilization and broader development issues include: Were the linkages between people's adaptations and available local resources in Kordofan characterised by people's over-utilization of a finite set of resources, requiring a focus on *resource management*? And, if that was the case, was such over-utilization caused by population increase or by the introduction of more intensive technologies in productive life? That is, was it population-driven or investment-driven? Or, were we dealing with situations of conflict that were not necessarily related to any absolute over-use of resources but that had to do with other factors that were rather social and cultural as well as political in nature, thus requiring a focus on *conflict management*?

With empirical material on the Hawazma and Nuba, Manger deals with the issues and questions outlined above, employing a cultural history perspective; to analyse questions of resource management, time allocation, and the interplay between human adaptation and political and cultural boundaries, including the question of identity. For Manger, such

a broad cultural historical perspective opens for an understanding of the distribution of groups, seeing the migration of Arabs and non-Arabs in Sudan. We can see how adaptive processes such as coping with drought or the shifts between agriculture and pastoralism have not only been adaptive processes but have also been characterized by shifts in identities (e.g., Nuba becoming Baggara). And we can see how such links affect the borders between groups, making them fluid rather than fixed and how the groups, seen as “moral communities,” might not coincide with the borders of ethnic groups or eco-zones. Manger’s final note is critical. He argues that the situation in Sudan moved from resource management to crisis management, and for him the problem is not really one about resource management, but rather about the failure of the Sudanese state to compose an identity in which not only Arabs and Muslims feel at home but also non-Arabs and non-Muslims.

Moving outside Sudan, Munzoul Assal’s contribution, *A Sudanese anthropologist doing fieldwork in Norway: Some critical reflections*, is a review of his fieldwork in Norway and a critical engagement with debates on ethnographic tradition in anthropology and the emerging “auto-anthropology” (Howell 2001). From one perspective, what Assal did is in fact conventional anthropology—that of an anthropologist doing work in an familiar or even exotic cultural context, with localisable groups—in contrast to some of the current anthropological fieldwork that is done among transient or non-localisable groups. But for Assal the distinction is not that simple. The two groups he studied, the Somalis and the Sudanese, at the time of his fieldwork (2000-2002), may come under the category of non-localisable groups. His fieldwork was done in Bergen and Oslo; both are definite and localisable spots. Yet, a compound of other factors stretching far beyond Bergen and Oslo affect the lives of Somalis and Sudanese among whom Assal did fieldwork. Their life projects are linked to places other than where they were living at the time of Assal’s fieldwork. Thus, apart from the agency a certain locality exerts as a concrete spot in which specific events or incidents take place, locality can no longer be fetishized the way it used to be in conventional anthropological writings (Wendy James’ contribution, this volume). What remains important, however, is the difference a certain locality makes for, or in, the lives of people inhabiting such locality. For instance, there are differences between Bergen and Oslo, in terms of work opportunities they provide for Somalis and Sudanese, and in terms of the organisational requirements they impose when it comes to issues of politics, ethnicity and meeting with native Norwegians (Assal 2004).

Assal did fieldwork in Norway, yet Norway is not his home country. He studied his own people, yet they are in a different place. He studied other people too (the Somalis), yet they are neither in their original home, nor in his own. This is an experience that requires some reflection. From this perspective, Assal is more or less in the position of what Weston (1997, 163) calls a “virtual anthropologist”; i.e., “the colleague produced as the Native Ethnographer.” As a native Sudanese anthropologist, he is required to weave delicately between subjective and objective stands, between being *native* and *ethnographer* at once. Assal did fieldwork in the Sudan for previous postgraduate studies before going to Norway but at that time it did not occur to him that being a native and an ethnographer at the same time could be theoretically and epistemologically problematic and challenging. Doing fieldwork among Sudanese outside the “habitual” or “natural” home is a challenging exercise. More often than not, Assal finds himself in a tough position; dealing with a perceptive audience that is very much fed with all sorts of twisted media coverage about immigrants and refugees,

and refugees who would like to have their version of the story told to the same audience. Assal's chapter is a critique to the epistemology of distance and otherness, which is still rampant in anthropology and is viewed as the best route to objectivity (Passaro 1997). In this connection, despite suggestions to the contrary (cf. Moore 1999; Thomas 1999), there are plenty of grounds these days for charging someone with a failure to perform real anthropology (cf. Howell 2001). Some studies are dubbed less anthropological than others. Such studies, argues Weston, include "studies of Europe ... studies that traverse national borders, studies 'up' instead of 'down,' studies of 'one's own,' studies that refuse to exoticise that stigmatised" (1997, 170).

Ahmed Al-Shahi's contribution, *Pluralism and governance in Sudan: Reflections on the local and national perspectives*, is based on his research and observations of over forty years on northern Sudan. During this period Sudan went through short-lived calm periods, and long turbulent times exemplified by two civil wars (1954/5-1972 and 1983-2005) and the ongoing conflict in Darfur. One prominent theme that runs through these unsettled periods is the problem of accommodating the political, ethnic, cultural, and religious plurality and diversity. Any imposition of a unitary culture or political system is likely to be met with opposition if not outright armed conflict. In this respect, the local model of dialogue, tolerance and consensus can be of great significance to any central authority.

Al-Shahi argues that, contrary to popular belief, northern Sudan is as diverse and plural as other parts of the country. The constituent characteristics of Sudan's mosaic are tribalism, religion, ethnicity, cultural differences, language, and political affiliation. He further contends that to shape a central political system by the army and an educated class and from an urban perspective and to impose it on the rural population is not conducive to the development of the democratic process and to political stability in the country. The local dimension of the democratic process stems from the cultural traditions of local people that have parallels in other parts of the world. For Al-Shahi, cooperation and understanding are necessary requirements for people of diverse origins and culture to live together, as his research among the Shaygiyya has shown. It is desirable, if not imperative, to respect the social and political formations at the local level since these traditions have moral significance and meaning for the people. To link the local and national level is essential to political stability, as each will learn from the other the tool of consensus politics.

Similar to what Ahmed Al-Shahi presented on pluralism and governance in Sudan, but more critical, Jay O'Brien's contribution, *Identity and culture concepts: Insights from Sudan*, deals with identity and cultural diversity in Sudan; themes which have been at the core of anthropological studies on Sudan and elsewhere. O'Brien's basic contention is that the conceptual toolkit that seeks to make sense of cultural issues requires re-examination. The tendency to treat culture as primordial and unchanging within bounded and self-contained units leads to viewing conflicts such as the ongoing one in Darfur or the civil war in South Sudan as irreducible clashes between cultures that may be suppressed for periods but never abolished—until the contending parties "mature" into "rational" civilizations. Ever since the European "enlightenment," modernist social thought has conceived an evolutionary process by which tribal, ethnic, religious, and other "non-rational" principles are gradually replaced by the products of "reason." When contemporary conflicts have presented themselves in ethnic terms or movements have arisen on the basis of religion, modernist thinking has

tended to comprehend these conflicts as moving against the tide of history. Recent popular “clash of civilizations” thinking by such luminaries as Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, who view conflict in the Middle East and the “war on terror” as manifestations of a death struggle between the “rational” West and “irrational” Islam, is but an extreme form of this conceptual dead end.

O’Brien explores the proposition that it is the modernist thinking that has been moving against history as it fails to come to grips with changing cultural processes in a globalizing world. He begins by examining the most basic cultural concepts of anthropology in general terms and then considers alternative conceptions and, drawing on field research he conducted among several ethnic groups in the 1970s and 1980s, examines them in operation in the context of social processes and conflicts in modern Sudan. Adopting a critical stand, O’Brien contends that discourse on ethnicity and related issues seems to be problematic, for its anthropological guardians as much as for their cousins in neighbouring academic and policy-making fields. While a variety of approaches to the study of ethnicity have emerged in anthropology in recent years, fuzzy primordialist notions seem still prominent, not to mention predominant in popular conceptions. Few anthropologists would now claim that ethnicities are immutable primordial identities, and, indeed, a number of anthropologists have helped develop an understanding of the mutability of ethnic identity that acknowledges notions of situational identification, ethnic assimilation, colonial construction of ethnic units, and ethno genesis. Reflecting on his fieldwork on different ethnic groups in Sudan, O’Brien provides an interesting analysis about ethnic identification, cultural reconstruction and how these processes relate to the civil wars and identity-based conflicts in Sudan. Overall, the chapter is a critical engagement with modernist discourses on globalization, culture and identity on the basis of empirical material the author collected in the course of his anthropological work in Sudan.

Musa Abdul-Jalil’s contribution, *From native administration to native system: The reproduction of colonial model of governance in post-independence Sudan*, deals with the case of promoting tribal leadership as a component of political and security administration in Greater Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. Although the newly introduced system has been given the name of “native system,” it shares many similarities with the native administration that British colonial authorities had introduced in the first quarter of the twentieth century. An important question to ask therefore is: If the establishment of a native administration by British colonial authorities can be understood against this backdrop, how can we understand its re-adoption by the Sudanese government in the twenty-first century?

The survival of the native administration system in Sudan after more than half a century of independent rule was unexpected. This is especially so because the educated elite that had led the struggle for independence was particularly aware of the importance of replacing native administration with a new democratically oriented system of local administration that better characterised a modern state. However, public administration experts thought that native administration could not be abolished immediately in the rural areas because of the lack of proper infrastructure to run an alternative modern local government system. Nevertheless, the system was gradually replaced in urban areas without many problems. The abolishment of native administration in the rural areas had some serious repercussions, so it had to be reinstalled. The real surprise was the reinstallation of a quasi-native administration

system in the capital city of Sudan, which is considered the vanguard of modernisation in the country. Moreover, the government that supervised these initiatives is run by a political group that had spearheaded the call for the abolishment of native administration in all of the country. The reason for this change of policy is directly connected with the need of the regime to control the immigrant population, which has increased sharply since the mid-1980s as a result of drought and the upsurge of war in the peripheral areas of the country.

The study of religion occupies a considerable space in Sudanese anthropological studies. This is an area where both foreign and Sudanese anthropologists contributed their lot. Osman Mohamed Osman Ali's contribution, *Anthropological studies on religion in Sudan*, provides an overview about studies on religion in Sudan and the aspects that are covered by them. Ali tackles the historical development of anthropological studies on religion in Sudan and the concomitant changes in their areas of concentration, basic questions, theoretical underpinnings, and writers' identities. He looks at these studies in two main periods: before and after the political independence of Sudan.

The period prior to the independence of Sudan witnessed the studies of Seligman (1932), Evans-Pritchard (1937, 1956), followed by Lienhardt (1961) shortly after independence. These studies were basically on southern Sudan. The post-independence period witnessed a shift of focus to northern Sudan. Both Sudanese and foreigners were involved in studies on northern Sudan, including Taj Al-Anbia Ali Al-Dawi, Abdullahi Mohamed Osman, Idris Salim El Hassan, Abdullahi Osman Eltom, El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed Salih, Osman Mohamed Osman Ali, Ahmed Al-Shahi, Ladislav Holy, Janice Patricia Boddy, Susan M. Kenyon, Wendy James, and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban.

These scholars dealt with many aspects of religion and religious life in Sudan, with a focus on the following themes: (a) Muslim Sufi orders and ideology; (b) local interpretations and variations of Islam; (c) *Zār* spirit possession; (d) divinity; and (e) Islamic sharia law. Ali argues that anthropological studies on religion in Sudan reflected the influence of certain Western theorists and the global theoretical and methodological changes, as could particularly be inferred from the circles of discipleship among practitioners. Nonetheless, these studies continue to be influential and exemplary in anthropology.

Sondra Hale's contribution, *Gendering the politics of memory in conflict zones: Women, identity and conflict in Sudan*, brings a dimension that is hitherto absent in Sudan anthropological studies. There were of course numerous and recent accounts on gender (cf. Abusharaf 2009), but Hale's take on "memory" brings a dimension that was absent. Few topics are more relevant to analysing and resolving conflict or to generating theories and policies than the politics of memory. Although memory and its place in politics had not engaged anthropologists until recent years, it is very much an epistemological, theoretical, and political force for the future of the field. For Hale, memory is here, in the heart of ethnography and embedded in the politics of memory where people confront each other with the past, tell stories of the past, and refute each other's telling of the past. In conflicts people not only kill each other, but they try to kill memory; e.g., their enemy's idea of his or her past. People likewise try to colonize each other's pasts. The various strategies for killing memory or colonizing that memory are rupturing time and space; annihilating culture; forcing one group's customary practices on another; exterminating intellectuals; dislocating people from their homeland

or forcing them to live among different ethnic groups; and land alienation. These are some of the strategies of violent conflicts that are aimed at forced forgetting, but are hard to forget.

People who have survived these strategies tell stories about them. It is the telling and the pointing that reinforce the memory of the events. Oral histories (storytelling) are often transformed into ethnographic data (Sylomovics 1998, xxi). And we act on that ethnographic data as if it were real, not as if it were imagined. These stories become a contested history. People remember their “homelands” differently and in the course of conflicts attempt to alter those homelands and the objects of memory, as in removing guideposts, markers, place names, and entire villages. Erase another’s land and the land will be yours if you mark it with your own objects and memories. The process is both abstract (memory) and material (real objects that symbolize a culture). For Hale, the politics of memory is about what the past means to the present. The focus of contestation is not so much about what happened in the past. It is about who or what is entitled to speak for that past in the present—which is often a conflict over representation—i.e., whose views should be sought. There could be agreement over events, but not over how the truth of these events may be most fully represented. According to Tamanai (1998, 4-5), “the more powerful an individual or a group is, the more effectively such an individual or group member can exercise the politics of memory.”

For women in the conflict zones of various regions of Sudan—especially in the contemporary conflict in Darfur—not only do different ethnic groups and people with differing modes of economy remember their pasts differently, but also women and men remember their pasts differently. So much of the “homeland’s” past is written on women’s bodies. Men may claim to remember the homeland through the bodies of women. In fact, in most instances of gender-based violence memory is linked to women’s bodies and the “homeland.” The representation of that homeland is therefore embodied. In Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and South Sudan women have been subjected to forms of sexual violence and other atrocities. These violations are remembered differently by perpetrator and victim, but the relationship of the perpetrator and victim may be one of ambivalence, unsettling notions of who did what to whom, where, and under what circumstances. Hale argues that an ethnographic search for indigenous mediation strategies in league with a process of gendering the politics of memory in conflict zones in Sudan may guide “Sudanist” anthropologists to a new threshold of the integration of theory and practice.

Ellen Gruenbaum’s chapter, *From harmful traditions to pathologies of war: Revamping the anthropological analysis of health in Sudan* is a contribution to the anthropology of health, illness and healing. Gruenbaum argues that the root causes of several international health disasters—such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Haiti, drug-resistant tuberculosis in Russia, and the many ill-effects of poverty on health—are found in “pathologies of power.” The global crisis of health and human rights is a “war on the poor,” and band-aid strategies of small improvements in health conditions cannot begin to address the underlying disparities of wealth and power. Yet in looking at Sudan’s health conditions in the international arena, economic inequalities in the colonial and post-independence periods have received less attention than topics such as traditional healing, zar, and “harmful traditional practices.”

Gruenbaum utilises ethnographic research from the 1970s (with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the University of Khartoum), 1989 and 1992 (with the Development Studies Centre and

the University of Khartoum), and 2004 (with Ahfad University, UNICEF Sudan, and CARE Sudan) as the basis for revamping the approaches to the anthropology of health, illness and healing, taking into consideration post-colonial critique of the ways culture and traditions have been singled out. Her analysis includes the effects of conflict, economic disparities, and international funding preferences on patterns of illness and health and on programmatic agendas, and she places particular emphasis on the role of Sudanese activism in addressing health and human rights concerns.

Enrico Ille's contribution, *Historical thinking in political discourses: The case of land issues in South Kordofan*, views historical thinking as something that creates a connection between the present time and the past. It results in a specific understanding of the past, which is represented according to the present it is embedded in. In the case of land issues in South Kordofan, this connection exists in the first place as discourse on first-come or autochthonous rights on primary, communal land rights. Since "original people" is presently a significant category in negotiations of land property, settlements and territories are claimed to be "original land" of this or that group, respectively. This understanding contradicts both governing law in North Sudan and centralized land allocation practice, through which large pieces of land are given to commercial investors or governmental projects for large-scale mechanized farming. Heavily affected by these dynamics, contentions among local communities in rural areas are dominated by discourses on communal land rights as a "tribal" privilege. This situation was intensified by the establishment of land commissions after 2005, following the policy of communal land registration favoured by the Sudan's People Liberation Movement. The chapter presents some theoretical considerations of the relationship of historical thinking and political discourses in present Sudan, citing the case of the village (Tira) Mandi in South Kordofan. It shows the layers of argumentation and the underlying socio-political structures that dominate processes to legitimize claims of leadership in a certain area, and thus primary rights on its resources. It also discusses the contradiction between the "clear" and "unquestionable" character of historical narratives, and the actual blurring of social categories and historical processes. In conclusion, the paper suggests understanding historical thinking in political discourses as embedded production of knowledge, bound to social frames as well as group and individual interests.

Finally, Abdalla Gasimelseed's contribution, *Rethinking livelihoods in the Gezira Scheme: A study of the Al-Takala village*, is an empirical sociological account on farming and off-farm income in the author's home village. Upon returning to the village after twelve years of absence, Gasimelseed observed that the majority of the tenants and farmers in his village are not keen to cultivate their tenancies and their farms along the banks of the Blue Nile. They, rather, purchase almost all their vegetables and grain from the market including sorghum, which was previously produced by them. Furthermore, he also realized that almost all the households in the village have at least one person that has either malaria, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure or renal failure and that at least one person migrated to oil producing countries.

The above observations warranted Gasimelseed to explore how the interplay between access and control of resources, livelihood activities, strategies and the institutional arrangements affect livelihoods and food security of the household in a village in the northern Gezira Scheme. Gasimelseed attempts to answer two broad questions related to livelihood inter-

vention: first, what kind of institutional arrangements and policies make it possible for poor people to achieve sustainable and secure livelihoods, and, second, how the interplay between access and control of resources, between livelihood activities and strategies and how the institutional arrangements affect livelihoods and food security on the household level. Moneylending, sharecropping, and off-farm wage labour are strategies adopted by both poor and rich farmers to diversify their income sources. While rich farmers adopt short- and long-term diversification strategies, like commercial activities and education, the poor farmers' diversification strategies are more or less a coping strategy for survival. Gasimseed also found that labour migration in and outside Sudan is a critical income strategy for all households in the village. A large number of households are found to be in debt, and due to the widespread diseases in the Gezira Scheme health represents the second arena of household expenditure after food. Gasimseed concludes that livelihoods in the study village are diversified and that households purchase most of their basic food commodities including grain from the market.

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Chapter 2

The state of anthropology in the Sudan¹

Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed

In introducing the *Political system of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, the late Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard stated that:

The investigations were made at the request of the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which had encountered some difficulties in its dealings with the Anuak nobility, and may, therefore, be considered a piece of “applied anthropology” in the only reputable sense this expression can denote at the present stage of the anthropological sciences: the discovery of facts so that a government can organize its administration to the light of them. I hope that it may prove of use to administrators and I trust they will realize that my study of the Anuak was limited to a small range of problems and increase our knowledge by more extensive enquiries. (Evans-Pritchard 1940b, 5-6)

This relation between anthropology and colonialism has been well established (cf. Magubane 1971; Mafeje 1971, 1976; Asad 1973; Ahmed 1973).

The major problem has been to transcend the petty bourgeois intellectual preoccupations of this discipline and realize that, rather than a product of individual mental reflexes, its contribution to the development of society ought to be geared to its socio-economic condition. Mafeje (1976) has accomplished this task. However, the state of affairs of the post-colonial states of Africa makes it very difficult for African intellectuals to get away from scientific colonialism. The present generation of African anthropologists is a product of colonial anthropology. If one generalizes Mafeje’s statement about himself and his fellow countryman Magubane, anthropologists “are African petty-bourgeois, pale imitations of European bourgeois society” (Mafeje 1976). But what can be said if anthropology ought

1. From Ahmed (2003, 25-42).

to apply to other social sciences in this context? It is a mistake to single out this discipline for criticism. The issue has its theoretical basis and historical context and cannot be understood without an enquiry into its growth.

It is within such a frame that the development of anthropology in the Sudan, and its present state, can become meaningful. During the past decade, attempts have been made to evaluate the “progress” of anthropology in this country. Its evolution, from being a tool used by administrators to help run a country with a diversified group of people to involving research contracts undertaken by possibly self-motivated scholars and becoming an academic discipline taught in a national university, has already been noted (Asad 1973; Cunnison 1977).

After describing earlier phases in the development of anthropology in the Sudan, this chapter will assess the state of anthropology in Sudan today, with special reference to the question of commitment, ethics, and ideology. As Cunnison (1977) argues, it is quite easy to recognize three fairly distinct periods of social anthropology in the Sudan. The first period starts with the visit of Seligman in 1910 and continues into the independence of 1956, when research was carried out by expatriates under an expatriate government. It was during this period that Evans-Pritchard, Nadel, Lienhardt, Buxton, and a few others carried out their work.

The second period starts in 1958 when anthropology as a discipline began to be taught at the University of Khartoum. Albeit a Sudanese institution, researchers and teachers were still non-Sudanese working under a Sudanese government.

1971 marks the end of the second period and the start of the third. It is during this year that the first anthropology students with higher degrees from abroad began making their way back to the department. The direction of the department started to be Sudanese, as was the bulk of the staff. By the early 1970s, the Economic and Social Research Council came into existence, giving employment to Sudanese anthropologists and providing opportunities for professional anthropologists to prove that their training and practice could be relevant to development problems. The end of the 1970s witnessed the establishment of two development-oriented universities, each with its special emphasis. Both the University of Juba and the University of Gezira instituted anthropology as a major field in the course of study for their first intake of students.

Applied anthropology undertaken on a consultancy basis needs to be added to the three periods recognized by Cunnison. One might argue that applied anthropological research is just another aspect of the third period, but it does deserve special treatment. Consultancy research, for the most part, has had a negative impact on the development of the discipline, and it has raised doubts as to the useful involvement of anthropologists in development efforts. The practitioners in question are expatriates working for international agencies that rival multinational companies in their control of the Sudanese national economy. Since their commitment is to the interest of the agencies employing them, their position in the neocolonial state is similar to that of the anthropologist of the colonial era.

Phase I: Expatriate government, expatriate anthropologists

By the end of the nineteenth century a large body of ethnographic material on the Sudan had found its way in a number of publishing houses in Europe. The most important was the description of the Sudanese people given by traveller James Bruce in his book, *Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile* (Bruce 1805).² Other works of an even higher quality were the books and articles of the German explorer, Robert Hartmann, published between 1863 and 1869. The most intensive of these works was *Reise des Freiherrn Adalbert von Barnin durch Nord-ost Afrika in den Jahren 1859 und 1860* (Hartmann 1863).³ In addition, a number of other explorers visited the Sudan on their own account, or under the sponsorship of various interested European institutions, and wrote about the ways of life and institutions of its people. Arab travellers also gave detailed accounts of the Sudanese society at the time. Prominent among them was Ibn Umar al-Tunisi on Darfur with his book titled *tashiz al-azhan bisirat bilad al-arab wa al-sudan* (al-Tunisi 1850).⁴

Sudanese scholars had also written about the life of the different groups of people living in the country. The most important contribution, and the name best known to contemporary scholars working on the Sudan, is that of Muhammad al-Nur Ibn Daif Allah with his book *Directory of saints, Holy Men 'Ulama and Poets in the Sudan'* written in 1805 approximately.⁵

The government of what was by the beginning of the twentieth century the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan found the material of great assistance, as it offered the administration information needed before embarking on major plans for the development of the country. As anthropology was gradually establishing itself as a separate discipline within the field of social sciences, a number of British administrators were seeking specialists to supply them with reliable information about the systems of social organization of the “natives” among whom they were working.⁶ Not only has anthropology been an aid to enlightened colonial administrations,

2. James Bruce was a Scottish traveler who started his exploration of the sources of the Blue Nile in 1769. In 1771, he travelled through Sennar and on through Berber to Aswan in Egypt, which he attained in 1772 (see Hill 1967, 8).

3. Robert Hartmann (1831-93) was a German naturalist who, in 1859, accompanied the young Baron A. von Barrun in a journey across the Bayuda steppe from old Dongola to Khartoum and up the Blue Nile. He later became a professor of anatomy at the University of Berlin and wrote several books on the people of the Nile valley (see Hill 1967, 1522).

4. Muhammad Ibn Umar al-Tunisi (1789-1857), a member of a learned Tunisian family, in 1803 joined his father who was in Dar Fur. He gave the world the first detailed description of Dar Fur (see Hill 1967, 277-78).

5. Muhammad al-Nur died in 1809. He wrote his book, which is a collection of biographies of Muslim saints in the Sudan, in colloquial Sudan Arabic (see Hill 1967, 268).

6. See contributions to Asad (1973) by Ahmed and Faris.

but professional anthropologists, through voluntary association with the colonial administration, have helped to strengthen the position of the administration in many a colonized country.

The attitude of the Anglo-Egyptian administration toward anthropological research is best summarised by Evans-Pritchard when he says:

The government of what was then the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan always encouraged anthropological research in the southern Sudan, both professional and amateur. Professor C. G. and Mrs. B. Z. Seligman made surveys in 1909 and 1921-1922 and their observations, together with such information supplied by others, were published in 1932 in their *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. Between 1926 and 1935 I paid six visits to the southern Sudan, on the first making surveys of areas not covered by Seligmans, and on the others making more intensive studies of the Azande, Nuer and to a lesser degree the Anuak. In 1939-40, Dr. S. F. Nadel continued our labours, conducting his research among some of the peoples of the Nuba Mountains. When the World war was over research was renewed. My colleague at Oxford, Dr. R. G. Lienhardt, between 1948 and 1954 paid five visits to the southern Sudan, where he made intensive studies of the Dinka and Anuak. He was followed by several of our students: Dr. J. F. M. Middleton made a study of the Lugbara (a Uganda people though some live in the Sudan) in the years 1949-1952. Dr. Jean Buxton made a study of the Mandari in 1951-1952, Mrs. Philip Mansfield (Miss Elinor McHatton) made a study of Lotuko between the years 1951 and 1954, and Dr. Conrad Reining made a further study of the Azande, with particular reference to "The Zande Scheme" from 1952 to 1955. Another research has recently been carried out by the present Government Anthropologist Dr. Kronenberg, in 1957 among the Nyimang, a people of the Nuba Mountains of some 37,000 souls, and in 1958-1959 with Mrs. Kronenberg among the Bongo and neighbouring peoples in Bahr El Ghazal Province, and in 1959-1961 again with his wife among the Didinga and Longarim of Equatoria Province. (Evans-Pritchard 1962, 1)

The willingness of the government to sponsor anthropological research was part of a general policy fostered by the Colonial Office for gathering more reliable material on the social organization of the "natives" and their systems of belief. The general feeling was that such material, when collected, would help the administration to easily establish means for maintaining "law and order" and to construct plans for the development of "tribal" groups within the framework of the colonial system.

This first phase is one in which research is done by expatriates for an expatriate government and where the administration and the anthropologist share the same ideology—that of colonialism. The main objective of the administration was to control, suppress, and exploit the indigenous population. The anthropologist helped facilitate this by explaining how the indigenous system of organization, beliefs, and values worked. Even though evidence of direct reporting does not extend beyond monthly reports submitted to the civil secretary's office, as shown in the Sudan Archives, the anthropologist was writing to an administrator who to some extent shared the same training and therefore was able to understand anthropological jargon. The financial bond is further proof of the linkage. The question of ethics did not arise here, since the objectives of the administration and the ideological bias of anthropologists

were one and the same. The theoretical contribution of anthropology managed to fit fairly well with the administrative inclinations.

It is sometimes argued that “with the exception of Nadel, there was little meaningful co-operation between anthropologists and administration” during the first period (Cunnison 1977, 4). On the contrary, it is easy to indicate that cooperation was a very important part of the relationship between administration and anthropologists in this first period, because most if not all of the finance for research came from the colonial administration. In more than one case the administration asked for specific studies to be undertaken (cf. Faris 1973; Ahmed 1973). Moreover, one of the least publicized works of Evans-Pritchard, *The Political System of the Anuak* (1940b), was in fact a demonstration of the involvement and use of the anthropologist in war times in the Sudan, long before the southeast Asia case, since Evans-Pritchard was involved in organizing Anuak irregulars during his stay in the Anuak land.

However, if meaningful cooperation is meant to refer to direct reporting on the people studied, in the Sudan it was not necessary to write simple reports that could be understood by administrators. The top posts in the Sudan civil service, unlike many cases in the history of British colonies, were manned by high-calibre graduates from Oxford, Cambridge, and London Universities. Moreover, most of these administrators had the opportunity to return to the University of London to take courses in anthropology, and some of them (e.g., P. P. Howell) did far better work than later anthropologists who came to their areas.⁷ This being the case, one might expect that administrators liked to see anthropologists reporting research results in a professional manner, and could draw their own conclusions for policy making.

The administration exercised firm control over the work of anthropologists associated with it. As early as 1926, a list of questions was provided to anthropologists who were expected to file reports including answers to some of these questions. The hope was to save anthropologists from getting involved in matters of purely academic interest and forgetting the immediate needs of the administration. Sir Harold MacMichael, one of the most able administrators in the British Empire, wrote in 1926:⁸

I feel too that we should get practical results in a shorter time and have more chance of avoiding the danger to which one is always liable in dealing with the scientific expert, viz: that he will sink the practical in the recondite and lapse into over-elaboration. (Ahmed 1973, 268)

The Sudan government engaged Evans-Pritchard in 1930 specifically to study the Nuer with the purpose of getting the information needed for their pacification and the establishment of administration among them. Similarly, Nadel was employed to do his study of Nuba in 1939. At the end of 1937, the government of Sudan had also established a government

7. Courses in applied anthropology were offered at the University of London for British administrators in the colonies. Some of the Sudan civil servants attended these courses, P. P. Howell being one among these. References to these courses are found in Evans-Pritchard (1951, 110).

8. A long excerpt of this letter can be found in Ahmed (1973, 267-69).

anthropologist and archaeologist position. A. J. Arkell took the job. However, most of Arkell's work was devoted to archaeology, apparently because of the advice offered by some of his colleagues in Sudan, who thought that he could do better by leaving anthropological research to Evans-Pritchard and Nadel and concentrating on archaeological excavation or museum work.⁹ By 1940, the Sudan government instituted an Anthropology Board under the Civil Secretary Chairmanship.

After the Second World War the position of government anthropologist was separated from that of archaeologist. Lienhardt was the first to fill the new office and did his work among the Dinka and Anuak of southern Sudan. He was followed by Ian Cunnison who conducted intensive work on a north Sudanese group between 1952-54, and then by Kronenberg.¹⁰ It must be noted here that all the studies before that of Cunnison were concentrated in southern Sudan or the pagan tribes of central Sudan.

To sum up, anthropological research in the Sudan began in 1910 and was continued thereafter by professional anthropologists through the sponsorship of the Sudan government and the help of the Colonial Office (especially in its early stages). The pioneering institution in this field was the Anthropology Board, with members from the Civil Secretary's Office and the Education Office. Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain more information about this board as there seem to have been no regular records of its achievements in the Sudan Archives in Khartoum.

The common orientation of anthropologists and administrators had a great influence on the way in which rural areas in the Sudan were run. This influence could be seen in the application of the equilibrium theory in the management of local communities, a theory directly borrowed from British anthropology. It is this equilibrium that is characteristic of Evans-Pritchard's material—to take only the most influential writer of this period. Not only does he adhere to this theory in *The Nuer* (1940a), as exemplified by the segmentary model, but also in his classical study of the Azande (1937). The Azande study shows us a system of thinking which has its own logic. Contradiction and scepticism within the system are mechanisms that safeguard it from failing. While it is made clear that all this takes place in a stratified society, in which the final say always rests with the prince, this knowledge is suppressed in order to allow for the idea of equilibrium to work. In the case of "commoners" it is as if they determined their fate by themselves. Such a view allows the "commoner's"

9. Such advice came mainly from Sir Douglas Newbold, who was Governor of the Kordofan province then (see Henderson 1952, 79-80).

10. With reference to this point Cunnison says: "Perhaps A. Kronenberg was the only worker with this title: I was told that I was not a government official; perhaps it was the same with other grant recipients. If my own situation was typical, there was nothing to the relationship: I had a government grant from 1952 to 1954 to do research on the Messiriya. The Province Governor got me to write a short plan, for the second year, which he forwarded to the Anthropology Board, and I was to lodge a final report with the Ministry of the Interior. While the Messiriya were laid down as the subject of the study, there was no pressure to make enquiries in any particular direction. I did exactly as I liked, which meant practicing anthropological research" (1977, 6).

place in society to be handled separately and to be shown as being in equilibrium through its own governing mechanisms.

In relation to the whole discipline of anthropology, research carried out in the Sudan is of great significance. Ioan Lewis gives an evaluation of this research:

The Sudan republic has been the scene of some of the most important and theoretically far reaching discoveries in social anthropology. Evans-Pritchard's classic studies of segmentary politics among the uncentralized Nuer, and of witchcraft among the Azande have not merely revolutionized the sociological understanding of tribal societies, but have also contributed much to a deeper understanding of the institutional basis of conflict and cohesion in human society generally. (Lewis 1971)

Among the most popular works of this period, which had a great significance for the development of the discipline and even influenced other disciplines such as political science, philosophy, and religion, are those of Evans-Pritchard, Nadel, and Lienhardt. Examples of these, to mention the classical pieces only, are *The Nuer* (Evans-Pritchard 1940a), *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Evans-Pritchard 1937), *The Nuba* (Nadel 1947), *Divinity and Experience: the Religion of the Dinka* (Lienhardt 1961).

Phase II: Anthropology comes to the university

In the second phase there were considerable changes in all fields (not only anthropology) as the University of Khartoum took over the role of prime mover of research from the administration. Since its introduction as a course in the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies in 1958, anthropology has gained ground. By the end of 1970, the Department of Anthropology at the University of Khartoum had ten posts, seven of which were filled and all by non-Sudanese members. There were also three teaching assistant posts, which instead were filled by Sudanese. But anthropology, as in most newly independent countries, remained linked to colonialism and its justification. In order to legitimize anthropology within the university, social scientists and students had to be convinced that the discipline contributed to developing a nation like the Sudan. In response, both anthropological teaching and research became development oriented, which soon led to more general acceptance. Research funds and possibilities for fieldwork were good. In this period research was focused on the northern Sudan, mainly because little had been done there and because disturbances had started in the southern part of the country.

Because of the past use of anthropology in the colonial administration, members of the anthropology department declined to participate directly in research in those areas where national political issues were involved. As Cunnison puts it:

We declined a proposal from a British foundation for one of the department staff to cover the situation in Wadi Halfa. Partly this was because we all had commitments already, but mainly because we considered it unwise to enter a politically controversial area in the climate of the early 1960s. The programme adopted seemed to be the most useful in

view of the skills available and the requirements of the time. Since planning was in the air, it would be better that accounts of communities should become available so that those responsible for planning could act in knowledge rather than in ignorance of the social systems of the communities to be affected. (Cunnison 1977, 7)

Yet at the same time, the need for advice on social issues remained. The United Nations Development Decade started, and visiting UN consultant teams came into contact with local planners. Some of the visiting teams included anthropologists (e.g., Barth on the Jebel Marra team in 1963). This fact might have encouraged some government departments to seek the advice of resident and expatriate anthropologists in order to improve performance, but there were strong reasons inhibiting members of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Khartoum from operating along these lines:

Towards the end of this period the same approaches were being made from the government departments for consultations, or for short surveys to be made, but with one or two exceptions the advice or help called for was not of a kind we could give in the time available and the general circumstances. Communication was difficult: few of us succeeded in establishing relations with people in ministries to match those we had in the University. *The Arabic of most of us was so bad that we were not in a position to tune in properly, even through newspapers, to contemporary debates and issues in the metropolis. We were in but not of the society.* (Cunnison 1977, 7-8; emphasis added).

Theoretically, a structural-functionalist analysis became the most dominant feature of this period. Towards the end, however, there were radical interpretations of the communities studied within the national frameworks. Among the most important works of that period are *The Barggara Arabs* (Cunnison 1966), *The Kababish Arabs* (Asad 1970), and *Nuba Personal Art* (Faris 1973b).

Phase III: Indigenous anthropologists and expatriate consultants

For more than seventy years, professional anthropologists from other countries have come to what is now the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, with the intention of conducting ethnographic research and in-depth anthropological studies of local communities. These anthropologists follow on the heels of travellers who for two centuries reported varying descriptions of customs, values, and aspects of the organization of states and systems, and of small groups in what was referred to as Bilad al-Sudan.¹¹

In the last decade, indigenous social anthropologists, after their graduate studies in the west, have returned to the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Khartoum, creating a core of indigenous scholars in a country familiar to every anthro-

11. As a geographical term, Bilad al-Sudan refers to all sub-Saharan Africa, extending from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. It was first used by medieval Arab geographers. Modern historians of Africa have continued using this term in their discussion of the Sudanic belt (O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974, vii).

pology student in the world. The number of staff members in the department is eleven at the moment, seven of whom are basically trained as anthropologists, the rest have had training in both anthropology and sociology. There are also five teaching assistants who are studying for a doctoral degree in anthropology abroad and who will join the teaching staff upon their return. The department offers undergraduate courses for between 180 and 200 students and it also offers masters and doctoral degrees. Ten students are currently enrolled in the master degree program, three are completing their doctoral degree. The courses offered at the undergraduate level range from a basic introduction to anthropological theory to areas of specialization such as the Middle East and Africa. There is an orientation towards development issues, and courses such as sociology of development and rural sociology are given special emphasis.

Anthropology is also taught at the University of Juba, Gezira, and at the Cairo University branch in Khartoum, as well as at the Islamic University. However, the number of courses taught and the number of staff involved in these institutions are rather limited.

In this third period, the focus of anthropological study differs from the two other periods in that it involves a more detailed analysis of relations between locality and nation, particularly in the political field. However, it continues to embody the characteristics of the second period; namely, that of looking at problems of practical nature. In addition, the "academic approach" characteristic of the first period (as Cunnison calls it) is not completely neglected, mainly because anthropologists continue to use the structural approach which leads to the view that nothing observed is irrelevant. Yet, in this third period, anthropologists do not allow the fantasy of being academicians to distract them from the applicability of their research in daily life.

The development of this third period is shared by expatriates who joined the department in Khartoum and later the Juba and Gezira Universities. In the second period it was easy to notice the influence of the Oxford school of thought on staff members, most of whom got their training there. But toward the end of the second period a somewhat different orientation came about through the contribution of Fredrik Barth, who visited for one year, and James Faris, who joined in 1966 for a period of three years. Both were trained in Cambridge, yet attempted to break away from the British school of anthropology. Both of them had a marked influence on the third period. The non-Sudanese staff who joined in the early stages of the third period were mostly their students. The connection was the result of an exchange agreement that Barth initiated between the anthropology departments in Bergen, Norway, and Khartoum. Faris maintained his connection with Sudan after leaving for the United States, and helped by sending some of his students to join the department in Khartoum.

The results of this connection have been of great assistance in the tasks facing the practitioners in the third period, since all those who joined are genuinely devoted to development issues. The staff from the second period returning to the University of Hull established further links because of concerns on the ability of the department in Khartoum to satisfactorily keep up its role in the third period. To do so they created the "home-based appointment" scheme where staff members were recruited for a period of three years and spent two of these years

in the Sudan teaching at the University of Khartoum.¹² In addition, the National Council for Research established its Economic and Social Research Council, whereby anthropologists interested in research of an applied nature had an opportunity for fieldwork as well as adequate financing. This provided further job opportunities for anthropology graduates and gave a chance to staff members to further their research interests through affiliation and sponsorship.

The substantial achievements of this third period—staffing of the department mostly by Sudanese members, cooperating with other departments outside the country, creating new jobs in other national institutions, and legitimating the role of anthropology as a discipline important to the process of development—have been overshadowed by even higher expectations. The indigenous or national anthropologists, who returned to the Sudan in this period, suffered from “scientific colonialism” as Galtung (1967, 296) calls it. Most of them came back and started “rethinking” anthropology, instead of concentrating on “reinventing” it. Few innovations have appeared since. It is taking some time to create this independent thinking, which calls for dismantling concepts that are marked by both western bias and ethnocentric ideology, and to critically analyse the literature produced by the Sudan about itself.

In view of what anthropology contributed worldwide in the colonial days, the hope was that its orientation in an independent Sudan would change, and that all practitioners in the field would rethink the concepts they were using in their analysis and the kind of problems they were focusing on. This would also involve a reconsideration of the unit of study. However, because of the hostile attitude of the Sudanese elite to anthropology as a discipline, after independence this reorganization was not an easy task. A considerable number of intellectuals viewed anthropology as a subject relevant only for a colonial government, and of no use in an independent country (cf. Ahmed 1973, 259-70). This attitude has been reflected in the low enrolment of students in beginning courses for the teaching of anthropology as a discipline (Cunnison 1977, 6). In addition, the questionable nature of the training that some indigenous anthropologists received, plus the influx of a large number of expatriate researchers, created a negative image of the role of anthropology in the development process in the Sudan.

The emphasis on regional studies and social issues in the process of development, however, has by now given anthropology a new focus. Many changes might be in the making, but a major one, which is already apparent, is methodological; namely, the shift from participant observation to participant intervention. This method raises the issues of commitment, ethics, and ideology, which have been a growing concern of anthropologists in the last two decades (see e.g., Hymes 1972). While today the Sudanese anthropologist is “both in and of the society,” there is not necessarily a unity between anthropology and administration. It is true that they share a common language (Arabic, not anthropology) and that their shared experience of being contributors to nation-building might improve their chances for mutual interest. After all, the anthropologist and the administrator are co-nationals. Yet, as

12. As a result of this scheme, the person chosen by the department in Hull University was sent to Khartoum for two years at the expense of Khartoum University with a supplement from the British Council. The selected candidate would then return to Hull for a one-year appointment. This scheme ran into some difficulties and is no longer functioning.

a participant in the national political system, the individual and his or her commitment to a certain line of development may lead him or her to disagree with the ideology of the ruling regime. Rapid shifts of political power have reduced the contribution of anthropologists to development on a national level. This is basically because of the lack of a dominant ideology which can give guidance to the social scientists at the dawn of independence. However, since the mid-1970s, radical approaches to the study of society were adopted by most of the department members in Khartoum without neglecting classical anthropological theories, which are basic to the study of the discipline. A number of publications by some members of the department exemplify this shift; e.g., Mohamed's *The White Nile Arabs* (1980) and Ahmed's *Shaykhs and followers* (1974), where the seeds of breaking away from the structural functional school were sown. Recently, a Marxist orientation started to dominate among the staff members and is expressed in both course content and publications.¹³

Currently, the members of the department have also made some progress through their greater involvement in policy-oriented research by institutionalizing social research into development projects and by substituting participant intervention in policy-making and implementation for participant observation. But at the same time a new phenomenon has appeared. There has been a flood of expatriate researchers and students whose main interest is to do research of an exotic nature in the shortest time possible. These are mostly "established" experts, and graduate students of various western universities, who work as consultants and advisors to powerful multinational or international agencies working in the Sudan.

These consultants and expert advisors gained their early fieldwork experience in the Sudan with the help of the department of anthropology. Believing that cooperation with various colleagues abroad should be encouraged, the department affiliated a number of these overseas students to the university, hence, giving them a chance to get research permits. Later on, this university affiliation became unnecessary when research permits were no longer required for "experts," "consultants," and "advisors" from international organizations or multinational corporations.

Most visiting anthropologists of this period fall into two categories: students who come to do "exotic" fieldwork and at the same time assume the role of advisors; and professional anthropologists who come as "experts" even if they have never been in the Sudan before. The first group lacks in experience and seems to be unable to grasp the issues of commitment and ethics. In the long run, the members of the first group simply further scientific colonialism as they use the influence of the agencies for which they work or to which they are affiliated to gain access to, and sometimes remove, documents that indigenous scholars cannot even dream of consulting due to security arrangements. Ethnically, by way of commitment, they seem to be more concerned with collecting their material in order to get their degree, after which they turn into "experts" on the country and its people. The impact that their research may have on the local people and the use of their reports by international agencies are matters they are seldom concerned about.

13. Courses on sociology of development, rural sociology, urban studies, and some of the material suggested for the course entitled "Texts and Problems" are examples of the Marxist orientation. For publications, see Ahmed 1979a, 1979b, and El Wathig 1980.

The second group of anthropologists, no matter how limited their knowledge of the Sudan, assumes an "expert" role and applies a "hit-and-run" method of research. Their visits to the country usually do not exceed a few weeks, during which they consult Sudanese specialists, whether inside or outside the universities. Often, the work of the Sudanese is borrowed and later edited after a short trip to the locality or region they were sent to study. Their reports are mostly based on knowledge gained through a hasty study, and quickly written without reflections before leaving the country.

Assessed in terms of their commitment to the local people, the second group is worse than the first. Anthropologists from the first group offer recommendations that may have a major impact on the population whose aspirations for development will not be uncovered by these short study missions. It is clear that their commitment is to their employers, for otherwise they might not be employed. Academic jobs for anthropologists in Europe and the United States are limited, and jobs as visiting experts or consultants are often well paid. Moreover, international agencies are required by legislation to have a social scientist on each team, although all too often anthropologists and sociologists are merely decorative. This type of work is easily justifiable if the belief is that international agencies and multinationals are bringing development to the Third World.

The involvement of visiting experts and students is damaging the progress of the discipline in this third phase because the standard recommendations of visiting "experts" are often taken more seriously by government officials than the detailed research of local university members. This can be seen in studies conducted for irrigated and rain-fed agricultural projects, which raise another aspect of dependency that, although important, will not be dealt with in detail here. It is a difficulty which will perhaps be solved in time, when government officials will discover that the "professional friends of the Sudan" are prepared to maintain a shared duty only so long as the Sudanese continue to play the part of ignorant natives and those "friends" can monopolize the position of thinking and speaking for them.

Colleagues from various universities of the world, interested in sending graduate students to the Sudan, should know that most of the members of the department in Khartoum today would agree with Hymes in that:

It is not a sufficient reason to study another culture simply because it is "other". Ethically and politically, too, there must be good reasons to inflict yet one more expatriate inquirer on another part of the world. Instead of taking for granted that a doctoral candidate in anthropology will do (exotic) fieldwork, let us require candidates to demonstrate that they should be allowed to. (Hymes 1972, 32)

The dominance of the expatriate influence today can be attributed to the use of the English language as a medium for reports submitted to the government. Of course, this is just another illustration of the scientific colonialism still accepted by the universities and the government body in the country. It is also an element of dependency and neocolonialism since most of the donor countries like to get reports in that language. Although the country obtained its independence in 1956 and despite the fact that most of its population speaks one form of Arabic or another due to pre-university education being Arabized in 1970, English remains the medium of teaching in all universities. When writing up research results, the department

in Khartoum makes an effort to use Arabic. But more needs to be done, especially if the question of “for whom does one write” is relevant. Do we really need to follow the Western academic format when writing reports for the government or publishing the results of our research? Such a question is being raised all the time and it is linked to the issue of reconsidering concepts and “re-inventing” anthropology, already mentioned above.

If the experts have had a positive impact it is that they influenced Sudanese anthropologists to leave behind the single-discipline approach and cooperate with other social scientists and disciplines handling development issues. The nature of the research undertaken and the problems investigated encourage interdisciplinarity, as can be seen in the Rahad and Jongelei projects (cf. Ahmed 1979b). However, this does not mean undermining or lowering the professional standards held by anthropologists. Work in multidisciplinary teams requires that anthropologists be excellent in their profession as well as good in other disciplines in order to understand what colleagues are saying and contribute more to the joint task at hand.

In terms of training students, a reconsideration of the structure of courses offered in anthropology and required courses in other departments is required. Fortunately, this is gradually being done, and the hope is that its usefulness for the development of the country will be realized.

Conclusion

The state of anthropology in the Sudan today, cannot be understood without knowing the different periods it has gone through. During the first phase, the focus was on the various systems of organization relevant to the colonial administration financing the research and on questions of interpretation of meaning. The second period brought a shift of emphasis in research. Although general monographs continued to be written, specific problems of a practical kind were more often discussed. The question of the settlement of nomads and their administration provides the best example of this concern. The same interest in practical application continued into the third period, but in addition more emphasis was placed on the analysis of locality in relation to the country as a whole. A reconsideration of concepts used in the analysis of data begun at the end of the second period but received higher priority in the third, in which there has also been a stronger methodological concern with participant intervention, increased interdisciplinarity, and more direct contact with development planners and decision makers through various institutionalized research schemes. Attention has been given to the involvement of the non-Sudanese experts and students in the last period so as to highlight the difference in commitment, ethics, and ideology between them and the Sudanese researchers. To some extent, foreign experts have had a negative impact on the role of anthropology for development in the Sudan. Sudanese anthropologists’ awareness of these issues of commitment, ethics, and ideology will be the main factor in improving the current situation.

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Chapter 3

Rethinking ethnicity: From Darfur to China and back—small events, big contexts

Gunnar Haaland

Introduction

I started my anthropological career in Sudan and now, at the end of my career, I am working in China. Since the beginning of the eighties, I have moved gradually eastwards from the Sudan, to Bangladesh, to Nepal and to China, but all the time my Sudan experience has been a reference for my work. What I learnt in the Sudan inspired me in my work elsewhere, and what I learnt elsewhere made me reflect back on my work in the Sudan. It is these reflections I shall draw on when I discuss my thoughts on ethnicity.

No country has shaped my anthropological career more than Sudan. It was in Sudan I did my first fieldwork, it was on the basis of that fieldwork that I wrote my most quoted articles on ethnic processes, and it was my experience as a teacher at the University of Khartoum that convinced me that academic life was not too bad after all. When I arrived in Sudan in 1965 to work for FAO, the first thing I did was to go to the Anthropology Department where I met prominent scholars like the already well-established professor Cunnison, a young enthusiastic scholar with a Pakistani passport, Talal Asad, and an even younger Oxford scholar, Wendy James, who at that time had just started her lifelong work with the Uduk. Since I had arrived during exam time, I also met the external examiner, the legendary Evans-Pritchard. Four years later, when I returned to Sudan on a research grant from the Norwegian research council, I met several young Sudanese anthropologists (Fahima Zahir, Taj el Anbia,

and Abdul Ghaffar who would leave their mark in the later development of anthropology in Sudan). In 1972, I joined the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Khartoum with the lowest salary and heaviest teaching load I have ever had, and with the most inspiring group of students I could ever wish for. The department was vibrant and so were the relations with other disciplines like political science, economics, and history.

During that time, Abdul Ghaffar and I drafted a proposal that brought three young Sudanese students from the economics, political science, and anthropology fields and one Norwegian, Leif Manger, into a modest interdisciplinary project we called “the Savannah Project.” Over the years, since I left in 1980, the project served as a model for development of larger projects covering other parts of the Sudan.

I shall use this opportunity to reflect on some general lessons learnt from my cooperation with staff and students at the University of Khartoum in teaching and research. The University of Khartoum experience was a formative period in my life and it gave direction to most of the activities in which I later got involved. For a long time I was mainly involved as applied anthropologist for various agencies, from the Red Cross to the World Bank, but about twenty years ago I took up my engagement with teaching at universities in countries like Nepal and China. In reflecting on some general lessons learnt from my cooperation with staff and students at University of Khartoum, my focus is on the three main tasks of a university: a) producing new knowledge in basic research, b) reproducing knowledge (including capacity to challenge and improve existing knowledge) in the teaching of students, and c) using this knowledge to advise different agencies on how to deal with practical development problems.

Lesson I: Event-focused fieldwork

I find it appropriate to start with a quotation from an anthropologist who more than anybody else put Sudan on the anthropological map, the great Evans-Pritchard: “Any event has the characters of uniqueness and generality” (Evans-Pritchard 1972, 175). We have to attend to the particularity of the events in order to discover the generalisable processes that shape them. Later, I came to reflect on this in light of Vayda’s methodological advice: a) making concrete human behaviour the primary object of study, and b) tracing (with whatever guidance we can get from existing theories and models) the threads of causal influence on these events, outwards in space and backwards in time. Researchers in the field should strive to be curiosity-driven (not theory-driven) and, thus, always be open and willing to adapt to findings that are surprising or unexpected (Vayda 1996, 1).

Lesson II: The importance of variation

Related to the previous point, I will add perspectives from another great anthropologist who has stimulated anthropological research in Sudan, Fredrik Barth. He has for years argued that we should take the variation in the events we are exposed to in the field seriously, and not force the variations we observe into a preconceived mould of an essentialised homogeneous “culture” or “society” (Barth 2002, 27-32). Watch the chaotic world of events you are exposed to, and, as Darwin did, wonder about how it came about. Darwin had no representative sample of anything, he did not discover any new things, but he watched observable variations in life forms (seashells up in the Andes, variations in the beaks of finches on the Galapagos Islands,

fossils in Argentina, etc.) in time and space. From his imaginative wondering he hit on the revolutionary idea that natural selection was the mechanism underlying the processes that produced this variation. However, his idea did not come out of the blue, it was nurtured by his wide reading of theoretical works in biology, geology, economy, etc. I think the importance of such subjective imagination in the scientific discovery process is well expressed by Karl Popper: “My view may be expressed by saying that every discovery contains an ‘irrational element,’ or ‘a creative intuition,’ in Bergson’s sense. In a similar way Einstein speaks of the ‘search for those highly universal laws ... from which a picture of the world can be obtained by pure deduction. There is no logical path.’ He says, ‘leading to these ... laws. They can only be reached by intuition, based upon something like an intellectual love (Einfühlung) of the objects of experience” (Popper 1959, 32). As social scientists we should be stimulated by the love for our subject matter, which in our case are the life-worlds of people living under specific circumstances.

However, love is not enough. Like Darwin, we need theoretical perspectives and observational techniques that we can use as tools that direct our search in productive directions. It is however not the theoretical tools and observational techniques we should fall in love with; these tools we should be prepared to discard as soon as better ones are available. Scientific development is characterised by a complex interconnection between events taking place in the “objective” world to which the researcher is exposed, “theoretical” perspectives, subjective creative imagination, and the observational techniques available to corroborate or refute provisional hypotheses about the empirical world, and even to establish the theoretical foundations for our exploration of this world. I shall here reflect on how small events in different empirical contexts have stimulated continuous revision of my perspective on a particular problem-field; namely, the connection between cultural variation and interaction boundaries related to ethnic identification.

Cultural difference and curiosity-driven research

In 1965, I was employed as Fredrik Barth’s assistant in the Jebel Marra Project. My main task was to collect data on the social and cultural features relevant for formulation of a regional development plan in western Darfur. This involved studies of the two main groups that used the project area—the Fur cultivators and the Baggara pastoralists who migrated into the project area in the dry season after the Fur had harvested their fields (Barth 1967).

When one day I went to interview people in a camp like those the Baggara used, I was greatly surprised hearing them speak the Fur language instead of Arabic. My first reaction was to explore whether this was a unique case or whether it represented more widespread phenomena. From my survey data, I found that every year about 1% of sedentary Fur cultivators left the village and established themselves in migratory camps living like the Baggara and behaving like them. Furthermore, many of them actually migrated to Baggara areas in the rainy season and some even lived in mixed camps with Baggara Arabs.

This puzzled me. My initial hypothesis was that in Fur culture there was an emphasis on cattle ideology, but that economic and ecological circumstances stimulated them to live as

farmers. However, I did not find any evidence of this, on the contrary it was a sedentary lifestyle that was culturally emphasised. The observed events of Fur living like Baggara took my research in a direction that was very different from the narrower applied anthropology survey specified in my plan of study. The events I was exposed to in the field made me curious and directed my interests towards more basic anthropological research on ethnic processes, a research that incidentally turned out to have great applied relevance. In my attempt to understand my observations, I gradually was oriented toward economic and ecological conditions affecting Fur farmers' decisions to invest in cattle and establish themselves as migratory herders. But I wondered why they behaved according to cultural value standards associated with Baggara and even became assimilated into Baggara groups (Haaland 1969, 1972). In 1967, I presented my Darfur material in a seminar we organised in Bergen focused on ethnic processes.

At that time, the problematic in anthropology, with regards to the study of ethnicity, was roughly as follows: ethnic groups were carriers of their own integrated culture. Little attention was placed on how social groups maintained themselves over time in contact with other groups, and on the question of the impact of circulation of cultural ideas and of personnel between different groups. My observations could not avoid these issues. Our focus in the seminar was on the mechanisms that served to maintain or change cultural differences among groups that are in contact with each other, and our approach was to focus on how cultural differences were made relevant in interaction between members of different groups. To study ethnicity by focusing on one group was like trying to clap with one hand. To clap we need two hands—we have to see how ethnic dichotomisation restricts interaction to certain sectors of behaviour. This we took as the main factor affecting maintenance of cultural difference in sectors where different groups did not interact; e.g., family life and rituals.

The book we published, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" (Barth 1969), has for almost forty years been one of the most cited social science publications (1,300 times on the ISI Web of Science) and has played a major role in the scholarly debate about ethnicity, a debate that has developed our perspectives further.

Instrumental management or primordial attachments

Is ethnicity to be understood as something primordial with long historical roots that nurture deep-lying cultural values fostering identification with a specific ethnic group? Those who emphasise the importance of primordiality frequently refer to Geertz and his arguments for the importance of "the assumed 'givens' of social existence ... immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a specific language, or even a dialect of a language and following particular social practices" (Geertz 1963, 109). Or is ethnic identity to be understood as a consequence of what individuals find instrumentally rewarding, economically and politically? I must admit that during my first fieldwork in Darfur in 1965 I became biased towards an instrumental position since economic benefits following accumulation of cattle had clear economic benefits, since ecological conditions favoured migration, and since security of life and property was enhanced by political inclusion in a Baggara group.

Looking back at those who criticise Barth's position as instrumental, I think that many are overlooking Geertz's formulation; namely, "assumed givens" of social existence. The question is who assumes and why. Primordial attachments are social constructions, and in order to understand their relation to specific identities, we have to explore the metaphoric imagery that makes ethnic ties convincing and compelling; e.g., imagery of "birth," "blood," "earth." This I ought to have followed up in my study, asking why there seemed to be so little at stake in the change of Fur identity. Maybe because of my instrumental bias, I did not see the relevance of the observations I had already made in the field of symbolism and ritual, or of what some of my Sudanese students had written (Haaland 1998). That takes me to the next point.

The importance of comparative studies

Paying attention to variation is not only important in the study of what goes on within specific communities, it is also important in a cross-cultural context. This does not imply that I draw a distinction between variation within and variation between communities. Barth has forcefully argued that "global empirical variation in culture is continuous, it does not partition neatly into separable, integrated wholes. In any population we may choose to observe we may also find that it is in flux, it is contradictory and incoherent, and it is differently distributed on variously positioned persons" (Barth 1994, 14).

I shall try to develop this point by discussing how my exposure to comparative cases has affected not only my understanding of ethnic processes generally but also how it has stimulated me to look back on my Darfur material in new ways.

The Santals of the Indian subcontinent and primordial constructions

My instrumental bias was challenged when, in 1979, I did fieldwork in a very different multi-ethnic setting; namely, northern Bangladesh. This was very different from Darfur. In Bangladesh, the overwhelming majority were Muslim Bengalis, there was a minority of Hindu Bengalis, and an even smaller minority called Santal. Again my research project was not focused on ethnicity but on village economy. However, given my Darfur experience, ethnicity fascinated me, particularly the position of the Santals. They spoke a language unrelated to Bengali, they had their own religious practices, different consumption patterns (including pork), they were recognisable by their dress as well as by the ways of comporting themselves in public spaces, and they were clearly stigmatised in the larger society by Muslims as well as by Hindus. Given my previous experiences from Sudan, I started by searching for cases of Santals who had changed their identity because I thought this would be instrumentally rewarding, but what I found was rather insignificant, although conversion to Islam was a realistic possibility. I found only one woman who had married a Muslim, and one man who had embraced Islam and become a *maulana* (a term used in South Asia for a Muslim religious scholar who has studied at an Islamic school). Then I looked for their economic position to explore limitations in access to resources. Yes, they were to a large extent landless wage labourers, sharecroppers or very small landowners, but so were many Muslims and Hindus, groups that avoided the public stigmatisation the Santals were exposed to. In fact, the Santals did not seem to hide cultural idioms that clearly showed their identity in

a social environment where this exposed them to prejudices and certainly was a handicap in court cases involving land transfers.

Since my search for material instrumentality was negative, I searched in a different direction, in symbolic expressions that might foster commitment to Santal identity. That led me to a rich symbolism found in seasonal and life cycle rites, in folk songs, proverbs, stories, in ideas of sacralisation of features of the house and the natural landscape, and in origin myths expressing important rules of organizing relations among humans as well as expressing the Santal vision of the good life. This vision is summed up in their concept of *raska* (pleasure), which they experience in festivals, in mixed dancing, and in consumption of rice beer.

This view contrasts sharply with what is found in Islam as well as in Hinduism. Conditions (droughts, floods, political harassment, diseases, and economic losses) that deprive the Santals of enjoying *raska* lead to *dukh* (suffering). Whatever the objective causes are, the Santals place their experience of suffering in a cosmological framework of *bonga* (spirit) interference. In this cosmology, experiences of daily life are seen as being caused by or having consequences in the *bonga* spiritual world (Haaland 1991). The strength of these symbolic expressions is manifested in the fact that today there are probably around six to eight million Santals living among majorities in small pockets of an enormous area covering Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal in India, several districts in Northern Bangladesh and the eastern lowlands of Nepal. There is no Santal organisation uniting all these small groups, although networks of kinship and marriage serve as a channel of communication between them.

The obvious conclusion is that people construct primordial ideas about identity and origin, and connect such constructions to stereotypical conceptualisations of what differentiates “us” from “others.” How much such constructions affect ethnic processes varies—among the Santals they are very important. Barth’s conceptualisation of ethnic processes is not a theory that assumes that material instrumentality determines embracement of ethnic identity. It is a conceptual framework that allows us to explore the way material instrumentality and cultural meanings enter into peoples’ ethnic self-identification and identification of others. People construct “histories” of primordial origin and of past events differentiating them from other groups, and celebrations of such “histories” in myths and rituals constitute important cultural meanings affecting the way ethnic processes unfold. For any particular ethnic group this varies in time and space. A primordial theory of ethnicity is just as inadequate as an instrumental theory of ethnicity, or a class theory of ethnicity. The relative importance of primordial constructions, material self-interests or class differentiation in ethnic processes is something to be discovered. The Santal experience forced me to reflect on things I ought to have looked into in Darfur. I should have explored the metaphors Fur use to express and foster social belonging, and why they did not seem to constitute a compelling commitment to values associated with Fur ethnic identity.

The Nepalese of South East Asia and symbolic entrepreneurship

During a holiday at a tourist resort in Southern Thailand, when my wife and I entered a garment shop and discussed among ourselves in Norwegian about what to buy, the shop owner made some recommendations to us in Swedish. If that was not enough of a surprise, when I heard him discuss with his salesmen, he spoke Nepali—another language I did not expect to hear in a garment shop in Southern Thailand. The encounter stimulated my curiosity. I had for several years been involved in a teaching and research program at Tribhuvan University in Nepal, and this made me curious about how this shop owner had ended up so far away from “home.” Somehow his “style” did not “fit” my stereotype for the ways in which Nepalese behaved. Going from tailor shop to tailor shop, I found that Nepalese dominated the garment trade in the resort. Their own estimates of 80% of such shops being run by Nepalese seemed quite realistic to me.

This trite event in a shop of a tourist resort triggered my curiosity. How on earth had so many Nepalese ended up as garment traders in a tourist resort in Thailand? To explore this, I followed Vayda’s advice and tried to search for linkages that connected the Nepalese garment traders to other events—outwards in space and backwards in time (Vayda 1983; Haaland 2008).

When I conducted a survey I found that most Nepali tailor shop owners in Thailand had not come from Nepal but from the Shan State of Northern Burma. To find out more, I went to Burma (in 1989 the name of the country was changed to Myanmar). From interviews I discovered that the earliest groups of Nepalese in Burma were Gurkha soldiers from the British Army that went to pacify the Shans and Kachins from the early 1880s and into the twentieth century. The Gurkha fighting skills reduced the local population significantly and thereby the land tax revenue of the colonial power decreased. The Burma District Gazetteer explicitly expresses this concern as perceived in the beginning of the twentieth century: “A very large influx of cultivators is still needed in the plains in order to bring the fertile area, now lying uncultivated, under the plough” (Hertz 1960, 77).

Most of the Nepalese garment traders in Thailand were descendants of Nepalese settler farmers in the Shan State. I wondered about how the Nepalese in Burma had maintained a Nepalese identity in the multi-ethnic community of Northern Burma where they were greatly influenced by another larger immigrant group, the Indians. It was Hindi music and songs they listened to, and it was Hindi films they watched. In interviews, they also explicitly stated that the Nepalese were increasingly adopting Indian cultural features. However, about fifty years ago a particular event happened that came to reverse this process of Hindisation.

A gifted Nepalese singer, Rocky Thapa, came to play an important role in giving meaning to the value of being Nepalese in the Burmese context. He was the son of a Gurkha soldier and born in the Shan State. However, his primary education had been at a missionary school and his Nepali language was rather rusty. He was interested in music and was a member of a band that performed at various functions. In those days, the Nepalese had very little idea

about Nepalese music and culture, so the music and songs were mostly learned from Hindi films and records.

A critical event in Rocky Thapa's career occurred in 1957 when a function was organised in the Shan State for the visit of Burmese Prime Minister U Nu. Many foreign visitors attended the function. The Burma government had invited different ethnic groups of the region to present folk music or dances that would represent their culture and tradition. The Nepalese were also invited and Rocky Thapa and his group presented Hindi film songs and dances as representative of Nepalese culture. After the performance, one of the guests, a Major in a Burmese army regiment, spoke to Rocky Thapa and told him that what they had performed was more representative of Indian culture than of Nepalese culture.

Rocky Thapa was shaken by this comment and started to think about what cultural expressions could possibly represent Nepalese culture in Burma. Since he had never learned Nepali language properly he started to take classes in Nepali language and read Nepali literature. He had a quasi-religious conversion and came to see that his mission in life was to make the Nepalese in Burma "shed off" aspects of Hindi culture. His way of accomplishing this mission was to write and sing Nepali songs. In his opinion, it took him about twenty years to finally get Nepalese to accept what he called their "traditional" music, which in fact consisted of songs he himself had written and composed. He considered his mission successful since he found that many people had been erasing Hindi songs by famous Indian singers like Mohammed Rafi and Mukesh from their cassettes, and substituting them with copies of his own songs.

In his songs, Rocky spins webs of significance from items sufficiently familiar to the Burma Nepalese; items that he "weaves" into a symbolic pattern emphasising new ways of conceiving the Nepalese life in Burma as a diaspora. In his songs he actively tries to create a collective memory, or myth, about their place of origin as an ideal home to which he encourages them to return.

As an example of this ethnic symbolism, I have taken one of the songs he performed on the occasion of a Nepali minister visiting Burma in 1964.

Phulera Phulyo Jhaka Ra Maka [*Flowers Have Blossomed, Colourful and Bright*]

Marigold has blossomed everywhere with its golden hue,
 How did this flower spread all over this foreign land?
 Seed is ours, how beautiful is this flower,
 Let it not disappear in this foreign land.

We will paint the silver Himalayas with golden hue,
 Marigold in thousands let us take them with us, keeping them in our hearts,
 Let us adorn our mother's body in garlands of marigold.

We, the Nepalese, have our homeland in the lap of the Himalayas
 The pure blood of Nepalese runs through our body;
 This day is ending and the darkness of night has reached this foreign land,
 This flower is withering, oh Brother! Let us take it back to our country.

Here, Rocky draws on the powerful imagery of the marigold (in Nepali *sayapatri*, literally meaning “hundreds of petals”). The marigold with its golden petals is a flower that is closely associated with Nepalese identity in the sense that Nepalese cultivate it in their gardens to use in garlands as well as in the decoration of their houses during the important festivals of *Tihar* (festival of lights) and *Dasain* (Festival of the Goddess Durga). In his song, Rocky describes its golden hue—with gold being the natural element that par excellence stands for purity. The flower is clearly meant to serve as a marker of Nepalese identity. This associative linkage is developed further in the second line of the song where Rocky raises the question of how the marigold has managed to spread to a land that is foreign to its homeland. He answers the question by associating the seeds of the marigold with the seeds of the Nepalese people—the reproduction of the marigold depends on the Nepalese tending to it, and the reproduction of the Nepalese depends on them being faithful to their Nepalese “culture” (marigold serving as a metonym for Nepalese “culture”). If the marigold disappears, Nepalese identity will disappear. The longing for return to the home country is expressed in several metaphors: painting the silver Himalayas with golden hue; i.e., bringing the seeds of the marigold (Nepalese in diaspora) back to Nepal; marigold (Nepalese identity) in the hearts; mother’s body (motherland) adorned with marigold (filling Nepal with diaspora Nepalese); night reaching the foreign land; i.e., the restrictions imposed on Nepalese and other foreigners after Ne Win’s coup in 1962 caused the marigold to wither. By using the Himalayas as a metonym for the Nepalese homeland, the ideal of being Nepalese is dressed up in a garb of sacred associations with the great civilisations of Hinduism and Buddhism and by talking of the purity of Nepali blood. The importance of Nepalese endogamy in relation to other groups in Myanmar is over-communicated, while endogamy within the different Nepalese castes is under-communicated—it is not stated that “different blood” runs in the bodies of members of different Nepalese castes.

However, most Nepalese in Burma preferred to migrate to Thailand instead of Nepal. The situation in Burma changed after Rocky Thapa got involved with Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD). She had heard about his popularity among the Nepalese and was also eager to meet him to ensure Nepali votes in the election. Rocky Thapa agreed and mobilised the Nepalese community (300,000) to vote for her. However, after Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory in 1990, the Ne Win government started arresting NLD party workers, and Rocky Thapa had to go into hiding. After this, he visited Nepal for the first time in 1998. As Rocky’s life-story indicates, he was originally rather marginal in the Nepal community and his embracement of Nepalese identity only became a compelling concern after a Burmese Major blamed him for using Indian songs to represent Nepali culture.

My fragmentary depiction of Rocky’s story is meant to draw attention to “primordality in the making,” to the constructors of innovative cultural expressions and the events that motivated their construction. It draws attention to the importance of small events and arenas of human lives that make symbolic expressions of ethnic identity convincing and to how this feeds back on other levels of identity from the micro-level individual commitment, to the median-level political mobilisation, and to the macro-level of state policies.

The small event I started with brought me not only to an individual’s artistic creativity, but also to how this had consequences in larger interaction systems involving processes of global politics, like British colonialism, and Burmese national politics and economy, like growth

of the tourist industry in Thailand and the income earning this provided for Nepalese migrants (Haaland 2007). This median level of ethnicity, where political entrepreneurs invent symbolic expressions articulating the importance of alternative rivaling identities, I had hardly touched in my Darfur work, but I can clearly see it could be highly rewarding in order to understand the situation there today (Haaland 2005).

Minorities in Yunnan China and the context of political economy

The last level of ethnicity I shall discuss is the macro-level of political economy. In China, it is blatantly clear that ethnic processes cannot be understood unless placed in a larger nation-wide, politico-economic context.

I do not know how many different ethnic groups there are in Yunnan. However, the Communist government decided that the Chinese should be registered as members of a so-called *mintzu* (nationality), according to Stalin's nationality theory (Stalin 1950). Since the minority groups were largely shifting cultivators in the hills moving from place to place as land was exhausted, different minority groups came to exist as small pieces in a mosaic of different groups, including the dominant Han majority (92% of China's population). Clearly, Stalin's criteria (a nationality is a group of people who share territory, speak one language, have the same economy, and share a similar psychological makeup) could not easily be applied to this situation and the government decided to lump together a large number of dispersed minority groups into a more limited number of administratively feasible units called *mintzu*. Some of the Government-defined *mintzu*—e.g., Yi and Naxi—included people who identified themselves as members of different ethnic groups, while some ethnic groups like the Mosuo were split between different nationalities. Many nationalities thus came to include people speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and embracing different cultural values.

In China members of different ethnic groups are considered Chinese in perpetuity if they have ever been conquered by the civilisational Han centre. The Chinese argue that those who have been brought into the orbit of the Confucian-based Han civilisation cannot leave it, because they have become part of it. Some people, like the Tibetans, the Yuighurs, and the Hui, do not seem to share this view. They claim to represent alternative civilisational centres, Buddhism and Islam respectively.

People were not only identified as belonging to a nationality, the nationalities were also ranked according to Engels' modification of Morgan's theory of human evolution (Engels [1883] 1972).

The earliest stage, "savagery," was characterised by hunting-gathering and by promiscuous mating. Higher up on the evolutionary ladder, in transition to "barbary," we find an early stage of matrilineality. On higher levels of "barbary," patrilineality emerges. At the highest level of civilisation, we have writing, urbanism, advanced division of labour, and family life characterised by the patriarchal monogamy. An important aspect of this theoretical/ideological perspective is the assumption that the peripheral minorities today represent stages the civilised people were part of in earlier periods. In China, the lower-ranking groups are in

many publications referred to as living fossils from the past. It is interesting to note that this theory of evolutionary hierarchical levels fits nicely with the Confucian philosophy of a moral hierarchy between people. In this hierarchy, the Han majority represents the civilisational centre, while the minorities can be ranked according to how much Confucian civilisation they have acquired—an interesting marriage between Marx and Confucius (Harrell 1995).

It is on this background we must understand the importance the Chinese government attaches to scaling. It sees it as its task to lift up the people placed lower down on the evolutionary ladder. One way of doing so is a policy of affirmative action—allowing lower-ranking minorities to have more than one child, and giving minority students applying for admission to universities twenty-five extra points on their test results.

There is another interesting point here. Children have to be registered with the same nationality as their parents. However, if two Han parents can document that one of their parents belonged to a minority, they can choose to register their child with the nationality of that minority, giving their child the extra advantages minority groups have. Minority nationalities may thus grow, not only by own reproduction, but by Han parents registering their children as a minority. The consequence is that minority nationalities increasingly come to include people who are ethnically Han, except that they may wear the ethnic costume of their registered mintzu on festive occasions.

During the Cultural Revolution, the government considered minority cultures as superstitions that ought to be eradicated and substituted by the correct Marxist-Maoist doctrine. After ten destructive years, things changed when Deng introduced “Leninist capitalism.” With the post-Mao reforms, Chinese reality has in many ways turned Marxism upside down. The economy, as the supposedly determining basis of society, is largely organised on capitalist principles. The political structure that according to theory should reflect this basis, is however still controlled by the Communist Party. The ideological superstructure that during Mao’s time tried to reflect Marx’s conflict theory is increasingly replaced by the Confucian harmony theory; harmony between genders, harmony between urban and rural areas, harmony between majority and minorities. Here there is no ideological room for class struggle despite the big economic discrepancies we see in China today.

The capitalist economy has also changed the position of the minorities. Today the state actively promotes maintenance of the different minorities’ cultural heritage as expressed in folk dresses, house types, jewellery, monuments, dances, rituals, etc. Maintenance of this cultural heritage is in fact an element in the state’s strategy of bringing economic growth to the periphery. This has to be understood in relation to the importance the state attaches to tourism as a means to improve the welfare of the minorities. Ethno-tourism has become a big business in Yunnan and here one has to sell the minorities in a way that stimulates peoples’ curiosity; i.e., playing on the exotic. Let’s have a look at one minority, the Mosuo. They have a very interesting way of arranging family life—they have no marriage, no social fatherhood, only motherhood, siblinghood, and maternal uncle relations. Land and houses are transferred in the matriline. This is a way of organizing life that contrasts dramatically with the more puritanical morality of the Han majority.

In colourful brochures we can see romantic pictures of men and women at the beautiful Lugu Lake. The pictures' texts explicitly play on male erotic fantasies. Since 1978, there has been a phenomenal growth of tourism in China, and it is at present among the top ten nations in terms of international tourist arrivals. Tourism is now one of China's largest industries accounting for more than 5% of China's GDP and directly employing around two million Chinese. Although earning foreign exchange was a main objective in the opening up of the country to foreign tourists, today the number of domestic tourists by far exceeds international tourists. I expect expansion of ethno-tourism will lead to increasing commodification of culture and ethnicity; clothes become costumes, tools and ritual objects become curios; local dances, ceremonies, and rituals become performances staged for tourists paying a fee for watching them (Haaland 2010).

From China to Darfur and the University of Khartoum

My intention with these sketches from fieldwork in different places has been to draw attention to the importance of events that may seem small, but that, when scrutinised, reveal processes of larger contexts. I have particularly emphasised the importance of variations, of deviant cases because this may allow us to discover emerging trends at a time when they are statistically insignificant.

I have drawn attention to a curiosity-driven, event-focused research strategy because I think it can be applied under most circumstances and because it may lead to discovery of unanticipated interdependencies, as opposed to what we discover when we fill in the "thought-stopping" manuals development agencies frequently hand us. Let me now first use my comparative experience to reflect on my Darfur work. Then I shall make some comments on possible uses of the approach I have advocated for, and some remarks that the University of Khartoum may reflect on.

Comparative reflections

In the comparative cases previously presented, I discussed which kinds of conditions were most visible in shaping ethnic processes. In the 1960s, it seemed that processes on the Fur-Baggara boundary were primarily channelled by economic structure and ecological setting, and this made me focus on instrumental aspects of identity change; in the Santal-Bengali case, the importance of symbolic constructions in fostering commitment to Santal identity was very clear; in the case of the Nepalese singer in Burma, my attention was drawn to the importance of the way micro-level events shaped an individual's experiences of self-identity and how this stimulated him to produce a rich corpus of songs that articulated the value of Nepalese identity; in the Chinese case, the importance of macro-level politico-economic conditions was obvious.

Looking back at my Fur analysis, after my Santal fieldwork, I became concerned about the kind of solidarities expressed in Fur symbolic constructions. Now I was alerted to the qualities in human relations they might express; qualities like trust and solidarity, suspicion and witchcraft, rivalry and murder. Drawing on perspectives from Bateson (1972),

I tried to argue that there was an elaborate corpus of symbolic imagery constructed around a key symbol, *bora fatta* (white milk, mother's milk), and its metaphoric and metonymic associations standing for the idea of solidarity; while symbols associated with *dikko* (black) stood for contrasting ideas of *kar* (witchcraft), and symbols associated with *fokka* (red) stood for *nungi toké* (rivalry; literally, hot eyes). These are not symbols that express and foster Fur solidarity in contrast to other groups. The "others," who are a threat, are neighbours, even relatives—it is among them that the suspicion of witchcraft arises. Likewise, with competition—in the 1960s rivalry frequently involved other Fur. At that time, relations between Fur and Baggara Arabs were rather symbiotic.

In addition, important cultural constructs communicated close connection between the Fur and the Baggara; most importantly they were both Muslims. Different versions of genealogies served to create a symbolic linkage between Fur and Baggara since they connected Fur dynasties to a North African Hilali, Ahmad al-Ma'qur, and his importance in introducing Islam to Darfur. Such a connection is also expressed in the story of the first historical ruler of the Keira dynasty, Suliman Solong ("Solong" means "Arab" in Fur language). While there were clear cultural differences between Fur and Baggara, these differences were reproduced in contexts like family life and village ceremonies (rain rituals and circumcision) under a Fur administrative hierarchy connecting villages to higher-level units. The cultural differences were clear, but they were not a big issue in day-to-day interaction.

The importance of the macro-level political economy was blatantly clear in the China case, and this was of course also an important dimension in Darfur from the colonial time until today, although it has changed over time. Particularly, population growth, expansion of the cash economy, and the growth of the Sudanese state gradually impacted ethnic relations in Darfur.

With growing competition for land, for government distribution of goods and services, and for bureaucratic positions, the field has opened up for ethno-politics where political support is mobilised by appealing to ethnic group loyalties. The relevance of ethnic identity in Darfur today is therefore very different from what it was forty years ago. With the changing economic and political conditions, I expect a growth in primordial constructions, although making them convincing is difficult, because they will have to bridge many different visions current among the regional elites.

The case of the Nepalese in South East Asia drew my attention to the importance of micro-level events that shape particular individuals' experiences of self-value and embracement of identities. Unfortunately, I have only to a very limited extent been able to model such micro-level processes in my re-analysis of the Fur material, although I, already in 1969, had become aware of a growing interest in manifestations of cultural features taken to contrast Fur group identity with the dominant Nile-based Arab civilisation. Some members of the local Fur elite had started to collect folk stories, folk songs, myths, and explicitly expressed that this was part of their concern for fostering Fur self-awareness (Haaland 1978).

The points I have brought out in my comparative discussion in many ways correspond to Barth's recommendation that we model ethnic processes separately on different interpenetrating levels; from micro-level processes effecting experience and the formation of identities, to the median level of processes leading to formation of collectivities and mobilisation

of groups, and to the macro-level of state policies relating to legal bureaucratic creations and uses of military force (Barth 1994).

Thoughts on University of Khartoum's development

Finally, I will mention that my rethinking has been stimulated by the privilege I have had in teaching students from different cultures in their home countries—they taught me a lot, not the least at University of Khartoum. Academically, this department has a lot of advantages compared to departments elsewhere—its staff has been trained in different anthropological research traditions of Europe and America with which it can maintain linkages of scholarly communication; the department has good connections to sister universities in Africa and the Middle East. If I were to recommend anything, it would be that Sudanese universities develop linkages to departments in the rising giants of the East—India and China. Strengthening south-south cooperation in research and teaching on a broad front may also serve to weed out ethnocentric biases that I think may still be built into our conceptual schemes.

It is difficult for me to give more specific advice to the department on the way ahead—that would require a better understanding of the present conditions for academic research and teaching in the Sudan than what I have. However, the event-focused approach I have tried to outline here directs our attention to an important aspect of the social condition of today; namely, the impact of globalisation.

Today, events are shaped by both local and global processes—an interplay that R. Robertson (1992) has called glocalization. We are all part of global interaction systems: economically (think about the present finance crisis), politically and militarily (aid policies, etc.), culturally (TV, magazines, education, competing ideologies), and socially (networks of close relations spread globally). Although one click on the computer in one part of the world may have far reaching repercussions on life in other parts of the world, the repercussions are not the same in different places. Everywhere they are transformed by local and national conditions; e.g., global finance crisis and Islamic banking.

Globalisation ought to be given an important place in teaching at the department of Anthropology and Sociology, particularly since Arab scholars made significant contributions in this field long time back. For instance, when I became interested in elite circulation, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* ([1377] 1989) was a classic. When I worked for ILO in the Maldives and became interested in how a centralised sultanate could be established and maintained on this widespread archipelago of 1,200 islands, Ibn Battuta (1929), who was a Qadi on the Maldives from 1354-55, and his fascinating story about how control of the cowry shell (*wada'a*) collection and export was the most important source of the sultan's power enlightened me (Haaland 1987). When I worked in the Indian subcontinent, for early ethnographic descriptions of the culture and society of Hindu civilisation, I consulted an almost thousand-year-old account by the Persian Muslim scholar el-Biruni (Alberuni [1030] 2005). If Scandinavians want to find out something about their ancestors' (the Vikings) old rituals, a basic reference is the tenth century Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan's (2005) description of the Swedish Vikings he met on his travels to the Volga River.

Studying Middle Eastern traditions of scholarship may not only be important for understanding historical developments, it may also serve as an inspiration to reflect on theoretical/methodological biases that may be embedded in the western traditions of knowledge in which modern social science developed.

In the Middle Ages Arab civilisation was global and Arab scholarship made important contributions to our understanding of that globality.

This long historic continuity of global Arab civilisation became very obvious when I, on an IFAD mission to South Yemen in 1984, became perplexed when I saw the skyscraper-like houses in the inland valley of Hadramout. What could possibly be the economic basis for this? This took me to remittances from Hadrami migrants who for hundreds of years were involved in the Indian Ocean trade (also including Islamic proselytizing and mercenary work in the army of the Nizam of Hyderabad). Descendants of Hadrami migrants can still be found in Northern Mozambique, on the Swahili coast, in Southern India, in the Maldives, Singapore, and most importantly in Java (Haaland 1985). The dispersal of Hadramis (like the dispersal of Nepalese) have diaspora-like features; i.e., people maintaining themselves as separate groups in “host-countries” on the basis of shared ideas about common origin in a “home-country.” This is an important aspect of globalisation and an important task is to explore the cultural content (e.g., ethnic or religious identity) and social situation (e.g., position in the political economy).

The position of Sudan in the globalizing world has of course changed over the years. How it has changed could be a fascinating theme and, in exploring it, students could be shown the relevance of drawing on modern anthropological and sociological contributions from different countries; e.g., Appadurai (1998) and Gupta (1999) in India, Yan Yunxiang (n.d.) in China, Giddens (1996) in England, Robertson (1992) in the United States, Castells (2000) in Spain, Assal (2004) in Sudan, and Barth (1978) in Norway.

Let me come back to my main lesson: the importance of cooperation of staff and students from different cultures. In China, I am cooperating with staff from two Chinese universities running courses for Chinese and Norwegian students—one focused on globalisation issues, the other on ethnic relations. An idea I find attractive is to have a few Sudanese students in these courses. Or even better it would be nice if similar courses could be established between Sudanese universities and the University of Bergen (or other European universities). Finally, I would also advice staff members and students at the University of Khartoum to participate in applied works, but I advice against becoming full-time development specialists—then one may end up becoming just as aid-addicted as many aid-receiving countries. Always keep a foot in basic research.

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Chapter 4

Strategic movement: A key theme in Sudan anthropology

Wendy James

Contributors to the present volume came together in 2008 for a Golden Jubilee conference to celebrate fifty continuous years of a remarkable department, in many ways an innovation for Africa, established in the University of Khartoum in 1958. From the start, the department was set up to include both social anthropology and sociology, and, also from the start, it aimed to carry out research and related teaching on “applied” social questions as well as theoretical and comparative ones. For many years following its foundation, it was the only department to include social anthropology (or any kind of anthropology) in Africa, outside the then apartheid-dominated universities of South Africa. For much of the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Africa, anthropology was still thought to look backward to past custom and culture, rather than forward to prosperity and social development. It was often an uphill battle for anthropology to secure acceptance as a modern branch of the humanities and social sciences, in old universities as well as new ones.

In the case of Oxford (my own university), for example, recognition for anthropology as a serious subject first came from the philosophers and historians, but there was a strong challenge to its existence from the new and growing discipline of sociology. The sociologists made more than one attempt to take over the Chair of Social Anthropology position first held by Radcliffe-Brown and then by Evans-Pritchard (see Rivière 2007). These attempts failed, in my view partly because the discipline, as fostered by these scholars, had already positioned itself within the broader sociological tradition. Whether one agreed with Durkheim, Marx, or Weber in their approaches to the nature of social processes, anthropology had by the 1950s earned itself a place in such debates in the United Kingdom, and the same was true, a little later, of the modernizing anthropology departments in Scandinavia. Very few depart-

ments at that time, including those of North America, actually combined anthropology with sociology; so the combination of the two subjects in Khartoum was quite innovative in its own way, and helped give a real cutting edge to the work of research and teaching in the Sudan. It was many years before the university sector in the other newly independent African nations overcame the image of anthropology as European antiquarianism, and began to warm to the qualitative, human scale of anthropology's methods, its professional respect for local voices, intention, memory and knowledge, and its relevance for understanding ongoing social processes. An overview of the way that anthropology was finally "indigenized" across the continent (partly because of its appeal to local pride in history, culture and identity, but also relevance to current "applied" issues) is provided in the recent volume titled *African Anthropologies* (Ntarangwi, Mills, and Babiker 2006).

After my initiation into social anthropology in Oxford, I came to the Sudan in 1964 as a lecturer in our department, and during my five years' tenure was able to carry out doctoral fieldwork in the Blue Nile Province. To me, that time does not seem long ago. To young people, of course, the past seems very remote—but as you get older you find that the past seems to be closer, and the continuities stronger than you would have ever expected. As the years pass, the generations seem more intimately linked, and this applies to academic traditions as it does to family continuity. My own maternal grandmother was very excited to hear about my plans to move to Khartoum, and started telling me stories she remembered of General Gordon, the Mahdi, and the "Reconquest" of 1898 (she would have been a teenager then). To me now, forty-four years from those conversations, the memory is clear. If you go back in time to 1920, before modern anthropology had begun in the Sudan, and just one more step back to 1876, you would still be living in the Turkiyya. It is true that Charles and Brenda Seligman already were well-established researchers by 1920; but it was still some years before Evans-Pritchard first arrived in 1926. I would regard that event as the initial introduction of the distinctively "modern" sociological style of anthropology, which was later taken further by the department in Khartoum University. Whatever the remoteness of those times to a modern student, there are continuities too, relevant to the present and perhaps also to the future.

In pondering the original "Call for Papers" issued with the invitation to the 2008 conference, it struck me that the way today's anthropologists handle the theme of movement reveals a great deal, both in relation to seasonal movement and to major mass migrations. By taking account of both individual agency and the salient socio-cultural contexts in which that agency operates, social anthropology has pointed to ways in which the phenomenon of movement can be tackled, both analytically and practically. Of course, it is individuals who ultimately make a decision to move; but they don't normally do this in isolation—they do so in the framework of some shared project, or strategy, or under some specific kind of compelling leadership. Networks, memories of place and time, and a sense of belonging to a wider world, all help to shape the shared situation that provokes movement. The specific seasonal movements of pastoralists can be appreciated within this framework, as can, on a larger scale, the specific movements of those who seek temporary employment away from home or resettlement in towns, who join armed combat or flee from its consequences. In all cases the individual person, even from the rural or marginal areas, is an actor caught in a collective and ongoing drama. Especially in the context of movement, the individual

becomes part of an unfolding story, sometimes able to influence its outcome, even in these days of powerful national and international interests and projects.

Games, strategies, social arenas

Over the last couple of decades, anthropology worldwide has developed an extraordinary range of specialisms—in the medical, cognitive, aesthetic, biological-evolutionary, feminist, philosophical, economic, or religious fields as well as within material-culture and museum studies, and so on. Some of these have left us searching for environmental, genetic, or other “scientific” certainties, while others have shunned what they dub the “positivism” of observation, generalization, and comparison, retreating rather into the aesthetic aspects of individual encounter, navel-gazing reflexivity, and cultural relativism. But I consider that the best exemplars in each of anthropology’s specialist fields situate individual experience, action, and cultural expression clearly *within a shared arena of social relations*, which can be understood, at least partially, against the background of a wider regional history. Such an arena has its own “rules of the social game,” which shape not only local interactions but also responses to external events. Arenas are not closed; insiders can be at odds, outsiders can be drawn in, as a good ethnographer can be, partially. Accepting such a strategic character of the behaviour of human beings is a good way of acknowledging our kinship with sociology.

I would argue that the two main approaches to social anthropology which came together in our department in the mid-twentieth century—the British tradition usually dubbed “structural-functional,” and the explicitly action-oriented school that Barth launched in Norway—shared this basic vision. Both took for granted the existence of a social reality “out there,” which could be explored through personal engagement and observation, and both placed great importance upon the possibility of comparison. Developments elsewhere in socio-cultural anthropology might well be moving towards a celebration of the creative spirit of individuals, regarding fieldwork simply as an exercise in personal empathy, and ethnographic writing as an art that little differs from fiction (see for example Clifford and Marcus 1986). It is worth noting at this stage that Ladislav Holy, who was a welcome associate in our department in the 1960s while carrying out fieldwork in Darfur, later championed the theme of “comparative anthropology” (see Holy 1987)—at the time, very much against the grain of prevailing “post-modern” fashion. Such ongoing debates have made everyone more sensitive to the arguments, and helped both sides tone down their claims without abandoning them (see for example Engelke 2008). To focus on the *historically situated* character of social action, and its artfully strategic quality, perhaps offers a “middle way” (cf. Kapferer 2005; James 2007b). Our perspective should ideally allow for both a general human rationality and the specifics of local socio-cultural and linguistic form, while placing individual values and agency in the centre of analysis.

While Gunnar Haaland, in his contribution to this volume, emphasizes the value of anthropological comparisons made in different geographical regions of the world, I am suggesting that it is also important to take the past into account in our efforts to understand the present—and vice versa, to use our field-based knowledge of the present, perhaps, to bring to life the records of the past. The experiences of displacement, for example, among ordinary Sudanese today can surely be compared with those of ordinary people during the disturbances of the

early Turkiyya, or Mahdiyya, or the first decades of the Anglo-Egyptian regime (including the 1916 conquest of Darfur).

As a consequence of the unprecedented scale of movement within the Sudan and across its borders over the last generation or so, the life of all individuals has come into contact with issues and processes shaping the nation as a whole in ways that could scarcely have been foreseen at the founding of our department. The categories of movement themselves have become blurred. Munzoul Assal has described some of the conceptual ambiguities around his teamwork research with displaced communities around the Three Towns. For example, the NGOs wanted his group to study “urban problems,” but “for me such problems are not urban at all; they simply configure the deep crisis in the country in general” (Assal 2003, 117). Assal’s discussion is part of a key volume on the recent and older history of anthropology in the Sudan edited by Abdel Ghaffar Mohammed Ahmed (2003), which in its coverage illustrates the degree to which large-scale movement has come almost to define the life of hundreds of thousands of Sudanese. The volume also provides plenty of food for thought on how researchers can or should grapple with this basic fact of life in the country today. Anthropologists, both expatriate and Sudanese, but especially Sudanese, have found it increasingly frustrating to work alongside short-term contract researchers caught within the restricted horizons and bureaucratic fact-finding practices of the “humanitarian international,” in Alex de Waal’s now well-known poignant words (see de Waal 1997). The collection in which Assal’s work appears in fact lays out many of the issues we are now invited to tackle further.

In my contribution here, I trace something of the way in which anthropological work in the Sudan first began to take account of what we could dub “strategic movement,” and then sketch how this developing theme helped to shape the early work of the department, provided fodder for critical debate, and a stimulus for engagement with practical issues in the country. I also give examples of how research by visiting expatriates, some but not all directly linked with the department, helped to build a distinctive tradition and coherent growth in the body of anthropological literature dealing with the Sudan. The methods, the debate, and the stimulus represented by the department served as a lively point of reference for the work of many visiting scholars, and this stimulus is still relevant for today’s researchers in the period following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005.

Retrospective

It is worth remembering some of the parallels between the conditions of life in past historical periods and those of the present. In the early decades of the twentieth century, following the Condominium rule, which began in 1898, official policies were geared to overcoming the aftermath of the turbulence of the late nineteenth century. It was during this time, often represented as one of “pacification,” that the projects of ethnography and anthropology first became established and received an official blessing (for a detailed account of the way the administration promoted anthropology, sometimes with ambivalent results, see Johnson 2007). Officials felt the need to “map” the country’s various communities and to clearly see where they belonged, and to endorse, or even reinvent, “traditional” forms of local authority. The early Anglo-Egyptian government was also keen to organize the safe return home of many who had been displaced by conflict during the previous generations (including those who had been fighters on one side or another during the Mahdiyya and the “Reconquest”).

A major concern was to establish stable communities in every part of the country. The very earliest ethnographic accounts, by administrators as often as not, understandably adopted rather static images of who was who, and accepted, at face value, oral accounts of historical migrations and exclusive genealogies of groups. Local administration was set up largely on the basis of what were assumed to be fairly fixed group homelands, along with customary law. MacMichael's work illustrates the persistence of this tradition for the nomadic Arab groups of the north (see MacMichael 1912), while Crazzolaro's work illustrates it for the migrations of the Nilotic peoples of the south (cf. Crazzolaro 1950). The authorities did not envisage much further need for movement, disturbance or migration. Officials certainly tried to control irregular movement, whether to the towns or in the case of nomads their seemingly excessive wanderings (I believe that Fulani-speaking seasonal migrants who reached the Blue Nile were actually escorted back to the Chad border as late as 1954). Migration in general was much discouraged, except in the case of large projects such as the Gezira scheme where labour was needed.

The professional anthropologists who came to the Sudan in the Condominium period (of whom there were in fact very, very few—half-a-dozen or so in all) had to work within this context. But, as I have long argued, anthropologists of the colonial era saw things through different lenses, and were not merely “handmaidens of colonialism” but provided critical perspectives which sometimes contradicted the entrenched views of rulers and elites (see my chapter in Asad's volume on anthropology and the colonial encounter, James 1973). For the Sudan, such critical perspectives first emerged in the 1930s. By contrast, Ethiopia had to wait until the 1960s for the first “critical” work in anthropology (see James 1990). The new perspectives began to question the validity of group genealogies and mythical migrations as historical facts, to counter official assumptions about custom and tradition, and to see the strategic reasoning of the people themselves behind their movements.

Glimpses of the new methods can be found in the Seligmans' work, both in the north, among the Kababish and Nuba, and among the peoples of the south (Seligman and Seligman 1918; 1932). There are even a few clues in their writing as to ongoing aspects of population movement or migration. In Nadel's work on the Nuba Hills (1947), a key concern was indeed movement, though he focused mainly on its destructive effects. Labour migration to the towns, or employment in the police, were seen as detrimental to the community cohesion of the home villages, and even to the psychological welfare of the people (for discussion, see Faris 1973).

However, a new style of ethnography and social analysis, stemming in part from the inspirational writings of the French school of sociology associated with Durkheim and Mauss, was introduced to the Sudan by Evans-Pritchard. In pioneering a more dynamic approach, among other things, he gave the theme of movement pride of place in his works on the Nuer (see Evans-Pritchard 1940 for a classic example). The seasonal movements of these cattle herders were by no means bound by blind tradition; nor were they haphazard. Evans-Pritchard provided an outline of the rationale behind the seasonal swing between large community gatherings in the wet season at cultivation sites, and the dispersal of young men at the dry-season cattle camps. Negotiated competition over water, grazing, and cultivable land, plus conflict over the comings and goings of the herds, underlay the complex game of political rivalry between territorially based groupings. While these identified themselves as coherent lineage units, their actual human composition was surprisingly diverse, starting

with the consequences of wide lineage exogamy and including many forms of assimilation (Evans-Pritchard 1951). Through tracing the patterns of coming and going, the processes of marriage and concubinage, the adoption of orphans or strangers, or survivors of local conflict, as well as the absorption of refugees from elsewhere, Evans-Pritchard was able to “deconstruct” for us what had been assumed to be the rather solid “group identity” of the lineage (as he had already done for the levels of authority and power among the Azande, and was later to do for the Bedouin in Libya). He was also able to show that the apparent mass migration of Nuer eastward into Dinka areas was made up of many small shifts and adjustments, including the formation of families with newly complex ancestry. Such a level of detailed analysis depended then, as it still does, on sufficient opportunity to spend time in the field. His immediate post-war successors in the south also pursued intensive fieldwork to analyse people’s lives and their situation in a sociologically informed kind of way. It is interesting to find how much prominence is given to strategic movement on the ground, its meanings and its memories, by both Lienhardt (1961) and Buxton (1963; 1973).

The founding of our department in 1958 was a watershed in many ways. But there were continuities too, significantly taking forward the “sociological” style of anthropology itself. In addition to Ian Cunnison, the first Professor, several of the staff members, who taught and did research in the first decade, were trained at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford where Evans-Pritchard presided (Dyson-Hudson, Hill, Asad, James, al-Shahi), and there were early links with both Manchester and Bergen. The “British” tradition in African anthropology, then moving in a distinctly “historical” direction, married nicely in the Sudanese context with the emphasis on individual action that characterized Fredrik Barth’s rejuvenation of social anthropology in Norway. A fresh generation of intensive research enlivened the relatively neglected regional ethnography of the northern Sudan. Much of this work sought to deconstruct some of the dominant collective stereotypes of the Sudanese people, to explore the rationale for the existence of the stereotypes, and to portray the social processes of real life on the ground.

I have space for only a few examples of the first generation of work connected with the department. Ian Cunnison, whose fieldwork among the Humr in fact began in the mid-1950s, showed how intimately the actual families and personal networks of these people linked them to neighbours such as the Nuba and the Dinka, and how we should distinguish between “official” tribal genealogies and personal pedigrees in understanding communities in this belt of the Sudan. The older style of accounting for the Baggara in terms of Arab migrations could only give a partial picture (Cunnison 1966; 1971). Barth and Haaland brought the focus down definitively on individual movement in the western Sudan. They showed how entrepreneurial farmers in Darfur could operate in the external markets from their home base in the mountains (Barth 1967), and could even build up their herds and join in the migrations of the pastoral Baggara (Haaland 1972). Conversely, the farmers could offer a safety net to enable herders, whether originally Fur or Baggara, to re-establish themselves after drought or disaster. Talal Asad’s work among the Kababish (1970) added a historical and strongly political dimension to the analysis of pastoral societies. He showed how Condominium policies of indirect rule, especially the Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance of 1929, not only defined the extent of their territory, but altered the balance of its parts by building up the central position of the Awlad Fadlallah and thus curbing the independence and mobility of the outlying minor sheikhs.

My comments above refer only to anthropological work carried out in the Sudan in the middle decades of the last century (and before civil war reappeared in the south and broke out in Darfur). As for the more recent generations of anthropological work associated with the department, I defer to younger colleagues. In the next section I give an overview of the relevance of a focus on “strategic movement” in the context of the human landscape of the old Blue Nile Province. My comments here are informed by a series of original field visits to the region, especially the southernmost parts, in the 1960s and early 1980s. Since then, following the outbreak of conflict in the late 1980s, I have had some opportunities to re-visit some of the people I used to know who were displaced to the Three Towns, to the south, to Ethiopia, and to North America.

Perspectives from the Blue Nile

The former Blue Nile Province, which stretched from Wad Medani down to Kurmuk, is a wonderful context in which to think about strategic movement and how anthropologists have tackled it. For the nomadic Arab groups, Abdel Ghaffar Mohammed Ahmed provided a model study of the Rufa'a el Hoi, incorporating the political level of strategic action as it had shaped their genealogical and lineage patterns over time (Ahmed 1974). The Blue Nile is of course a region that has seen classic debates about supposed “migrations”—in the Condominium period, Sudan Notes and Records (SNR) includes a fulsome exchange of theories about “the Funj” and where they came from. They seemed to be a “new people” who suddenly arrived to found Sennar in 1504. Were they eighth century Ummayyad refugees straight from Syria, or Shilluk, or were they Ethiopians?—among many other possibilities. This struck me long ago as the wrong sort of question. The historical dimension of Asad's work was a great encouragement for me in trying to find better questions to ask, and I tried to put together my own observations about the way Funj identity or ancestry was being claimed in the southern Blue Nile with a reading of the older debates and sources. It was clear that no tribal migration was involved. However, the emergence of a new dynasty and elite nobility on the Blue Nile was connected with widespread trade, a great increase in central power at Sennar, and the incorporation of many people from the peripheries into the central institutions of the kingdom. Links with the kingdom itself and its former authority, often reinforced with marriage ties to its remote dependencies, were signs of these former patterns of movement (James 1977). It is interesting that even today, the name “Funj” is reappearing, not only in the context of the recent civil war but also in the village surveys of the relief agencies. The name has become a surprisingly popular “ethnic identity” on the tick-box forms, claimed by many returning IDPs to the new Blue Nile State.

An even more dramatic case of the need to deconstruct the older image of a mass migration into the Blue Nile is of course that of the Hausa and Fulani speakers. The myth was of pilgrims from West Africa simply getting stuck on their way to or from Mecca. This myth, and the nature of the migration itself, was tackled first by Mark Duffield in the 1970s (see his book, *Maiurno*, of 1981). He was able to show how the Condominium regime positively encouraged the settlement of immigrants from West Africa because of the shortage of agricultural labour in connection with economic development projects (including the Gezira scheme). The region of Sennar, southwards, provided conditions under which peasant production could also flourish, and, partly through expansion into the businesses of trade and transport from the base town of Maiurno, a new class structure developed. The presence of

an influential, settled community later provided direct and indirect support for a rise in the scale of seasonal pastoral migrations extending from Chad through the Blue Nile Province and to the Upper Nile (in the course of the recent civil war, these migrations took an alternative southward route through Ethiopia). Bawa Yamba, himself originally from West Africa, followed this work with a sensitive study of what it was like to belong to a community of people still regarded as “immigrants” despite having seen several generations settle in the Sudan (1995). Keeping a low profile politically, the “West African” groups in the Blue Nile have been able to consolidate their position considerably in recent decades, in both rural and urban areas of the province.

Urban studies of the old Blue Nile are not many. The lead taken by Taj el-Anbia el-Dawi for El Obeid (1972) and the contributors to the volume edited by Valdo Pons (1980) still needs to be developed for this part of the country (though I am sure I am out of date here). But we should take note of Susan Kenyon’s detailed and very interesting work on the lives of women in Sennar (Kenyon [1991] 2004). Through their memories, their networks, and their continuing openness to possession by the spirits of various historical characters known as *zar*, a picture emerges not simply of the town itself but of its connections with places elsewhere (Sennar became a hub for immigrant labour, both permanent and seasonal, as well as for traders, industrial workers, demobilized soldiers and so on). Even through these imagined connections, we can sense the existence of Sennar within a web of regional comings and goings, just as we can sense the memories of long-distance movement that have always marked life in the Nile corridor from Janice Boddy’s account of *zar* possession in the riverain villages north of Khartoum (Boddy 1989). Ever since the pioneering work of Samia El Nagar (1980), it has been necessary to put beliefs and practices such as the *zar* in the context of social change, especially in the turmoil of urban conditions. It is not surprising that some of these phenomena began to appear in the new displaced communities of the 1980s and 1990s.

Memory and imagination often dwell on the idea of movement, not only as historical tradition or planned strategies for the future, but as an internal dimension of one’s very existence. Gerd Baumann was originally trained as a musicologist, and then in anthropology and ethnomusicology, before he carried out fieldwork in the Nuba Hills in the late 1970s. His base was Jebel Miri, a seemingly isolated community, which nevertheless had strong links with the towns and mainstream Sudanese social ways through seasonal labour migration. This double aspect of the Miri world was reflected not only in its people’s bilingualism but also in its musical life. The young men were thoroughly familiar with popular Sudanese music and even the young girls heard it on the radio and learned to play the *daluka* drums with their friends in nearby market towns. But when the men were home at important times on the “traditional” ceremonial calendar, they played, sang, and danced the village music. And when the young women married, they had to give up the *daluka* and stick to the grindstone songs of their grandmothers (Baumann 1987). Patterns of movement, not only within geographical space but also within social and personal space, had become internal to the cultural life of Miri. This sort of internalization can be found in other forms too; in the Blue Nile, for example, Akira Okazaki’s work among the Ingeessana (self-name Gamk) has even explored the people’s dreams (Okazaki 2002). Psychologists would typically treat dreams as a highly personal phenomenon; but Okazaki has revealed a social dimension to the dreams he heard about, the presence of historical actors, of outsiders, of wars and threats.

The existence of far-away places and events in one's dreams surely signals a consciousness of spatial movement and social interconnection even in the most private experience.

The Blue Nile has also its quota of recent "enforced" movement through flight from conflict, especially in the southernmost regions bordering Ethiopia. The front line of the civil war moved into the Blue Nile Province several times from 1987 onwards, and even the rural communities could not maintain a presence in the devastated areas throughout. Alex de Waal's original work on the aftermath of the 1984-85 drought and famine in Darfur revealed, for the first time, some of the local dynamics involved in enforced flight (de Waal [1989] 2005). Village communities did not leave en bloc, even though relief centres were available. People always tried to leave someone behind to look after their property and animals, and to protect their claims to the land itself. The need to maintain a territorial presence even outweighed the need to safeguard infant life (something at odds with the priorities of the aid agencies). Keeping all local neighbourly networks in good order was also vital to the survival of individual families; and decisions were made to move or to stay on the basis of historical memories of what earlier generations had done. There are many echoes of such elements in recent anthropological studies, which tackle contexts relating to the war in the south; for example, the long-term perspectives on relatively recent disruptions in the Bahr el-Ghazal taken up by Jok Madut Jok (2002).

There are many parallels in the case of the southern Blue Nile over the period of the recent war. The choices for conflict refugees, after this area became a war zone in 1986, were more drastic than those available to those displaced by the drought of the mid-1980s in Darfur, though foreshadowing, tragically, the choices available to people in Darfur when conflict escalated nearly two decades later. I have described in my recent book (2007a) how, in the case of the southern Blue Nile, waves of people left their "traditional villages" at different times. Some of course joined the army or Popular Defence Forces, while others joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (the choice was often pragmatic rather than ideological). Some left for the towns and cities of the north; some fled to quite specific hills in the neighbourhood which had sheltered their grandparents a century before, or southwards under SPLA protection; others crossed the nearby international frontier. Indeed several "core groups" and many, many individuals in twos and threes crossed the frontier more than once during the period of 1987-2002, seeking assistance from whatever source they could as the front line of the war moved northwards and southwards several times within the Blue Nile Province. Many locals spent years in a succession of UNHCR refugee schemes in Ethiopia, particularly in the Bonga and Sherkole camps from the mid-1990s, but their resettlement in the Sudan was completed in 2008, following the CPA of 2005.

The sense of "home" can sometimes travel with a group of people. I believe this was the case for example with those from the Uduk-speaking villages of the Kurmuk district, most of whom ended up in Bonga for about fifteen years (for a detailed social history of this displacement, see James 2007a). Not only was the layout and organization of the refugee scheme there a kind of parallel to pre-war life in the villages, but there was also a renaissance of "traditional" music, songs, and dance. This was not simply a backward-looking revival, however, as it went hand in hand with new song styles and all kinds of new performances (including Arabic and Ethiopian styles, *karate* as seen on video in the local bars, lots of football and so forth). Bonga offered a sort of social centre of gravity for the wider network of Uduk speakers

and some of their neighbours; for example, refugees stranded in Kenya sometimes wanted help to return home, not to the Kurmuk area (because at times that was impossible) but to Bonga in Ethiopia. The sense of “belonging” also depended on a nostalgia for the Sudanese homeland—people listened regularly to Sudanese radio stations, and insisted on keeping to “Sudanese time,” as opposed to Ethiopian time (a one hour difference). But the networks are widening and modern communications keep alive the links between the few families who finally resettled in North America and Australia, those who have now settled firmly into the cities of the northern Sudan, and those who have now made it “home.” I noticed, a few years ago, that cassettes of the new songs from Bonga are very popular in the wider diasporas.

Prospective

How do current conditions compare with those of a century ago? The country has again been through decades of conflict and massive displacement. Substantial efforts are being made in the South and the Three Areas to take forward the implementation of the CPA, achieved in 2005, and the early return of peace to Darfur is anxiously anticipated. Policy aims include, of course, the return of both IDPs and international refugees, and the reestablishment of some kind of “normality,” including political stability, to the rural areas. Perhaps within the foreseeable future the scenario for the whole country will be one of return, rehabilitation, and rebuilding. And what will the role of anthropologists be? To what extent will the general “return to homelands” equate to human well-being, in so far as this is one of the underlying concerns of anthropology?

Against the background of massive dislocation, what will be the future relevance of the “Malinowskian” style of intensive fieldwork in one place (or at least with one language), the cultivation of personal friendships in the field and the gaining of trust as a basis for writing accounts of a truthful and lasting quality? Surely the methods of the anthropologists today should lead to accounts that the people themselves or their grandchildren will recognize as their own history? Can such methods, which as I have suggested seek to engage with the long-term world of the displaced, help to provide some rationale and useful background for those assisting the formation of new communities? How should academic anthropology respond to the dominantly bureaucratic, managerial style of information gathering so commonly found in the short-term work of the development and humanitarian agencies? Our past writings represent rich insights into the life of Sudanese communities, which are now historically invaluable. We should demand the backing, bureaucratic and financial, to build on this research legacy, even though today’s conditions are a bigger challenge than ever.

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Chapter 5

Urbanisation and Social Change in the Sudan

Fahima Zahir El-Sadaty

The term “urban” has acquired two meanings in sociological literature. The first applies to the spatial concentration of a population on the basis of certain limits of dimension and density. The second meaning refers to the diffusion of the system of values, attitudes and behaviours defined as “urban culture,” which is in fact the cultural system that characterises capitalist industrial society in the modern context (Castells 1976a; Pickvance 1976). “Urban” can designate a particular form of spatial occupation; namely, the urban centre resulting from high concentration and a relatively high density, with, as its predictable correlate, greater functional differentiation. However, making this theoretical definition operational in a concrete analysis creates some difficulties (Castells 1976b). Specifically, Castells poses the question of when a spatial unit can be regarded as urban based on indicators of dimension (i.e., scale) and density. He notes that there are insurmountable contradictions of statistical empiricism in the determination of what qualifies as urban. While the number of inhabitants and the structure of the active population and administrative divisions seem to be the most common criterion, the threshold varies enormously. The indicators of the different activities depend on the type of society analyzed, and the quantities (number, densities, etc.) take an entirely different meaning according to the productive and social structures that determine the organisation of space.

Max Weber (1958, 66) and Arnold Toynbee (1970, 8) have defined the city as a settlement, the inhabitants of which engage primarily in non-agricultural, productive activities. This definition is of some value in that it identifies general features that may be found in any existing city. Cities in all historical epochs have emerged or been established as a result of the surplus generated in rural areas and reinvested in urban centres, depending on the level of

economic and technological advancement, although this dynamic did not necessarily come into play in the establishment of cities in the so-called Third World.

Arbitrary definitions have resulted in numerous classifications of urban settlements. Sudanese statisticians and census specialists have persistently and arbitrarily used the terms urban and rural as blanket terms to describe different types of human settlements, employing population numbers or administrative divisions, which have been constantly changing for the last fifty years or so, and wittingly or unwittingly disregarding the fact that their approach is not only misleading, but has also serious implications for the type of human settlements they so designate. Other specialists and practitioners using these classifications are, therefore, left with the formidable task of determining which human settlements should be considered rural or urban, and what kind of criterion has been used to differentiate between the various types of human settlements. Cautionary measures should be exercised in reviewing these slippery definitions (El-Sadaty 1998); a practice that should also be embraced by Sudanese statisticians and census practitioners in the future.

However, and in light of the conceptual and theoretical limitations referred to above, “urban” in the Sudan, and for that matter anywhere else, is not a neutral term; neither has it been uniform throughout various historical periods. “Urban” in the Sudan, and specifically from colonial rule to the present, has gained a specific connotation, appearance, and structure. Sudanese modern urban centres were established by colonialists starting in 1898, and were tailored to suit their objectives. This has also been the case for most third world cities, though with minor regional variations.

The history and nature of urbanisation in Africa

Africa has known different patterns of urban growth throughout its past. Sudanese society experienced urban life and the rise of urban settlements prior to colonial rule. However, urban growth and urban settlements of the past bear no resemblance to today’s urban centres. Past settlements were shaped by socio-political-economic conditions. The structural forces that brought about those urban centres were generated by simple technologies and traditional subsistence economies that had relatively little surplus for exchange and that released a small urban elite from the agricultural sector to establish those urban centres. Towns were either established as market centres, garrison towns, and religious centres or seats for rulers. Their limited function meant that they exhibited very rudimentary occupational differentiation and concomitantly elementary forms of social stratification. A case in point is that of the Yoruba towns of Nigeria, which has drawn much theoretical controversy regarding the nature of their urbanism urbaneness. Therefore, it is the nature of the productive forces and processes, and their productive relations, that shapes specific types and forms of towns. When one speaks of the urban centres that existed prior to colonial rule, one is by necessity referring to a form of urbanisation that in no way resembles that of today’s urban centres. The theoretical confusion and the difficulty in explaining the nature of urban growth in Africa stem from the application of theoretical formulations derived from a completely different socio-cultural context to today’s urban centres. They have even gone through great pains to dismiss the fact that these centres were urban altogether, ignoring the fact that

the colonialists' arrival was the fundamental reason behind the transformation of these settlements into a form of urban growth with no precedents. What are then the history and nature of this urban growth?

Constrained by conceptual, as well as by methodological difficulties, students of African urbanisation have failed to see that earlier forms of urbanisation in Africa were the result of different sets of historical forces; yet, they were urban. Their failure stems from the fact that they attempted to treat the city as a static, superhistorical entity, and elevated various concrete, historical features to abstract universals. Mariotti and Magubane note that a city is a set of social relations in which the social process of a class society becomes focused under particular historical conditions (Mariotti and Magubane 1979, 268-69). They further stress that, superficially, urbanisation that has occurred during different historical epochs may look identical. This superficial sameness can only generate abstract definitions. Therefore, according to Mariotti and Magubane (1979), any study must specify the process and facts that generated definitions and descriptions. Descriptive statements are not useful without an analysis of the different historical circumstances that moulded cities into what they are today.

Mariotti and Magubane, moreover, explain that cities first arise with the emergence of class society and subsequently develop, and ultimately wane, with the evolution of productive forces and concomitant reorganisation of class relations and shifts in social power. The establishment of capitalism as the dominant mode of production transfers productive forces and social power to the town. With the advent of capitalism, urbanisation becomes a world-wide phenomenon reflecting the social change that is induced by economic restructuring. As the centre of productive life, the city attracts a large number of people to its industrial centres. Labourers are drawn or forced into these centres because of job opportunities created by the expanding manufacturing and commercial activities. In this society, the process of urbanisation is set in motion by the classes that control the forces of industrialisation (Mariotti and Magubane 1979, 269).

As Mariotti and Magubane state, the class structure of society and the interests of the ruling class are crucial determinants of urban manifestations. The control of the means of production gives capitalists power over the urban workers, who are separated from their own means of production. The wealthy classes obtain control over the local town government and local trade and industry, and pass statutes in support of their interests, reinforcing their privileges and monopolies (*ibid.*, 270). In societies in which an indigenous class develops, the surplus derived from earlier exploitation is invested to produce further growth. Industrialisation continues and urbanisation is contained by the widening economic framework. But in societies in which the capitalist mode of production is introduced and controlled by an alien bourgeoisie, and develops without connection with the requirements of these societies, this process is distorted. Oscar Lang suggests that "investment in underdeveloped countries of capital from the highly developed countries acquired a specific character, it went chiefly in to the exploitation of natural resources to be utilised as raw materials by the industries of the developed countries and into developing food production to feed the population of the developed capitalist countries ... in consequence, the economies of the underdeveloped countries became one sided, raw material and food-exporting economies. The projects which were made by foreign capital in these countries were (not used) for reinvestment in these countries where the capital came from. This is the essential reason why the underdeveloped

countries were not capable of following the classical capitalist path and economic development....” (Mariotti and Magubane 1979, 270). In short, then, the process of urbanisation under capitalism has a historically specific dynamic, which implies that industrial capitalism must be understood not as a static condition but as a developing, expanding process.

The widespread occurrence, both in time and space, of the urban phenomenon should not obscure its particular modification. Our examination of urbanisation must remain within definite historical limits. Also, the peculiarities of the circumstances in which urbanisation occurs must be taken into account (*ibid.*). In Africa, urbanisation in the nineteenth century occurred through the penetration of foreign capital, which arrested the natural transformation of African social forces and resulted in distorted patterns of urbanisation with all its ills—unemployment, rural/urban immigration, poverty, and squalor and destitution in the countryside.

History of urbanisation in the Sudan

Urban centres in the Sudan date back to the ancient Sudanese civilisation. Urban life goes as far back as the prehistoric era and predates the Turko-Egyptian invasion of 1821. What is now known as north and central Sudan was dominated by two kingdoms: the Fung Kingdom of Sennar, which ruled the eastern part of the region including the Nile Valley; and the kingdom of Darfur, which occupied the western part of the region including Darfur. Information about population settlements and commercial activity is lacking; thus, it becomes extremely difficult to reconstruct the social, economic, and demographic patterns of the area before the Turko-Egyptian invasion. Travel literature, which was made available by European and Arab travellers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has become a source of information. According to these writings, the general economic conditions were characterised by low agricultural production together with famines, diseases and tribal wars, which retarded population growth and resulted in few settlements.

Twenty or so settlements, which were active in trade and commerce, were referred to as urban settlements in travel literature. This means that those settlements, which were classified as towns, were mainly commercial or administrative centres, or both. According to the travellers’ writings, and as El-Bushra (1971) notes, the most important settlements in the eastern region were Sennar (the capital of the Fung Kingdom), Wad Medani, Arbagi, Shendi, Berber, Dammar, and Suakin, all located along the Nile with the exception of Suakin. Kobe, to the northwest of the present site of El Fasher, was the capital of the kingdom of Darfur and by far the most important town. Major caravan routes connected these towns across various regions, and gave them special significance. Caravan routes extended from Kobe, in the west, to Suakin, on the Red Sea coast, and from Shendi and Berber, in the north, to Sennar, in the south. These centres and towns also had international connections, which linked them to areas as far as Upper Egypt and, westward, to Bornu and Hausa land.¹ Furthermore, the caravan route that went through Suakin brought the region in contact with Arabia, India and China, which made the exchange of commodities possible. However, as it is apparent

1. El-Sayed el-Bushra, “Towns in the Sudan in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,” *Sudan Notes and Records*, vol. 11 (1971): 65.

from the travellers' accounts, those urban centres exhibited a rudimentary occupational differentiation based on a relatively small agricultural surplus, manned by a small mercantile elite and based on a primitive craft specialisation, and, hence, a simple form of social stratification; a political system built on tribal, kinship and clan organisation.

The size of these settlements varied between a few thousand and ten thousand people. Prior to the Turko-Egyptian invasion, the major towns in the eastern region were Sennar, Shendi and Suakin, all of which were important trade centres and seats of administration. In the western region, the most populous was Kobe with a population of 6,000. In contrast to European towns, Sudanese towns were small, haphazardly built, and poorly provided with even the basic urban services. Some of the towns that existed before the Turko-Egyptian invasion of 1821 disappeared, while others developed into minor or major centres providing a wide range of urban functions.

Under Turko-Egyptian rule, Khartoum became the capital of the administration, and towns like Wad Medani, Shendi, Suakin, El Fasher, and El Obeid were established as provincial administrative towns. Under the Turks a new elite came to power and Sudanese merchants were now overwhelmed by Egyptian, Turks, Syrians, Greeks and others who were more entrepreneurial, traded larger volumes, and had supporting financial and marketing activities. These new elites were also dominant in the new or transformed towns. Under their administration, towns were not redistributive centres for their hinterlands, instead their major role consisted in levying customs and duties and in supervising and directing trade of Sudanese commodities such as ivory, slaves, gum Arabic, gold, and ostrich feathers to Egypt and the Turkish Empire. Although most of the towns that existed prior to the invasion continued to act as centres of trade and administration, the nature of these functions changed considerably.

After the overthrow of the Turko-Egyptian reign by the Mahdists, following the siege and fall of Khartoum, the capital was moved to Omdurman, which was then a small garrison town of the Mahdists. Under the Mahdist state, Omdurman grew considerably, to ca. 120,000–130,000 inhabitants, while Khartoum, as the seat of the Turko-Egyptian government waned. It was not long, however, before the Mahdist regime was ousted by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium regime. After the battle of Omdurman in 1898, a large-scale movement of the population took place, and, as a result, the capital was once more transferred to Khartoum.

The condominium, independence, and post-independence eras

The new British rulers had a different set of policy directives and, although old provincial capitals continued to perform administrative functions, new urban centres were established while old ones were transformed. Urban centres now became integral parts of international trade networks. Their main function was to administer capital investments in the extraction of new materials or primary products (particularly cotton), while the surplus in the form of profit was funnelled to the colonial power, Great Britain. This is the result of the peculiar relationship linking Sudan to the metropolitan industrial capitalist nations through the advent of colonialism. Because of this peculiar and distorted relationship, Third World or

African cities, and Sudanese cities amongst them, never experienced the transformation of the traditional productive forces that took place in Europe at the time of the industrial revolution, where capitalist industrialisation was a revolutionary force that precipitated growth and development. The same forces that gave rise to towns transmuted rural life. The social disorganisation of the countryside further contributed to the growth of these towns. The installation of the Gezira Scheme, the Gedarif durra cultivation, and later on, the White Nile pump schemes, as well as the Managil and other mechanised agricultural schemes, have resulted in temporary or permanent rural unemployment and rural poverty, which forced people out of their land. The fragile country economy is now reoriented as an adjunct of the economy of the metropolitan power. The emphasis on monoculture with the consequent dependence on a single export, or at best a small number of exports, made the Sudanese economy extremely vulnerable to any price changes in the international market. This further accelerated a downward trek in various forms of migration: short-run, long-distance, circular, etc. Urban centres at the receiving end of the migration flows were centres of administration, commercial activities, capital-intensive manufacturing, financial services, construction, and water, electricity or transportation services, and were not designed to take in and cater to an unlimited number of people from the rural areas.

Sudan: The urban and the primate city

The major urban centres in Sudan (Greater Khartoum conurbation, Wad Medani, El Obeid, Port Sudan, etc.) have either been established or transformed to serve the specific objectives of the colonialists; i.e., the extraction of raw materials and exploitation of cheap labour. Policies were formulated, and laws promulgated, to serve those objectives. However, Sudan has continued, ever after the colonizers left, to produce primary products for export, and to depend on international economic forces that to a great extent determine its economic performance. Unfavourable and deteriorating terms of trade have incessantly affected the population in the rural areas and those holding formal urban occupations. Sudan is unprepared to respond to the new set of economic measures of globalisation and will be a witness to more people moving from the rural traditional and modern agricultural sectors to the urban centres—globalisation necessitates competitiveness which requires agricultural efficiency, investment in higher productivity and increasing reliance on technological expertise, upgrading of labour skills, as well as an efficient communication and transportation system of delivery to move both people, messages and commodities. This means more labour redundancies and consequently more movement to urban centres. Recently, this state of affairs has been aggravated by an enduring armed conflict in the southern, western and eastern regions and by long spells of drought that culminated in famines and food shortages intermittently during the last twenty years (1975–1983, 1985–1992, 1998–2001). As a consequence there has been mass population movement to the major cities, of people seeking both work and refuge. This has clearly been reflected in the wide disparity between the rate of migration and the employment rate in urban centres (unemployment rate is 16%) and further reflected in pressures on the housing market, education, health facilities and transport services. This population influx to major centres raises the more fundamental question of the primacy of these urban centres, particularly the Greater Khartoum conurbation.

The primacy of major centres

It was the British policy that created major urban centres, where all services, economic activities, and administrative functions were concentrated. This is perhaps the main reason behind the huge waves of migration reversing into major urban centres whenever a crisis occurred in the rural areas—such as crop and food shortages, and armed conflicts—in addition to the fact that people seek educational and health facilities as well as better work opportunities in these conurbations. The primate city theory, or primacy of certain cities in the urban geography, centres on the fact that a single city or one urban centre dominates a region in terms of population concentration and relative population size ranking. The urban primacy concept was first introduced by Mark Jefferson (1939) who measured the extent of urban primacy by calculating the size of the second and third largest cities as a percentage of the first largest city. Rank-size regularity in a national city-size distribution has, however, been generally recognised as the more desirable and normal pattern. In countries with rank-size distribution, the population size of any city is inversely proportional to its rank in the city hierarchy; the second largest city is half the size of the largest one, the third is one-third the size of the largest one, and so on. Such a regular distribution pattern is explained by the central place theory which focuses on the efficient provision of goods and services and involves lower order centres being nested within the trade areas of larger, higher order centres in an integrated system (Bromley 1992). The experiment, then, of a primate city is often associated with the absence of such an integrated system of central places. In countries with primate city distribution, the largest metropolis has often grown to such a size and level of wealth that it dominates both the country's settlement system and its economy.

Nations with a similar stage of economic development have very different indices for primacy, although urban primacy is a feature common to many of them. In most African countries where city primacy is a dominant feature, the emphasis is upon the urban system being dominated by a single primate city. Jefferson has suggested that city primacy is linked to the mature economic development of a country. In research from the 1960s, evidence showed that the link of primacy to economic development is rather weak, whereas other research links city primacy with the nature of economy. It is further suggested that primacy is related to export-oriented agricultural economies, whereas rank-size regularity is associated with industrial or non-export-oriented agricultural economies. Moreover, export-oriented and agricultural economies are viewed in a dependency perspective. The principal city of an underdeveloped export-oriented agricultural economy stands both in a dependent position with respect to advanced economies, and in a dominant role within its own nation. However, the lack of clarity and consensus on this point has led some researchers to question which economic variables are connected with city primacy, and to conclude that city primacy can occur in both types of economies (export-oriented agricultural economies and non-export oriented ones). Other investigations also refer to the link between city primacy and colonialism where colonial rulers have consciously pursued concentration of administrative, political and commercial activities and functions in a single city. The national governments, however, followed suit after the colonialists left, since the dependency pattern continued. The resulting economies were usually export-oriented, a fact that aided concentration in the port and capital areas and resulted in the creation of an internal dual economy—the core and the periphery. The implication of primacy for development has both advantages and disadvantages. Some have pointed out that primacy can be viewed either as an aid or

a hindrance to development (this of course depends on what development perspective one advocates). It has been stated that the advantage of the big city or the primary one is of economic efficiency. The primary city becomes the most rational location for most industrial business enterprises. The big city, by the very nature of its concentration, enjoys economies of scale, specialisation advantages, complementarity among industries, reduced communication costs, high market potential and generation and diffusion of innovation. Agglomeration economies, in particular, explain why large cities appear to generate faster national economic growth rates (Gilbert 1981) and why metropolitan expansion is viewed as an integral part of the process of economic development.

The efficiency argument extends beyond industrial location to include public utilities, like drinking water, telephones, electricity, and removal of sewage, since it is cheaper to provide these services to a clustered population than to a scattered one. However, the argument against large or primate city focuses on the diseconomies of scale and the diminishing quality of life, where social services fail. In a developing country, these increasing costs result in the huge growth of that portion of urban population that is not served. Greater Khartoum suffers greatly from this phenomenon (Abu Sin and Davies 1991).

On the other hand, according to a core/periphery perspective, in a developing country the dominant primate city can obstruct a sectorally and geographically balanced pattern of industrial growth to the advantage of population groups who seek to stabilise the system to their own advantage. The equalisation of wealth between core and periphery is prevented and the dichotomy is reinforced by state investment combined with other forms of discrimination. The periphery, the internal colony, is commonly forced into primary export activities and remains permanently excluded.

However, growth pole development in selected centres did not bring about the desired results, and did not deliver development goods to the periphery—as a matter of fact the periphery remained impoverished. The “secondary city” policy, based on which the development of secondary cities depends on increasing productivity and on satisfying internal rather than external demands, is an alternative to the growth pole policy, which relies on concentrating export-oriented industries in a few larger regional centres. Therefore, policies for controlling growth of the primate city can be combined with those stimulating appropriate development through the concentration of business industry and investments in construction, infrastructure and all public utility works at the expense of its rural hinterland, from which the dominant city disproportionately gains. It is the quality of the interrelationships between the primate city and the hinterland that determines the extent to which the region benefits or suffers. The hinterland has a dependant relationship with the primate city, a centre of innovation from which benefits trickle down, and which will in time level the disparities between the core and the periphery.

However, this trickle-down effect has since been questioned because, over time, the periphery will be drained of capital, labour and raw materials by what has been termed “internal colonialism.”

Physical planning, land use and residential patterns

Worth mentioning here is that the physical planning of Khartoum today is of colonialist making. The physical planning of the city was never integrated with economic plans or with comprehensive national planning. A physical planning unit was first established in 1937. The Khartoum town planning and physical planning committee has since been transferred several times amongst various ministries. Although Khartoum is favoured by its geographical location, at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, and has extensive agricultural land that could supply Khartoum with vegetables, fruit and dairy products, most of its lands are now residential. Despite the fact that most of its land is used for residential purposes, Khartoum, since its independence, has been caught unprepared to house the thousands that fled the rural areas. Omer A. Al-Agraa (2001) states that, although Sudan's general housing situation has somewhat improved recently, it is still far from being satisfactory. He further notes that the percentage of households officially owning their residences may have increased from 65% in 1993 to 80% in 1998, yet this last percentage, which has probably further improved, indicates that as many as one-fifth of all households still have housing tenure problems, which they try to solve through very expensive, unsafe, and socially and environmentally hazardous squatting, or with unhealthy overcrowding, sometimes ending up with no house at all. Al-Agraa further points out (2001, 3) that this unsatisfactory housing situation may be attributed to a persistent gap between supply and demand. The demand, especially in the urban areas and particularly in the capital, naturally increases, and, more importantly, is influenced by massive displacement and migration from war-ravaged and relatively underdeveloped or drought-stricken regions. The supply on the other hand, is handicapped by long-delayed, and inadequate, housing plans, lagging implementation, unaffordable building materials and construction, paralyzing poverty and almost total lack of access to housing loans (the budget in 2001 for housing loans was of 143 million Dinar made available by the Estates Bank—the only official institution offering financial support to housing—and equalling no more than the average cost of one hundred housing units).²

According to Al-Agraa (2001, 3), 85% of the existing housing stock in the capital belongs to the third, fourth, and illegal classes, while the remaining 15% belongs to the first and second classes. Although this indicates greater access to housing by the poorer majority, it nevertheless implies widespread lowering of standards and some outright decay in the urban environment, especially in the tenure-insecure, illegal areas and in the temporary fourth classes that together account for around 40% of the capital's housing. The above-mentioned classification of housing is itself controversial in several ways. While it does provide households with opportunities, the current physical segregation of the various classes leads, amongst other problems, to questionable socio-economic segregation of the population. It seems that arguments for and against classification continue amongst planners with some asserting that the ultimate solution lies in a compro-

2. Salah Abdel Razig, "Housing finance in the Sudan" (Arabic), Fifth Scientific Conference, quoted by Prof. Agraa in "Decay in the Sudanese Urban Environment," (2001): 12.

mise; i.e., retaining some form of classification without the current pronounced segregation.³ In view of the current situation in Khartoum, and for the rest of the urban areas in the Sudan, a classification that underlies socio-economic inequalities is unavoidable, whatever may be the compromise. Inequalities built into the system of urban resource allocation and distribution and its inaccessibility to the majority of the urban population will be the norm. Housing classification is the outcome of the differential inaccessibility to the unequally distributed and most desired urban resource; i.e., land. Segregation of residential quarters on the basis of social classes is perhaps only one of the consequences of the stark transformation of Sudanese society today. The sharp differentiation of the population on the basis of social class (defined in terms of ones' share of GNP), and the polarisation according to social class indicators, left most of the Sudanese population under the poverty line despite economic growth and wealth acquired from the extraction of oil in the Sudan. Therefore, movement from the countryside to the urban centres, most notably to Khartoum, led to pressure on the housing market and the expansion of both residential areas and squatter settlements.

Sudan, and similarly Khartoum, has long ago been incorporated in the world market and thus been influenced by forces of change and transformation that are beyond the rural and the urban itself. Khartoum is in no way responsible for the so-called urban problems we witness there today; rather, squalor, poverty unemployment, new sorts of crime, and all forms of fraud and white-collar crimes are a natural outcome of capitalist urbanisation. A new class of men of wealth and power is now controlling urban space and urban resources. Market forces are now determining the urban space, land is being bought and sold by foreign capital from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states for capitalist investment. Projects like Dreamland, or the construction of presidential villas and development projects in central Khartoum, all indicate a kind of development and investment that clashes with the numerous shantytowns being erected. The same forces that are reshaping urban space in Khartoum are forcing the rural population towards Khartoum.

Similarly, the urban labour market in Khartoum is a fast transforming labour market, and under new conditions of international trade regulations and high-skills technology there will be very little room for the untrained, unskilled, and uninformed and certainly labour will go where it is most needed. The untrained and unskilled will end up in the informal sector. By its very nature, the informal sector is both accommodating and able to offer job opportunities to those with little or no capital, no skills or other credentials. Increased rates of urban poverty have also thrown a sizeable number of women and children in the informal sector of employment. Women can now prepare snacks, run small bakeries and even offer their services on wedding occasions and for other jobs. Children dropping out of school can be seen at traffic lights selling tissue paper, toys, and more. The Sudanese family has undergone serious changes. The extended family, which was once described by Adel Ghaffar M. Ahmed (1977) as a handicap to development, is now the safest haven for many. Young unemployed youth and university graduates line up in search for jobs, with added financial responsibilities while the family patiently watches and waits. The dependency rate is high and the age at which couples are getting married has risen as neither young unemployed men nor women can afford to start a family. Young women compete equally with men for

3. Ibid., 3.

the few jobs offered and both of them aim for higher postgraduate education. These changes in the family have serious implications for the demographic structure of the town and for the future of the labour force. Future generations will be born in families that cannot afford their upbringing and schooling, while the more educated will have smaller families.

Ruralisation of Khartoum

The features of the urban scene that have been mistakenly referred to as the “ruralisation of Khartoum” are simply manifestations of these changes. Those who came from the rural countryside are now in an urban environment and their residential and social mobility is determined by urban institutions. The rural norms and values they cherish are part of a normative system that is constantly changing to conform to the urban system. The urban system—the path that Khartoum took for development; i.e., capitalist urbanisation—cannot be reversed bearing in mind the nature of the state. This means more poverty, more unemployment and more unrest. The unrest we have seen in the countryside will soon manifest itself in Khartoum—the events following the death of John Garang in August 2005 are not far from our memory, nor is the invasion of Omdurman in May 2008 by the rebel faction of the Justice and Equality Movement. The transformation of Khartoum will therefore continue.

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Chapter 6

Old Omdurman and national integration: The socio-historical roots of social exclusion¹

Idris Salim El-Hassan

Introduction

The concept of social exclusion, despite its rather recent appearance and imprecise definition, has proved to be a useful analytical tool regarding some aspects of social differentiation, especially in urban situations. It is generally employed to designate differential accessibility to social services and participation in urban public life as a result of specific governmental social policies. However, this chapter discusses a special case in Sudan where social exclusion is not related to an official social policy per se but rather is due to the development of structural, socio-economic historical factors. In this case, one section of the urban population does not recognize other categories as co-citizens not because of a social policy but because the former think they are, historically speaking, the “true” citizens while the latter are “outsiders.” Another dimension of the case discussed here, and usually not entertained in the conventional use of the concept of social exclusion, is the way in which social exclusion is related to national integration. The chapter argues, using material from urban

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Sudan, that the two aspects are closely interlinked through the socio-historical criteria that define an urban identity.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first explores theoretical issues. The second section discusses the research problem, while the third one gives a broad historical and social context of Omdurman, an important urban centre in Sudan considered the “national capital” of the country. Various types of socio-historical data will be marshalled in section four to indicate how the residents of the old quarters of Omdurman have come to identify themselves as the “real” citizens of the city, excluding others from this privilege. The implication of this ideological bias will be pursued further. The conclusion points to possible future developments insofar as national integration is concerned.

Theoretical context²

Though the term “social exclusion” is of relatively recent origin and goes back to about a quarter of a century ago, there is a large and rapidly growing literature on the subject which has already made huge impact on current discussions on a wide range of social and economic issues. The concept originally described the “socially excluded” as containing the following categories: the mentally and physically handicapped; suicidal people; elderly invalids; abused children; substance abusers; delinquents; single parents; multi-problem households; marginal and asocial persons; and other social “misfits.” However, now the concept has expanded to cover a variety of other aspects: secure, permanent employment; earnings; property, credit, or land; housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural capital; the welfare state; citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; family and sociability; humanity, respect, fulfilment and understanding.

We notice that the concept in its original or expanded forms—even though it mentions matters such as citizenship—primarily deals with social policy issues. Social exclusion from the angle of the social policy perspective concentrates on governmental institutions and systems, and focuses on larger issues of disharmony or denial of rights and opportunities. However, I want to concentrate on social exclusion with regards to citizenship where one section of the population denies the citizenship of the other sections, and the impact this dynamic has on national integration. Social exclusion in our case does not have concrete expression in political or social policy matters; i.e., the “excluded groups” are not prevented from participating in the political, economic or social life; they are not “misfits.” On the contrary, some of them are very rich and occupy prominent social and political positions. The excluding group, as will be shown, does not have any power to influence social policies which might affect the other groups. There are no physical or social confrontations between the two groups. The excluding group, Old Omdurmanis, identify themselves as the “real” citizens of the national capital Omdurman by the mere fact of being the old timers, and do not recognize others as equal citizens. By doing so, Old Omdurmanis ideologically appropriate the historical, national image of Omdurman. This raises the question of how

2. This section draws from “The social exclusion discourse: ideas and policy change” by Béland (2007); Hills, Le Grand, and Piachaud (2002); Sen (2000); and Silver (1994).

Omdurman, once seen as a model of national integration, can maintain social integration as it denies some of its citizens the right of having shared in the creation of that national image. It is argued that Old Omdurman's model is not conducive to national integration since it is exclusionary in nature.

The chapter argues that factors of social exclusion are embedded in the socio-economic, historical set-up of the city. That is, the processes of social exclusion are not at all due to any current political or socio-economic policy, but are a result of processes that have developed over long historical periods of time. The end result is that one is defined as a citizen on mere social and not official or institutional bases.

This form of exclusion is thus not related to poverty, unemployment, etc. Neither does it prevent the excluded from participating in the political or socio-economic activities. It is simply the feeling of not having one history or one destiny. This feeling is mutually shared by both the excluding group and the excluded. The hope is that the argument presented here will contribute to the ongoing debate on the nature and dynamics of identity and national integration in the Sudan, while presenting a socio-historical perspective in addition to the already existing historical, racial, ecological approaches. Since some dynamics relate to the past while others operate in the present, there will be an alternation between past and present tenses in this chapter.

Research problem

Omdurman has significantly moulded the political, economic, social and cultural situation in the Sudan, and continues to do so. Out of the eight presidents and prime ministers of Sudan since independence five are from Old Omdurman, living in nearby neighbourhoods. The major national political parties (the Ashiqqa, Unionist, Communist, Umma, or Islamic movements, to mention a few), the women's movement, literary and artistic groups, religious organizations, and the national educational movement (girls' schools up to university level, non-governmental boys' schools) have all been conceived and started in old Omdurman. The top two football clubs in the country (Hilal and Mareikh), the only national Radio and TV stations, the only national theatre, the military academy, for example, still exert immense influence on the national level in their respective fields. The first female doctor, the first female parliamentarian, the first female teachers' college, and the first nursery and midwifery colleges all originated in Omdurman. All these personalities, institutions, and movements, being national in character, and especially the Radio and TV stations, have been instrumental in shaping national awareness and political and cultural life of Sudan as a whole. The question here is whether the image of Omdurman truly embodies that sense of national integration it projects on the national level.

During the last decades, a huge body of literature appeared on Omdurman. Many writings, heated debates and exchanges have centred on Omdurman's identity as expressed by attacks and counter-attacks concerning its leading national role, social characteristics, unique values and cultural contributions in different social fields. No other city in the Sudan has received as much coverage as Omdurman. In this literature the image of Omdurman appears to provoke strong conflicting responses by those who idolize it on one hand and those who demonize it on the other. Omdurman, known as the "national capital," is always presented by

Omdurmani writers, poets, artists, and intellectuals, in addition to its old citizens, as a place where groups of different ethnic, tribal, geographical and cultural backgrounds have melted into one homogeneous, harmonious and cohesive society³ despite its internal geographical, economic or political divisions. It is accordingly claimed by the same groups, represented by the *abna'a Omdurman* (sons of Omdurman) group⁴ (al-Sudani Daily, December 29, 2008; and al-Sudani Daily, January 24, 2009), as a model for social integration nationwide. In their view, Omdurman acts as the prime mover in moulding the Sudanese national character through its hegemonic culture and offers itself as a symbol for national integration (Abdel Hamid 2004a). However, as some opponent scholars argued, this is misleading for in fact Omdurman's culture by its nature is marginalizing and excluding to other non-Omdurmani cultures and people (Abdel Hamid 2004b).

The criteria the *abna'a Omdurman* use to identify the "real" Omdurmani exclude all those not born in the old parts of the city or not born to Old Omdurmanis; all those who do not meet these requirements are not considered Omdurmanis.

This chapter discusses the roots and the components of the excluding and marginalizing attitude of Old Omdurman residents, and how they have come to be. The chapter explains how the interplay between historical, geographical, and demographic factors has led the Old Omdurmanis to consider newcomers as outsiders unless they adopt Omdurman's way of life and become fully assimilated. Old Omdurman presents an interesting case in that, contrary to the claims made by old Omdurmani writers, poets, artists, media personalities, intellectuals, and others of Omdurman symbolizing a model for national integration, it does not welcome the presence of newcomers from other parts of the Sudan who want to keep their own cultural identity. Newcomers are not regarded as full citizens. This form of social exclusion is not political, administrative or economic but it belongs to the social domain; i.e., it is not practiced by the state, its organs, or any of its officials. The argument will thus focus on the matter of national integration from the point of view of the Old Omdurmanis and will not look at the new changes and development caused by external (migrants and displaced) and internal (natural population growth, increase of social differentiation, etc.) dynamics or elements. This would require the use of a separate methodology and the analysis of a different set of data.

Using the concepts of time, place, social institutions, ideology, memory, gender, ownership of land, and stratification, the chapter explores some of the factors and processes that might have contributed to strengthening the sense of social cohesion among the old residents to the extent of excluding other new co-residents in urban Sudan. Taking Omdurman as an example, it will be argued that, according to the mode of interplay between the constituent factors, the emerging patterns of social forms might impact the state of social integration.

3. This is well demonstrated by the very famous song "ana Omdurman, ana al-Sudan" [I am Omdurman, I am the Sudan].

4. This group, composed of members of old Omdurmani families, first appeared in 1994 as *awlad* (boys) of Omdurman, changed to *abna'a* (sons) of Omdurman in 1998. The group then became the institutionalized club of Abna'a Omdurman, which holds irregular cultural and social activities.

Omdurman's case will be taken to illustrate how social cohesion could be hampered by not granting, due to varying factors, other co-citizens the privilege to be part of a shared history.

Omdurman: The historical and social context

The position of Omdurman will be discussed in terms of its geographical and historical characteristics, the basic concept of its foundation, indigenous and colonial influences, and the impact of all these factors on shaping its demography, social interaction, urbanization dynamics and modes of living. This is, among other things, illustrated by the linkages between architecture, social organization and actual modes and forms of social interaction (Daifalla 1998, 66-82).

Omdurman, in terms of population and area, is the largest of the three cities that constitute Greater Khartoum (Omdurman, Khartoum and Khartoum North) (Central Bureau of Statistics 2006, 55). Geographically, lying on the western bank of the River Nile, it is connected to all of western Sudan's hinterland, extending beyond to western Africa and to the north up to the Mediterranean region via the famous caravan route of Darb al-Arbien (the forty-day route) and pilgrimage routes. Animal, agricultural, and forest products are exported through these routes, while glassware, textile and other products are imported. There are also merchants, pilgrims, ulama (Muslim scholars), and adventurers utilizing these roadways. In recent years, large numbers of people fleeing their homelands because of drought and civil strife in Kordofan and Darfur took the same routes to come to settle in the western parts of the city (Khun 1970; Protki 1973).

Omdurman is named the "national capital" because it was the seat of the Mahdiyya rule (1885-1898), the national religious revolution that ousted the colonial Turkish regime (1821-1885). Though the history of the city goes thousands of years back, immediately before the Mahdiyya it only comprised of the southern parts of Abu Seid and al-Fitihab, then small villages of fishermen and agro-pastoralists (Rehfishch 1964). However, with the downfall of Khartoum, the capital city of the colonial Turkish rule, al-Mahdi decided to move the capital to Omdurman whose establishment was mainly based on the encampments of the victorious armies of the Ansar (al-Mahdi's supporters). Driven by religious fervour, the Mahdi's armies, sometimes accompanied by families, came from all regions and tribes of the Sudan. The groups from western Sudan constituted the main body of the army and a significant part of its leadership. The influx of the combatants at the time caused the population of the city to rise dramatically from few hundreds to about one hundred and fifty thousand in 1886 (El Bushra 2005, 345). The early planning and architecture of the town, initiated by the Khalifa (successor of al-Mahdi) Abdullahi, reflected the composition and the socio-economic and tribal origins of the newcomers and their ascetic religious orientation. They mainly came from humble and poor rural backgrounds, with nothing more than their support of the "religion" (i.e., Islam) bringing them together against the hegemonic infidels. In addition to the army soldiers, there were few artisans and functionaries of foreign origin (Turkish, Egyptian, Levantine and European—some of whom were Christians) from the ousted regime, who preferred to stay or were simply caught up in the fighting and had no place to go except to accept to move, on the orders of the Khalifa, from Khartoum to Omdurman. Demographically, the population of Omdurman then consisted of detribalized people whose links with their original homelands had weakened considerably, many of whom were of

ex-slave origin (Mukhtar Ajouba 2008, 25-32). This was later accentuated with the defeat of the Mahdiyya and the establishment of the new Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule (1898-1956) when the Mahdiyya armies retreated and many of them fled to Gezira and western parts of Sudan. The implications of this period have had great impact on the development of Omdurman as will be shown later.

The layout of the old city, as envisioned by the Khalifa, shows broad roads for easy movement of the massive numbers of soldiers with the Mahdist army as they embarked on military missions inside or outside Sudan, or simply for parades (e.g., al-Arda – Parade street). The city displayed few long wide lanes leading to the spiritual centre where al-Mahdi's tomb and the main mosque lay not far away from the temporal hub represented by the *suq* (market) with its different divisions. However, the rest of the city was divided into sections, which were further subdivided into quarters. Apart from the main quarters of the Khalifa, his family, bodyguards and intimate supporters, the other parts were allotted based on tribal affiliations to military leaders; hence, some of the places were named after those leaders (wad Nubawi, wad al Baseer, wad Aru, abu Roaf, etc.). There was no well-designed general plan for the city aside from the broad directives stated above. The distribution of the houses between and within the quarters' divisions was left to the army leaders to determine, as were the sizes and choice of neighbourhoods according to the needs of each group (Abu-Salim 1991, 83-102). The Mahdist state did not intervene in the issue of land ownership. Accordingly, plots and houses were owned by their occupants. Since many of the residents in one plot were either part of extended families or kinsmen, or from groups attached to them, their dwellings connected through openings known as *naffaj(s)* (Mariam 2006). Up to the present day, in old sections of the town (e.g., Abu Roaf, Abu Kadoak, or Bait al-Mal) a whole street, which might comprise many houses, only has few doors opening to the outside while inside all the houses are linked through the *naffajs*. This design ensures the privacy of the occupants and enables communication between the family women without having to go through the streets.

Omdurman's response to the environmental, geographical and historical challenges was different because of the differences in the historical, geographical and other aspects of its context. Generally, complex challenges are not met by cities equally, as each city has its own personality and capacity of efficiency within a specific context (Sachs-Jeantet 1994, 332). In the case of Omdurman, however, and like many cities in the Sudan in particular and Africa in general (Pons 1980; Lobban 1970), the colonial experience could be one of the important factors, among other internal ones, largely responsible for dwarfing the rising feeling of social integration. Despite the presence of "modernizing" agents introduced by the British such as modern education, radio stations, sport clubs, etc., there seem not to have been deep-rooted processes of urbanity with regards to social integration. In fact, the social dynamics in old Omdurman worked against and resisted the structural changes that are usually associated with urbanization. A real balanced urban development would be expected to result in deeply rooted, strong social integration. Omdurman, employing the ideology of resistance, created its own parallel form of modernity.

Socio-historical dynamics of old Omdurman

Old Omdurman is characterized by strong neighbourhood ties resulting on the one hand from strong, anti-colonial, ascetic, religious sentiments, and, on the other hand, from living together for a long time in one permanently owned place—in the way described above. Hence, neighbours of one *hai* (quarter), who could also be relatives, would be living together for generations in the same family-owned house, or string of houses. In this last case, as mentioned earlier, extended families had, and still have, their big houses adjacent to each other; this was particularly important for ensuring women's seclusion (Sharif 2006). Moreover, it was not unusual to find in each household some distant relatives and acquaintances, who came to town for religious education or work, living with the same extended family, though in separate quarters. They all lived under the patronage of a head patriarch or matriarch (grandparent). The term *hoash* is used to describe both the physical building and the web of social relations.⁵ Some of these famous *hoashes* are those of Al Bedri, Al Malik, and Al Abu Samra. The individual is thus embedded in the web of relations of localized extended families over long periods of time. The individuals are recognized and identified by others as belonging to those extended families and treated as such, while they themselves are brought up and socialized within those social boundaries; and they behave accordingly. In other words, the individual's identity is linked to the family identity and recognized by the individual and by others in this manner. It should be noted that, however, individual males and females moved and interacted freely and liberally within the *hoashes* except for the strict rule of separation between the two sexes.

Marriage is another important institution that brought the people of old Omdurman together (Zenkovsky 1945). Women played a very prominent role in connecting extended families across the different quarters through cross-marriages between distant relatives, friends, co-religious orders' members or schoolmates. Immediately after the downfall of the Mahdiyya, there was turmoil and instability as many men were either killed or fled the city to the extent that the population size dropped from 150,000 to 60,000 (El Bushra 2005, 348). In many cases women were left without support and were forced to assume the role of family heads in that period and thus prevented the family system from collapsing. In other cases women of detribalized groups of ex-slave origin were the cornerstones of their family system. But this was reversed once men regained control after the new colonial rule became stable. Therefore, when matters settled down the patriarchal system was reinstated. This might suggest an explanation for the ambivalent attitude towards the position of women in Omdurman. On the one hand, they seem to be highly respected and the object of idolizing (in songs and support for women organizations, for example), while on the other hand they are secluded and pushed aside as inferiors as in any strict male-dominated patriarchal society. Women are thought of as weak creatures the responsibility of whose protection lies with the men.

A number of *hooshs* (extended families) constituted a *hai* (quarter) bonded by a strong feeling of fraternity and sense of competition towards other quarters, as exemplified by the frequent fights that erupted between the youths of the different quarters. Also, each *hai* used to have a group of strong young men acting as *futuwat* (bullies) to protect the *hai* and its

5. For an excellent case of this residential arrangement see Shakkak (1978).

young females from all forms of misconduct by men from other quarters, especially during wedding parties. Thus, women continued to be bridges connecting the quarters through cross-marriages (Mohamed Iman Ahmed 2006). The competition between the different *hai* was generally mitigated by the presence of such marital bonds, while rivalries between the educational groups, political parties, sport clubs, literary groups, and religious and institutional establishments remained in the background. Sometimes, even with the presence of the former mediating elements, rivalries reappeared at higher levels in the form of dualism (Ansar and Khatmiyyia religious orders; Hilal and Mereikh football teams; the Sharfi and al-Bakri cemeteries), indicating different social and political affiliations. For example, the Ansar are usually buried in the Sharfi graveyard, while the Khatmiyyia in al-Bakri. The city is accordingly divided mainly along lines of kinship, neighbourhoods and religious ideology rather than based on wealth or social status.

In Omdurman, macro-level dynamics are very much pinned to and shaped by the social relationships grounded in the rather closed networks of kinship, neighbourhoods, and religious values and personalities. However, all forms of social relationships, at all levels, are largely governed by the extended family ties. Hence, despite the outward appearance of openness, the old Omdurman people are in fact very much encapsulated within their own social systems and style of living. They do not accept radical innovations or others who cannot, for one reason or another, assimilate themselves and be completely absorbed within those relations. This could explain why the modernizing effects introduced by British colonialism did not bear fruit in the way envisaged by the colonizers. I argue that is because the family ties are so strong that they are able to subsume all other non-family relations and reduce them to basic primary structures of relationships. These relationships do not coincide with urbanism, which is characterized by heterogeneity and innovations. Rather than opposing new changes head-on, Omdurman has had the capacity of internalizing and incorporating new modes of living and relationships brought by others and transforming them without its own model necessarily being radically changed. The case of Omdurman in this regard is similar to the difference between national (native) and colonial cities in Africa (Ashgate 2003).

For instance, the Indian and other non-Sudanese communities could not penetrate and change the dense web of close ties; on the contrary, they became part of it. Except for religious differences, the Copts, for example, are Omdurmanis through and through in terms of social customs, practices, and social ties (al-Sudani Daily November 21, 2008). Copts in Khartoum, for example, do not show intensive social interactions with Muslims like in Omdurman. I venture to say that the above applies to other modern and non-traditional organizations and institutions as well. For instance, police and legal systems were very much moulded by those social relations to the extent that some policemen and judges did not carry out their official duties properly if the persons involved belonged to one of Omdurman's social circles. A comment like "he is the son of so and so" was quite enough to release the offender (Bedri 1999). Even the women's movement, the communist party, the Umma party, and the radio have all been dominated by Omdurman's social model which gives primacy to maintaining good social relations more than having them disrupted by political or other formal relations. Since its establishment in the mid-1940s the majority of the women movement's leadership has been from Omdurman and mostly comprises of relatives, neighbours, friends or school-mates. Looking closely at the beginnings of the movement also reveals that it grew under the protection of male religious leaders and guardians. The same is also true for education

and political parties which, except for a few, developed under the influence of Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, leaders of the two main religious orders in the Sudan. All these organizations, despite the garb of modernity, are rather traditional and conservative.⁶ For, none of them could fully escape the grip of localized extended family systems, neighbourhood ties or religious patronage, or all of them at the same time.

Some social practices strengthened the above-mentioned social bonds further. Many generations, potentially of individuals related to each other, lived together in one locality, which deepened familiarity and interconnectedness between them. Cohorts of grandparents, parents and grandsons grew up and played together, went to the same *khalwas* (Quranic schools) and modern schools, and together participated in many social activities like going to the cinema or playing football.

Again, there were no marked variations in terms of social differentiation and stratification. Even the wealthy, being influenced by Mahdiyya asceticism, lived a simple life with no conspicuous modes of consumption. Since modern institutions of social security could not penetrate and replace older forms of social support in the old quarters, neighbours had to rely on their own mutual assistance and cooperation to meet their material and social needs. Old Omdurmanis expressed this mutuality in institutions like the *fatur al-Juma'a* (Friday breakfast) for which the extended families, relatives, neighbours and friends meet to have breakfast together, a ritual that more often than not extends throughout the whole day. During this time they play cards, chat, sing and tell stories and jokes about the group's members and Omdurman in general. Also, weddings and mourning occasions were prolonged events that were a must to attend. The rest of the group castigated those who were not present without valid excuses, especially at burial times. During the fasting month of Ramadan, women gathered to prepare the month's special food and beverages, such as the *abray* drink, while men went out in the streets to have the *iftar* (sunset breakfast) together. Women had their separate world when they met on special occasions of mourning or for weddings; they also attended *bayt al-khiyta* (knitting classes) where they learned to make men's *tagiyya* (head covers), handkerchiefs, or decorate table clothes and bed sheets. Knitting classes were for females only and were held in secluded houses (Bedawi 2008). They were informal learning institutions established through unofficial, communal, voluntary efforts. Many similar learning institutions, for both males and females, were established as a passive form of resistance to the British modern (secular) educational system against which they competed. These included Omdurman's Mahad al-ilmi (religious institute), Ahfad, al-Melaik, al-Ahliyya, al-Mutamam intermediate and secondary schools, and Mahad al-Girsh al-Sanae (al-Haj 2001).

The British administration exerted great efforts to handle the delicate issue of dealing with religion in northern Sudan for the fear of fuelling religious sentiments similar to those that had instigated rebellion against the former Turkish rule. Important religious figures whom the British engaged with or co-opted in a very cautious manner played a significant role in bringing people together around the British officials. Though they opposed some

6. For a critique of the traditionalism of the Sudanese Communist party with regards to gender see Fatima Babiker Mahmoud (2008).

of the British policies, these religious figures had the power to influence through their communication with the British rulers whose respect they had earned. This influence extended beyond mere religious matters, into other social domains. Shaikh al-Badawi, Abu al-Gasim Hashim, and many other prominent religious personalities, for instance, were allowed to have afternoon Quranic classes in their homes, which quite a number of people used to attend; or, in some cases, some of these religious names were appointed as sharia judges or teachers in government-controlled schools. Hence, their social influence was greatly boasted. On the other hand, Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi (son of the great Mahdi) and Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani (respectively the two major leaders of the Ansar and Khatmiyya religious orders) were the arch-patrons and sponsors of all fields of popular religious tariqas, political movements (Umma and Unionist parties), social activities (e.g., *mawlid*, prophet's birthday), educational campaigns, literary and artistic groups (Nur 2004), sport clubs, and even comic personalities (wad Naffash) and song writers (Abd al-Rahman al-Rayyiah). Al-Mahdi's and al-Mirghani's social and financial support, as well as their spiritual blessing and political influence, were necessary for social acceptance by the public and approval of the authorities (Bashari 1996). All social and political efforts tried by the elites were largely destined to fail if not positively or implicitly condoned by them.

Other important institutions playing a significant role in Omdurman's cultural life were the coffee shops (s. *qahwa*, pl. *qahawi*) in the marketplace (the most famous of which included those of Yousif al Faki, George Mishrigi, and wad al-Agha). Poets, critics, journalists, playwrights, novelists, and singers used to go there to socialize and exchange ideas. The *qahawi* offered traditional drinks in a traditional way. The two main literary groups (reading circles) of Abu Roaf (*hai* Abu Roaf) and Hashmab (*hai* al-Mourda) mainly attracted friends and relatives from the same neighbourhoods. In spite of the fact that the two circles read British newspapers and high literary and intellectual works, they were equally interested in Arabic classics (Ali 2006, 183-184).

The strong kinship and neighbourhood ties have resulted in two important implications: connivance (or pact of silence), and exclusion of non-complying individuals. There is an untold secret agreement to keep silent about serious contravening of social or ethical codes that might disrupt the social fabric. In case of illegal pregnancy among prominent families, a certain person by the name of Abd al-Faraj would be commissioned to silence the female wrongdoer for good.⁷ Cases of homosexuality were kept secret or dealt with very quietly (Bedri 1999). A lot of people knew about those working as *bassaseen* (spies) for the colonial rule, but rarely would one encounter anything in writing on the topic. Also, many people knew about or noticed incidents of serious social violations but kept silent because tied to the code of connivance—or pact of silence. Those who are writing about these matters now live outside Omdurman (e.g., Bedri has lived in Sweden for the last three decades).

On the other hand, non-conforming persons could be severely punished either through social excommunication, or pressured to the point of leaving, becoming addicts or going crazy. As such, any attempt to break away from the straitjacket of these superimposing, close-knit social ties was considered cause for concern and a grave sin that had to be addressed with

7. Interview with a person who requested that his identity be hidden.

prompt, strong action. One might ask why the merchants, Sudanese and non-Sudanese, the army officers, or the middle-class bureaucrats could not change this social structure. Merchants mainly engaged in traditional local trade; they were not part of the international trade of the capitalist system. As for the officers, especially the “detrribalized” (i.e., of former slave origin), the major concern was to maintain a privileged standard of living characterized by conspicuous consumption patterns. Having worked in the Egyptian army, they used to read Egyptian papers and magazines, listen to Egyptian records, speak in Egyptian dialect, and eat with fork and knife—unusual for ordinary Sudanese people at the time (Bashari 1996, 177). Moreover, though having fixed incomes that enabled them to lead a comfortable life, it is either because of their consumption style or non-inclination to engage in any commercial or financial investment that their standard of living deteriorated after retirement. They did not have extended families to fall back on. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, were merely subservient to the colonial administration. Again they led a double life: they worked and spent most of their time in Khartoum, while they kept their relations with their family, extended family, and neighbours confined within Omdurman.

Hence, no social force in Omdurman society was strong enough to penetrate and drastically change the tightly knit ensemble of social relations. The core of those relations remained traditional in character despite the outer cosmetics of modernity imposed by the colonial system. In other words, what happened in the private domain prevailed over the public domain. From a different angle this could be interpreted as one form of resistance to the colonial rule. Again, this is comparable to other national (native) African cities in terms of resisting colonial domination.

Social memory in consolidating and rejuvenating social relations over time has proved to be a very useful analytical tool in social science. In old Omdurman, religious brotherhoods, important religious families, and social institutions brought people together on many communal occasions. All these elements make up the pool of communal memorabilia of the city. Literature now abounds with minute details of the different quarters (their streets, houses and occupants), the different parts of the marketplace (who was in which shop and what they sold), the most important events the city witnessed, memories and memoirs (see for example, A'mir 2005; Shakkak n.d.; Salih 2002; Ali 2006; Sherif 2004). Old Omdurmanis have their own *lingua franca*, know the same stories, same events, same personalities, tell the same jokes and anecdotes and keep passing them on from generation to generation (Bedri 1999).

Old Omdurman's strong communal memory is exemplified by al-Hadi al-Dalali, who is legendary for knowing all the people of old Omdurman. His anecdotes of spotting non-Omdurmanis who happen to be around the old neighbourhoods abound. Female figures like *bit* (daughter of) al-Khabir, bit al-Gasa, bit Bati, and Hawwa al-Tagtaga all constitute a living memory of the city. Other almost-mythical figures, such as the comic characters of *wad* (son of) Naffash, Saina, Ahmad Daoud, Dirma and others, lend the city its sense of unity and give it a continuing history. Old Omdurman still keeps its image and identity through the stories of those legendary figures and anecdotes carried from generation to generation.

Old Omdurmanis keep such memories in their minds and heart through the process of *wanasa* (chatting) on all social occasions. One better choose Khartoum for work and Omdurman for a good chat, as a famous saying in Omdurman goes. Omdurmanis are very

well known for their ability to tell good and amusing anecdotes. Other non-Omdurmani individuals find it difficult to fit in Old Omdurmanis' groups (Bedri 1999). Latecomers, who do not participate in this collective, memorized heritage, are not considered by the *awlad* or *abna* (sons of) of Omdurman to be true Omdurmanis. To qualify as such, one has to be born in old Omdurman in or before 1956 (year of independence) and have done what the "old boys" of Omdurman used to do—e.g., getting off the tram at high speed; and knowing the physical layout, important places and extended families of old Omdurman.

Conclusion

The above description and analysis indicate how Omdurman, despite the claims made by Old Omdurmanis and the image it tries to project of itself as a model for national integration, is in fact excluding and marginalizing. Its social cohesion, arises from a common history, ideology premised on primary social relationships of kinship, residential solidarity, religious sentiments and figures, traditions and special modes of interactions, and verbal and written history. Newcomers in Omdurman find they are not part of the history proclaimed by the Old Omdurmanis. Nor are they citizens, as that term is defined by Old Omdurmanis. Due to conflicts, drought and desertification processes, in addition to the grave political mistakes that have been committed by politicians, millions of people from marginalized areas in the Sudan left their homelands and took refuge in the capital city. They come with different cultural and social backgrounds that do not fit with old Omdurman's model of social integration. Applying the concepts of multiculturalism and cultural diversity, a new model has to be sought; a model that can accommodate them as equal citizens with full rights of participation in the social and political life, sharing one history and one future to be realized by all on equal footing.

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Chapter 7

Anthropology and peacebuilding in Sudan— some reflections

Gunnar M. Sørbo

Introduction: An ethnographic approach to peacebuilding

Paul Richards has argued that the “lessons of a number of botched peace-keeping missions or failed peace processes are that a sound grasp of social issues was missing” (Richards 2005: 5). To what extent may this be a problem in Sudan? Do peace builders and policy makers address the underlying patterns of conflict in Sudanese society? And more specifically, can important lessons be drawn from an ethnographic approach to understanding issues of war and peace in Sudan?

At first sight, the answer to the second question seems obvious. There are multiple conflicts in Sudan, on many levels and in many parts of the country, and they definitely seem to require for their understanding the kind of knowledge which anthropologists normally collect and possess. Most colleagues will probably argue that our discipline has made important contributions in this area ever since Evans-Pritchard’s pioneering work on the Nuer (1940). But what would the main features of an ethnographic approach to war and peace in Sudan be and how would they be relevant for current efforts at peace facilitation and peacebuilding? While those two questions may elicit different answers, anthropologists are likely to agree on the four following points.

First, an ethnographic approach goes against the kinds of “broad-brush” explanations that have prevailed in much of the literature on “new war” since the 1990s (Richards 2005).

In addition to the thesis that endemic hostilities (including ethnic hatred) reasserted themselves once the Cold War competition ended, they include Malthusian considerations (violent conflict is generated by environmental scarcity) and the idea that internal wars are explained as much by economic considerations (greed) as by grievance or inter-group hatred (Collier 2000).

Anthropologists will look for more comprehensive understandings. Thus, for Sudan, they will argue that the conflicts in the country are driven by a complex set of interrelated factors. At the root of them, and closely linked to one another, are historical grievances, identity issues, inequalities in the sharing of power and resources, disputes over religion, over access to and control over natural resources (including oil), and a number of governance issues including the absence of a democratic process and the violation of human rights. While different narratives have, at different times, dominated in the media and among advocacy groups, anthropologists will claim that the Sudanese conflicts in fact contain all those and many other ingredients. In the words of Alex de Waal, Sudan's crisis is "over-determined" (2007, 1).

Second, anthropologists will argue that one should not impose a sharp categorical distinction between "war" and "peace," but think in terms of a continuum. There is rarely an abrupt transition from war to peace after peace agreements are signed. This helps us appreciate that many wars are long periods of uneasy peace interrupted by occasional eruptions of violence; that war is often a state of mind shared among participants; and that "peace" can in fact be more violent than "war" (Keen 2001).

This is well known in Sudanese ethnography. Sir Evans-Pritchard taught us long ago that war and peace among the Nuer are concurrent and competing modes of existence. The feud between different tribal segments, he argued, was essential to the political system: "Between tribes there can only be war, and through war, the memory of war, and the potentiality of war the relations between tribes are defined and expressed" (1940, 161). While no area of Nuer social life was subjected to greater governmental attempts at intervention and suppression since the 1930s than the feud (Hutchinson 1996, 109), intercommunity fighting is still a fact of life among the Nuer and in many other parts of Sudan.

This is an argument with at least two implications. First, when applying a war–peace continuum as a vantage point for research, what may appear as original or "root" causes may change over time. Second, if some conflicts never really end, the aim of peace facilitation may not be conflict "resolution," but rather conflict transformation, such as directing the social energies deployed in war to problem-solving ventures on a cooperative basis (Richards 2005, 18).

A third essential ingredient of an ethnographic approach follows from the two points above. Details matter. As Paul Richards writes, "every armed conflict is made up of an accumulated mass of small and not so small details. They remain as facts, figures and memories in people's attempts to make social life and a living beyond armed conflict" (*ibid.*, 14). But there is also the point that understanding the intricacies of particular conflicts is decisive for the choice of interventions. Thus, the attempt by the International Criminal Court (ICC) "to connect all consequences in Darfur to a single cause (Bashir)" has drawn criticism from beyond the supporters of the Khartoum regime (Mamdani 2008).

A fourth point relates to our people-centred, local perspective. To many, one of anthropology's key tasks is to emphasize the local potential for peace, or "peacebuilding from below." Again, according to Richards, people's interests might often be served better by reform of local governance and justice rather than a reconstruction of the state; and, "anthropology may at times be called upon to assist the peace makers, but at times, also, it has a duty to ring-fence the space in which social creativity flourishes" (2005, 19).

In the same vein, Carolyn Nordstrom writes on Mozambique:

While at the community level people institute remarkable systems of recovery and justice, they received little support from the more elite-controlled and powerful socio-political institutions operating in the world Community-generated solutions are often quite different, even contradictory to, those enforced through formal socio-political institutions The Hobbesian legacy would have us believe that elite-brokered peace accords restore order to a disordered society. But in Mozambique I found the inverse to be true: civil society crafted sophisticated institutions to stop violence and to heal the wounds war left in its wake. And it was on this work that the peace accords were built. (Nordstrom 1997, 216-20)

In her ethnographies of war, however, Nordstrom (1997, 2004a, 2004b) also reminds us that local or regional conflicts are becoming increasingly international, even global in character. Inspired by Appadurai's (1991) concept of de-territorialized and globalized "ethnoscapes," she describes the situation in Mozambique as a "warscape." The point is to acknowledge that "warscape" realities indeed are global but still violently emplaced in local war zones, as is the case in northern Uganda or in Darfur. As Finnstrøm writes on northern Uganda, "In 'warscapes' contemporary experiences meet and intermingle, locality meets and fuses with trans-locality, the global is manifested in the local, exiles and diaspora groups are involved for political and/or humanitarian reasons, as are Western agents and foreign interest groups" (Finnstrøm 2005, 107). How can all this be relevant for peace builders, peace facilitators and other policy makers concerned with the situation in Sudan?

Development and violence in Sudan— a network of conflicts

Successive Sudanese governments have often argued, as they do now for Darfur, that the violence in the country is largely caused by local-level, ethnic conflicts mainly arising from pressure on a diminishing resource base. On their side, rebel groups in Darfur, like in other parts of Sudan, quote the marginalization and underdevelopment suffered by all Darfurians, regardless of their ethnic background, as the main reason for taking up arms against the central government.

Many local conflicts in Sudan, particularly in marginal areas, have traditionally been largely unrelated to the state. Sudan is home to the highest concentration of traditional pastoralists in the world and the combination of scarcity, a need for mobility, and recurring droughts makes conflict inevitable, between different pastoralist groups and between pastoralists and farmers (Markakis 1994, 219).

There continue to be a number of essentially local conflicts of this kind in most parts of Sudan and many people are often killed in clashes between clans, “tribes” or ethnic groups. Thus, for example in Equatoria, there are innumerable inter-tribal conflicts, between Mundari, Bari, Nyangwara, and Dinka; between Acholi and Latuka; and between Toposa, Didinga, and Murle. Some of them have deep historical roots while others flare up because of intricacies of revenge and competition over resources (Schomerus 2008). Within “tribes,” there may also be severe conflict. On August 6, 2008, at least fifteen people were killed following inter-clan clashes among Dinka in the Rumbek area. Incidents of this kind are not infrequent.

During the last three decades, however, and particularly after the National Islamic Front (now National Congress Party) came to power in 1989, such conflicts have increasingly become absorbed into, enmeshed with, or at least affected by the wider struggles between the North and South, between the Khartoum government and Darfur rebels, or between competing southern interests. They have also been made worse by the ubiquity of small arms, particularly among those tribes that were armed to fight as proxy forces during the civil war.

Anthropologists have done much to document such developments. Just to mention a few of them, Sharon Hutchinson has analysed how the rapid polarization and militarization of Nuer and Dinka ethnic identities during civil war in the 1990s led to a deepening of the Nuer/Dinka divide and to the reformulation of women’s and children’s former status as immune from intentional attacks (2000). She has also described how rival southern military leaders, greatly helped by the machinations of the Khartoum government, endeavoured to transform earlier patterns of competition between Nuer and Dinka communities over scarce resources into politicized wars of ethnic violence (2001).

Likewise, the largely unpublished works by the late Paul Wani Gore on local conflicts in Southern Sudan reveal how the fragmentation of centres of political power, the divide-and-rule strategy of the Khartoum government, and the divisions between the elites of different ethnic groups, which helped weaken local administrative structures and traditional mechanisms of conflict management and resolution, have sharpened ethnic differences and competition over resources. In an analysis of eight conflict areas in Sudan, Wani Gore argued that local conflicts have generally taken on a much wider political dimension, changed their character and that, increasingly, a culture of violence has been established in large parts of South Sudan, South Kordofan, and Darfur (UNICEF 2003).

In Darfur as well, a major cause of conflict has been a proliferation of local conflicts over land and other resources combined with the unwillingness of the central government to mediate and—more recently and more ominously—its manipulation of land issues and concomitant manipulation of administrative subdivisions (Tubiana 2007). Like in the South, such divisive policies on local and regional levels have created growing regional subcultures of ethnic violence.

There is wide agreement in the academic literature that the civil strife that has spread throughout many parts of Sudan since the 1980s should be seen as part of a pattern of violence where the Sudanese state—as a vehicle for special interest groups—has played a major role. In his book, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars* (2003), Douglas Johnson provides an interpretive framework based on historical and contemporary material which, I believe, is shared

by many. It has been elaborated and presented by others as well and, in brief, holds that, since the colonial period, the Sudanese state has owned, managed or effectively controlled the modern economic sector. State resources have been concentrated in the central Nile areas in the North, reflecting the longstanding political dominance of groups from this area.

A process of uneven development and economic dislocation began during the colonial period and became particularly massive in the 1970s. The shift from subsistence agriculture to export-oriented, mechanized agricultural schemes had its greatest impact in the so-called “Transition Zone” between North and South, along Southern Kordofan, Southern Darfur, the Blue Nile and the Sudan-Ethiopian border region, resulting in the dispossession of small-holding farmers from their customary rights of land, the erosion of land-use rights by pastoralists, and the creation of a large force of agricultural wage-labourers, whose numbers were increased through displacement by drought and war in the 1980s and 1990s. While the transfer of assets, which began before the war, was accelerated after 1989, the development strategy has essentially remained the same (Johnson 2003).

This process created serious structural problems in the agricultural sector. The rate of increase in production has been declining and there are many areas with high food insecurity (UNEP 2007). A major grievance has been land use. The area of land under mechanised farming increased from around two million feddans at the beginning of the 1970s to some fourteen million feddans by 2003 (one feddan equals 1,038 acres). A vital factor here was the passage of laws undermining the control that local authorities and local people were able to exert over land (Keen and Lee 2008). This process was accelerated by the NIF regime after it came to power in 1989.

From the 1970s onwards, the agricultural growth model adopted in Sudan gave little or no consideration to those who were displaced or otherwise affected. It is no coincidence, therefore, that aside from the Khartoum area, which saw major violence following the death of John Garang (2005) and the JEM attack on Omdurman (2008), and occasionally suffers from confrontations between groups, most of the violence has taken place in rural (pastoral and agro-pastoral) areas. Populations from these areas also constitute the main source of street children, poor female-headed households, displaced persons, and refugees. They come from three broad regions: (a) the areas struck by drought and famine during the 1970s and 1980s; (b) the areas that saw an expansion of mechanized farming during the same period; and (c) the former “closed districts” of the colonial period; i.e., South Sudan. Increasingly, the targeting and uprooting of rural populations and their forced displacement became an integral part of the war strategies of rebel and government forces alike.

While Sudan is becoming wealthier because of oil exports, poverty is accentuated by the fact that social services spending has been among the lowest in the world. The poor track record on development spending is paralleled by a very limited capacity at state and local levels to plan and manage projects (Keen and Lee 2008). According to the Sudan Household Health Survey (Government of National Unity and Government of Southern Sudan 2006) and the World Bank (2007), the outcomes on key measures of human development in Sudan’s disadvantaged regions (including Darfur, the South, the Three Areas, and the East) rank among the lowest in the world, while Khartoum and some northern states along the Nile show performance well above the sub-Saharan average. For example, primary school

attendance was 90 per cent in the River Nile State while attendance was less than 10 per cent in half the states in South Sudan.

Growth has been strong in recent years, but has not been broad-based, and in fact has been accompanied by rising inequality between regions and between rural and urban dwellers. While per capita public spending was about USD 300 in 2007 (World Bank 2007, 6), little of this reached the poor and the marginalized regions. Traditional rain-fed agriculture, practiced by the rural poor, has seen neither significant levels of investments nor increases in productivity. At the same time, defence expenditures have crowded out poverty-related expenditures, deepening the cycle of poverty (*ibid.*).

There are of course many other aspects of the current crisis in Sudan. An overview of such aspects would not be complete without a word on cultural oppression and cultural policy. In Sudan, “national integration” has been premised on assimilation into what was presented as the superior culture of the ruling ethnic groups. The exclusionary nature of economic expansion has reinforced a kind of political and cultural exclusion, which has been documented by a number of anthropologists (e.g., Manger 1994). And, as de Waal has argued, the “perpetual turbulence” in Khartoum, due to in-fighting amongst the Khartoum elite and a failed consolidation of state power, has not prevented this same elite from dominating the peripheries through processes of exploitation and co-optation (de Waal 2007). On one level, therefore, analysing the conflicts in Sudan appears a fairly easy task. Sudan suffers from the combined effects of two sets of crises that are closely interrelated: (a) a crisis of governance, and (b) a livelihoods crisis.

Sudanese warscapes: The Darfur case study

But while the grievances of those who have historically been left behind in a dysfunctional process of development are a common feature, the contexts that have affected people’s life situations are not the same everywhere. Despite, or rather, because of the centrist bias of development strategies in Sudan, ongoing conflicts in places like Darfur, Abyei, the Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains, or Ekuatoria may be decisive for the future of the country as a whole. Thus, the failure to implement the Abyei Protocol in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has implications not only for determining the North–South border, but for the implementation of any Darfur peace agreement as well (Johnson 2008). And the multiple local conflicts in South Sudan, compounded by the murderous activities of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), clearly threaten the sustainability of peace and state-building in the South. The conflict patterns that emerge in different parts of Sudan reflect continuities of the kind analysed above, but they also reflect local and regional peculiarities and, in several cases, are continuously being reconfigured. As conflicts evolve, what may appear as original or “root” causes also change over time.

Darfur provides an instructive example. It had a viable political order, first as a Fur-dominated yet multiethnic sultanate until 1916, and then as a region that, while prone to local conflict over resources, remained quite stable until the late 1980s. Its stability was based on what has been termed the “Darfur consensus” (Fadul and Tanner 2007). Land was the lynchpin of this consensus. The ethnic groups that make up a central majority bloc (Fur, Baggara Arabs, Masalit, Zaghawa, Tunjur and many smaller “African” tribes) came together in enjoying

access to land under the *dar* and *hakura* systems. They shared a common view on the legitimacy of the land ownership and management system, in turn based on the native administration system of local government. The largest group that was deprived of land rights was that of the Abbala Arabs (ibid.).

According to Fadul and Tanner, most Darfurians contend that the current conflict constitutes an assault on the Darfur consensus (ibid.). To a large extent, the factors which pushed the region over the edge were extraneous and include the blow-back from the Chadian wars, Libyan meddling, destructive interventions by the central government, and severe drought leading to migrations. One of the primary traits of the Darfur crisis can be described as a split between those members of the population with territories (*hawakir*) and those who have none (Tubiana 2007).

As Tubiana has argued (ibid.), one of the early warning signs of conflict was a dramatic increase in violent incidents between farmers and herders. The droughts of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which forced herders to encroach on the lands of farmers, were one cause for these incidents. These clashes did not necessarily pit Arab versus non-Arab but they did lead, in 1987-1989, to a wide-ranging conflict between the sedentary Fur and a broad coalition of both cattle- and camel-herding Arab tribes. For the first time, nearly all the Arabs of Darfur came together, united by a new pro-Arab ideology which was backed by Libya and successive governments in Khartoum from 1986. It was during these conflicts that the term “janjawiid” first appeared.

From 1994-1995 onward, the Masalit of western Darfur became the next victims of Arab militias seeking access to land (ibid.). By the time the two new rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), appeared in early 2003, widespread intercommunity violence over land had already begun taking place across Darfur. While they made regional, and even national, claims that aimed at transcending ethnic cleavages with demands for a more equitable distribution of power and wealth for all of Sudan, their base was for the most part non-Arab, with heavy representation from the Zaghawa and the Fur (ibid.).

Since 2003, local conflicts in Darfur started spinning out of control and among SLA and JEM, issues of land came to take a secondary place in the overall development of Darfur. Part of the reason for this is that many of the rebel leaders were young urbanites who had lived outside Darfur for long stretches of time.

Over time, the fault lines of conflict have become increasingly complex and intractable. Political and livelihood landscapes have changed dramatically. The number of rebel movements has proliferated and sends the message that it is less important to have a constituency than to take up arms if you want to be invited to meetings and peace talks.

Moving down to local levels, the picture is much more complex than normally conveyed in the media. Thus, there have been a series of violent intra-Arab conflicts between the Baggara and Abbala. Whereas, until around 1970, both Baggara and Abbala remained almost separate in their habitats and annual cycles of movement, things started changing when drought hit Darfur for several years, both during the 1970s and 1980s. The Abbala started

moving south, at a time when others did the same (particularly Zaghawa) and the Baggara Arabs themselves had trouble with coping with drought. Because the Zaghawa and others settled to cultivate, Baggara animal routes were blocked. These changes took place during the absence of a native administration due to President Nimeiri's decree issued in 1970.

Material collected by Yusif Takana shows that grazing and water rights have been the main causes of conflict in Darfur. As from the early 1990s, the Abbala as well as other groups started to change their strategy. Acquiring lands for settlement could be done by political allegiance and support for the Khartoum government. This strategy worked and a number of new *nazirates* and *omodiyas* were established at the expense of groups who had recognized traditional rights to lands and authority. Many violent, often intra-Arab conflicts have accompanied such changes, with great losses of life (Takana 2008).

In the case of the Zaghawa, their migrations were not necessarily caused by hunger and drought. As Jerome Tubiana has argued (2008), the educated Zaghawa elite, while promoting the development of their region of origin, quickly saw the possibility of massive movements to the South. The massive emigration, which was initially opposed by the traditional leaders—because they knew they would lose power that was tied to their land—helped weaken the chiefdoms of Dar Zaghawa, especially since it also coincided with Nimeiri's decision to abolish the native administration.

The current conflicts extend into Chad. Efforts by the Chadian government to avoid taking sides were shattered in 2003-2004 by the arrival of some two hundred thousand Sudanese refugees across the border and the establishment of rear bases in eastern Chad by Darfurian rebel groups. The rebels were strengthened by their membership of cross-border ethnic groups, including the Beri (Zaghawa), to which Chadian President Idris Deby belongs. Violence similar to that in Darfur began emerging in eastern Chad. Some of the perpetrators have links with Darfur.

As a result of such developments, Tubiana and Walmsley (2008) argue that four crises are now increasingly interlinked:

- The conflict in Darfur itself, played out between Darfurian rebel groups and the Sudanese government, and, beyond them, between ethnic groups favourable to the rebellion and groups favourable to the government.
- The chronic conflict in Chad between the Chadian government and a divided political opposition.
- The proxy war in which Chad and Sudan are engaged through rebel groups and militias.
- The ethnic conflicts in Chad and Darfur, between long-settled landowning groups and newcomers with no traditional rights to land.

The events and developments in Darfur, then, must be understood in the context of a number of factors at different scale levels. On the micro level, as Gunnar Haaland has argued, processes that affect the formation of social identities and access to resources are of crucial

importance. On the regional level, there are processes which change the scope for political leadership and mobilization of groups—changes that have stimulated formation of alliances between traditional enemies (e.g., Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa) involving symbolic work under-communicating traditional stereotypes and over-communicating similarity in opposition to groups defined as supporters of the government. These alliances are vulnerable and are likely to shift over time (Haaland 2005). On the macro level of state politics, Darfur has always played an important role and, more recently, the Sudan government has been clever in playing on differences between the opposition groups. But then there is also the larger international context which affects how local and national “players” can act. This includes regional and cross border dynamics (Chad, Libya, Central African Republic).

Although land is central, we need to specify the different contexts that affect people’s life situations in ways that have led to increasing competition for natural but also public resources, and thereby creating fertile ground for ethno-politics. As Haaland (2005) has argued, one aspect of the Darfur conflicts is related to changing ecological relations between ethnic groups. Another factor is related to the long-standing labour migration to the central Nile Valley and issues of economic polarization; a third to education and Darfur elite formation; and a fourth to the national political context that in so many ways has impacted on developments in Darfur.

It must be our task to analyse social life, economic adaptations, and political change and struggle in the context of the opportunities and constraints operating in several such “systems,” and to show how they interact with each other in concrete social settings. Thus, the events in Darfur, according to Haaland, can be understood in the context of a multitude of “games” involving local, regional, national and international “players.” Our challenge is to integrate different levels of analysis and one way of approaching this is to define the different (micro and macro) contexts that are relevant for understanding real life processes at local levels. This raises the issue of how we most fruitfully define and delimit social, economic, and political systems in different local settings. There is clearly no “correct” scale for an investigation of conflicts in Darfur, but there may be an appropriate one for answering different questions (Sørbø 2003). Macro-level processes do not necessarily determine developments at lower levels. Land claims at the local level may spill over into national, state or district-level politics, for example, and influence the direction of future policy and the scope of legally enforceable rights.

An ethnographic approach to issues of war and peace includes, then, a concern with process and context and with linking detailed local-level observations with regional, national, even global interconnections.

Implications for peacebuilding

Regarding the implications for peacebuilding, at least four points can be made. First, peace builders and policy makers must somehow take this kind of complexity and regional variation into account. Thus, the “story” of Darfur is not the same as the “story” of the Blue Nile State or the East, and we need to find out what types of real life processes are going on in the different regions and on local levels—as well as the linkages between them—before deciding on measures to facilitate peaceful development. In fact, there is little doubt that the country

has been drifting towards increasing fragmentation, also in the North. An all-Sudan approach to peacebuilding must take this into account, as well as the concomitant regionalization of politics (see also Thomas 2009).

Second, if social, political and economic exclusion was a cause of war in Sudan and continues to be so in places like Darfur, then peace requires society to be reformed along more inclusive lines. Peace builders must seek an understanding of what is driving violence in Sudan, including the grievances of the marginalized and the benefits accruing from violence, and develop a critique of the patterns of development that have been pursued in the country (Keen and Lee 2007, 520). This must include conflicts over land and other resources.

Third, while the role of the Khartoum government in fuelling the Sudan crisis has been very important, there is both need and scope for paying more attention to low-intensity and local conflicts and to rebuilding state–society relations through bottom-up processes rather than almost exclusively depend on top-down approaches. As Manger (2008) has argued, a top-down solution to the types of conflict we have seen in places like Darfur or the Nuba Mountains, based on the logic of the CPA, is destined to run into problems unless local populations, their organizations and leaders are involved.

Fourth, and given the complexity of the Sudan crisis, planning processes and assistance organizations should incorporate conflict-sensitive approaches regardless of whether they are directly addressing conflict issues in their work as a matter of course.

The performance of the international community, however, has been disappointing in most of these areas. Thus, while alienation of land as part of processes of marginalization and increasing poverty has been a key determinant of conflict in Sudan, there is an absence of an overall framework to deal with the problems with the necessary urgency. In fact, there is as yet no overall strategic plan for recovery and development despite the fact that a number of assessments were made in advance of, and after the signing of, the CPA, most notably the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), and despite the fact that the UN has been drawing up annual work plans since 2006. This is particularly apparent in Southern Sudan where the GOSS has been working on a budget sector planning approach, strongly supported by the international community, resulting in some ten budget sector plans for 2008 to 2010. As government institutions struggle to fulfil a wide range of obligations, decision-making is more aligned with operational planning concerns than overarching strategic ones (Murphy 2007) and there is a sense that everything is needed, which means that nothing may be particularly prioritized.

Also, awareness and consideration of conflict and public security and its potential to impact upon the CPA, has been late evolving and has yet to enter into the mainstream programming. Thus, the authors of a study of reintegration of IDPs and refugees returning to Jonglei State noted that in the absence of an adequate understanding of the structure and process of the conflicts and instability, Jonglei has acquired one-dimensional negative images of pervasive chaos to a point that has tainted perceptions, dissuading actors from fully engaging with its fundamental issues (Pantuliano et al. 2008). Similar images also appear to prevail in the case of Darfur. It is not always clear, as David Keen writes, “whether it is the violence that is mindless, or the analysis” (Keen 2008, 13).

There are many reasons for the current failure, including that the international community has been increasingly drawn into continuous crisis management because of Darfur as well as the slow and very difficult implementation of the CPA signed in 2005 by the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

There is also considerable uncertainty among donors about how to deal with an intransigent Khartoum regime as well as a lack of coordination and growing divisions particularly over Darfur but also more generally. All this is likely to become worse with the ICC decision to move forward with the case against President al-Bashir. In addition, much of the international responses are of a humanitarian nature and limited resources have been shifted to conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

It is also obvious that peacebuilding efforts in Sudan (particularly the South) are not simply shaped by knowledge or assumptions of the particular conjunction of factors that have caused the country's chronic instability and inability to achieve peace. In addition to strategic and other considerations, they are also shaped and affected by standard models of post-war reconstruction that have emerged in recent years, which implies that knowledge of the distinctive characteristics of societies that have recently experienced internecine violence may not be regarded as indispensable. The model is used not because it is empirically well-grounded but because it resonates with particular sets of ideological presuppositions entertained by Northern policy makers (Richards 2005, 6).

In general, policy makers and peace builders must pay more attention to understanding and addressing developments at local levels, including low-intensity and local conflicts. These struggles are often over access to agricultural and pastoral resources and can establish pockets of discontent, reduce food production, flare up into greater conflicts or be linked to other, larger-scale conflicts. Changes in rights to, and the use of, land represent fundamental transformations in Sudanese society. Without understanding such issues and the complex local dynamics of violence, international actors may end up involuntarily fuelling existing antagonisms (for a similar argument on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, see Auteserre 2006, 2008).

In South Sudan, an assessment of current conflicts must also begin by making reference to the manner in which Sudan's second civil war was prosecuted. Large areas of the southern part of the country witnessed a proliferation of internal contests, divisions, and conflicts, which became entangled in the wider North–South war. Such developments bequeathed a difficult legacy that remains as a cause of insecurity and essentially will take time to resolve. As a result, many parts of the South will remain vulnerable to instability for time to come, and measures will be needed to mitigate its effects (Pantuliano et al. 2008)

On a general level, then, a poverty-focused approach that gives due consideration to land issues and livelihood support has been slow to emerge in the post-war reconstruction of Sudan, and the lack of economic development in the rural areas negatively affects the perception that the population has of the international community's intervention.

Challenges to anthropology

While anthropologists have made important contributions to the understanding of the Sudanese crisis, there is a need to move beyond local or regional studies to areas where more research is needed and that are highly relevant for issues of war and peace. I will conclude this chapter by mentioning just a few of them.

1. *Shadows of war* (Nordstrom 2004a). We know from Darfur that trade has become ever more ethnically determined and that a war economy is emerging; e.g., in the timber trade (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul 2008). However, we know much less about how trade dynamics are changing or, more generally, the relationship between power, profit, and politics, including the role of international connections, cross-border trade, and extra-state systems (Nordstrom 2004b). Innovative studies of the Sudanese state are also needed. Thus, while the current regime may have a hard grip on a weak state (P. Woodward, personal communication), we need to take note of varying degrees of “softness” and “hardness” in different sectors of the state apparatus like security and the military (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 30) and consider the dynamics between sectors as well as their links to “systems of benefits” that may emerge in war and conflict (Keen 2008, 15).
2. *Peacekeeping*. Sharon Hutchinson has argued that well-intentioned international peace-monitoring missions may have perverse effects, in the sense that violence is perpetuated rather than curtailed (Hutchinson 2006). However, we know from the Nuba Mountains that the effects may be positive. What are the effects of peacekeeping operations in Sudan on conflict transformation as well as markets, local communities, political developments, etc.?
3. *Everyday peacebuilding*. As suggested by Auteserre for DRC, the dominant post-conflict peacebuilding “frame” shapes the international understanding of violence and intervention in such a way that local conflict resolution may appear irrelevant and illegitimate. Typically, elections are seen as a more appropriate tool for state and peacebuilding than local conflict resolution. This frame may authorize and justify specific practices and policies while precluding others. What happens when imported models meet messy realities? What about local or national ownership? And what about the implications for peacebuilding?

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Chapter 8

The predicament of access to, and management of, resources in “globalised” Sudan.

Some notes on Arab pastoralists in the
Butana and Southern Kordofan

Barbara Casciarri

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter¹ is twofold: it hopes to provide a contribution to the understanding of the dynamics affecting Sudanese pastoralists in the recent context; and engages in a discus-

1. I would like to thank my colleagues Munzoul Assal and Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil, Department of Anthropology, University of Khartoum, who gave me the opportunity to participate in the Golden Jubilee Conference of 2008. I warmly thank the late Jay O’Brien, an anthropologist whose work on Sudan I greatly appreciate, for the reading of my draft and the useful suggestions. Finally, I thank Fiona Terry for her language revision of this chapter.

sion on the role of anthropology in the interpretation of ongoing processes in a crisis-ridden society affected by various conflicts, such as Sudan. Using an approach that straddles economic and political anthropology, I focus on patterns of access to, and management of, natural resources and the material and socio-cultural disruptions that recent transformations have had on local communities. As a general background for my analysis, I rely on the works of some scholars that, far from representing a single homogenous school of thought, share a common reference to basic notions of historical materialism removed from the constraints of orthodox Marxism. The French tradition of Marxist anthropology, which studies the modes of incorporation of African societies by the capitalist system, the revival of Polanyi's thought by the renewed dialogue between anthropologists and “non-orthodox” economists, and the recent contributions of scholars focusing on the effects of the “new liberal world order” on Southern societies all provide an interesting support for a dynamic and critical anthropology and offer analytical tools for the comprehension of African societies in this phase of globalisation. At the same time, they give us suggestions for the debate about the role and engagement of anthropology proposed for the Jubilee Conference of 2008. The case of Sudan, with a particular focus on pastoral communities, provides an interesting context in which to attempt this back and forth between description and interpretation, field and theory, scientific knowledge and ethical or political dimensions.

1.1 Anthropology's focus on resource access and management

The issue of access to resources has received attention since our discipline took its first steps. Whereas, at the beginning, this attention was limited to a sort of ethnographic descriptivism, thanks to the tradition of British social anthropology the “ecological background” started to gain prominence through its more intrinsic link to the analysis of socio-political structures (Evans-Pritchard 1940). In the French anthropological tradition² the focus on access to resources became a crucial issue in the 1970s thanks to the parallel development of two approaches: the one known as *anthropologie des techniques* or “cultural technology” and Marxist anthropology. The first approach, illustrated by the program of the review *Techniques et culture* (Cresswell 1976), develops a vision of the technique issue (*fait technique*) as tightly embedded in the social dimension—a feature that makes it a privileged focus for anthropological analysis—while defining a set of methodological tools aiming to the global reconstruction of socio-technical systems. The second approach, by revitalising the Marxist thought autonomously from the vulgate of dialectic materialism imposed by the USSR orthodoxy, focuses on relations of production (established between humans while transforming natural resources) as a pivot of the social structure and its processes, and highlights the interconnection of material production, social reproduction, and symbolic constructions. Benefiting from the contribution of Polanyi's substantivist approach (Polanyi 1944, 1968), which stresses the embeddedness of economy in society among communities

2. I often refer to the French anthropological tradition inasmuch this constitutes my primary scientific background. Nonetheless, being Sudan a country quite neglected by French African Studies (which are rather focused on former French colonies in West Africa and the Maghreb), this background has been necessarily integrated with the studies of Anglo-Saxon tradition, more focused on East Africa.

whose logics are different from the ones of market capitalist system, Marxist anthropology rejected its classification as being merely “economic anthropology.” It discovered, beyond a mechanic vision of material determination, the potential of analysing modes of production in order to open to a holistic perspective able to grasp the dynamics of change of non-Western societies³ in colonial and post-colonial situations⁴ (Kahn 1981). Other scholars (like S. Amin or G. Franck), dealing with issues of imperialist domination and relation between periphery and centre, also nourished the dynamic approach of Marxist anthropologists whose analysis of socio-economic formations focused on questions such as the modes of incorporation of southern peasant societies by an expanding capitalist system, the role of kinship relations in production and reproduction, the processes of class formation, gender relations within the framework of socio-economic systems and the ideological basis of sex-based inequality and oppression.

Another contribution that needs to be mentioned when we deal with the issue of resource access in Sudan is that of radical development studies by some anthropologists who put at the centre of their scientific concerns the analysis of the articulation between rural peripheral societies and the world capitalist system. By criticizing the dominant theories of development, and revealing the real causes of underdevelopment, some authors such as T. Barnett (1975, 1977), O’Brien (1977, 1986), and Duffield (1981), studied local socio-economic formations through their complex implication within the process of capitalist reproduction in Sudan. Their fieldwork integrates such a dynamic and global analysis with social factors pertinent to Sudanese societies—tribalism, ethnicity, kinship, and marriage patterns—at the same time and with the same general approach of other non-Western anthropologists inquiring into the phenomena of class formation or social conflict in Sudan (Asad 1970, Saeed 1982). Some of those scholars have been able to adapt their analysis to the context of globalisation, and have focused more recently on the reshaping of relations of domination in the post-modern world by the joint action of international cooperation, humanitarian aid, diplomacy, private corporations, global financial institutions, all aiming toward the fostering of economic and political “securitisation” in conflict-ridden and unstable areas such as the Sudan (Duffield 2001).

With this background inspired by various sources—the anthropology of techniques as a *fait social total*, the Africanist Marxist French anthropologists, and the radical anthropology

3. It is meaningful to note that most of the French Marxist anthropologists (P. Bonte, J. Copans, C. Meillassoux, P. P. Rey, E. Terray) have specialised in African studies. Still in the 1970s and 1980s they referred to such societies as “pre-capitalist,” but this term became more and more ill-suited for the contemporary context, where no society exists in complete autonomy and isolation from a world system.

4. Despite their differences, the common background of these scholars lies in an original revival of Marxist thought liberated from the dogmatism imposed by its official USSR version. Thus, rather than being inspired by the anthropology of Marx and Engels (based on a unidirectional vision of the evolution of human societies and, for historical reasons, ethnocentric), they rediscovered, often in less canonic texts, the concepts, hypotheses, and methods of Marx as a good sociologist of capitalist Western society of the nineteenth century, and tried to develop them by adapting to the analysis of colonial and post-colonial non-Western societies.

focusing on peripheral societies—I find a sort of continuity and some essential basis for examining the transformations of contemporary rural Sudanese societies, putting at the core of this study access to, and management of, natural resources.

1.2 Some notes about the term "globalisation"

As I use the term "globalisation" to identify the context of my analysis, I ought to stress my understanding of this notion and the relevant aspects of this phenomenon, particularly as the term has become widespread, fashionable, and thus a vague catchword for our times.⁵ I'll limit myself to four main observations. First, I do not consider contemporary globalisation as an absolute break with the past (Wallerstein 2002). The increasing flows of humans, commodities, and ideas over the last thirty years are one of its undeniable features, but these cross-border interactions already existed in previous times. Instead, the presence of "new actors," their new settings, their stronger degree of integration, and a deeper faculty of penetration in local dynamics are the features that warrant more attention.⁶

Second, the differences and distances between north and south, west and east, are not removed as a consequence of the alleged standardisation brought by globalisation. "Here" and "there" still have their significance (that a certain post-modern anthropology tends to deny) despite increases in those flows of exchanges and interactions. In addition, material production and the related labour forms are not yet outdated or marginal (despite the development of immaterial labour), that is more evident in countries like Sudan.

Third, instead of concentrating on socio-cultural expressions of globalisation, I focus on another crucial aspect of this complex phenomenon (which is as significant in the north as in the south), the process of liberalisation⁷ of goods, services, and labour. In fact, this

5. Due to the very large application of the term "globalisation," this notion runs the risk of being too general and ill-defined (occluding also peculiarities and contrasts) or supporting the dominant vision of globalisation as a sort of ultimate step of an increasingly uniform world, going towards the benefits promised by the diffusion of Western democracy and the liberal system after the end of the Cold War.

6. In this sense, it would be better to talk, as Amin does (1995), in terms of "development of globalisation" to refer to the last decades of capitalism, which has been already characterised as a "world (global) system."

7. By "liberalisation" I mean the policies adopted by (Western and non-Western) governments, in accordance with international financial institutions, to open the way to foreign and domestic capital investments, to reinforce free trade dynamics, to promote privatisation of goods and services, and to develop the dominance of market relations in every aspect of life. Such policies, coherent with a liberal "philosophy" that is the ideological historical support of the capitalist system, became widespread and stronger during the last decades, in parallel to the reshaping of political and economic international settings in the phase defined as "globalisation." In this sense, "liberalisation" refers more to the *economic* liberalisation (and should not evoke ideas of "democratisation"), though in our approach the phenomenon has a social relevance going beyond the purely economic sphere. In the same sense, the adjective

seems to be a main element of change among rural societies, a direct threat to their access to resources (thus to means of reproduction), a major cause of progressive precariousness and pauperisation. This led also to focus on the dynamics of negotiation and competition among local political institutions in southern communities, since the issues at stake in power management remain closely linked to the access to material wealth.

Finally, although the material and economic dimension of resource management is central within globalisation, the ideological dimension is also crucial. In a phase where liberal ideology pretends to be unique and triumphant, the holistic approach used by anthropologists grasps these material changes (among which commoditisation of land, water, and labour is a priority) in relation to their associated symbolic representations. Thus, the transformation in the way of conceiving (and legitimizing) forms of appropriating nature, together with the related human relations, is another inevitable topic if we want to understand the general bearing of this phase of change.

1.3 Fieldwork in Sudan and the Ahâmda and Awlâd Nûba case studies

Here, I will talk about two pastoral groups among which I carried out my fieldwork, first for my PhD (1989-1995), and then upon my return to Sudan (2006-2009).⁸ The Ahâmda are a group of nomadic origin who claim common descent from the eponymous ancestor, Hammed. Historical fortunes and the mobility of pastoral groups led to the fragmentation of the group, which is now scattered in various parts of Sudan (White Nile, Gezira, Blue Nile, Butana, Shendi). The section I studied, after a complex history of scission, moving, and recomposition, relocated in the western fringes of the Butana and restructured itself as an autonomous *gabila* (tribe), according to the common patterns of agnatic segmentary articulation of Sudanese Arab tribal groups. In my study, I focused on the modes of such organisation and on the ideological form of its legitimacy, considering territorial, political, and social factors with reference to Arab kinship structures and their role in such dynamics (Casciarri 1997, 2006). In 2006,⁹ I returned among the Ahâmda. The laps of time between

“liberal”—preferred to “neo-liberal,” which could imply the idea that liberalism and capitalism *became* causes of exploitation and social injustice only in this recent phase—is used to define actors and factors that constitute the main support of the mechanisms of such a system—and should not be intended as a synonymous of “open,” “tolerant” in opposition to “undemocratic,” or “conservative.”

8. This article has been written as a development of the paper presented for the international conference organised for the Golden Jubilee of the Department of Anthropology, University of Khartoum, in 2008. For this reason, the article does not take into account data collected during research among the same groups after 2009

9. As I could not return to Sudan after my thesis (1997), I carried out research in south-eastern Morocco, on the relations between Berber nomads and Arab oasis farmers concerning water uses—an experience that reinforced my interest in the social management of resources. In 2006, I returned to Sudan as coordinator of the CEDEJ, a French center of research in social sciences. My project, focusing on the socio-economic

my initial research and this "restudy" gave me the opportunity to grasp the changes that had occurred between 1989-1995 (first fieldwork) and 2006-2009 (second fieldwork) in a crucial phase of wider socio-economic transformation that affected the country.

In 2007, I also started fieldwork research among the Awlâd Nûba, a section of the Hawâzma cattle herders of South Kordofan. The interest in developing my knowledge of Sudanese pastoralists has been reinforced by the fact that this group is located in a transition zone between north and south, and has been affected both by important economic transformations and by the long war in the Nûba Mountains. The dynamics of exchange between Arab nomads and non-Arab farmers, and their relevance in shaping social processes, make this area particularly interesting for anthropological issues. During this second Sudanese fieldwork, I focused on the question of appropriation and use of natural resources and their link with political institutions, integrated by a survey on the role of education as a strategy of the group for coping with a changing ecological, economic, and political environment.¹⁰

Despite their differences, the two cases of the Ahâmda and Awlâd Nûba societies can be compared. First, both groups share some general structural features in their productive system and the underlying socio-political institutions. Second, the factors affecting their transformation, at the national and international level, are also similar in nature. My knowledge of the Ahâmda is much more detailed, due to a longer fieldwork and a restudy that allowed me to observe certain dynamics after fifteen or twenty years. On the other hand, my fieldwork among the Hawâzma was shorter and benefited only from observations of the same dynamics made between 2007 and 2009. I had to rely either on oral witnesses or on written sources for historical insights into this group.¹¹ Nonetheless, I found the challenge of comparing the two cases interesting in the context of the main issue of this chapter, the situation of pastoral people's access to resources in "globalised" Sudan.

processes of change among rural Sudanese societies and the role of local political institutions, was part of two interdisciplinary programs, both concerned with questions of resource access, one in partnership with the University of Khartoum, the other with Ahfad University, Bayreuth University, and Paris X Nanterre University.

10. I thank my colleague Stefano Manfredi, who introduced me to the Awlâd Nûba, among which he was carrying out fieldwork for his PhD thesis on African linguistics at University "L'Orientale" in Naples, Italy.

11. The most recent and complete anthropological work on the same section of the Hawâzma, the Awlâd Nûba, is the one of Barbara Michael (1987). Other non-anthropological texts (often reports of development projects) offer information about the same group.

2. The access to resources among pastoral Sudanese groups affected by globalisation processes

Pastoral (Sudanese) groups can be a primary focus of the anthropological analysis of local communities' transformations linked to globalisation processes mainly for two reasons. First, because the already existing marginalisation of such groups, favoured by national and international policies with continuity between the colonial and post-colonial phase, is consolidated by the stronger constraints imposed by global capitalism on the available resources and their modes of exploitation. As here I am mainly interested in the aspects of "globalization of poverty" (Chossudovsky 2003), such groups stand as a pertinent topic of research. Second, because of the central place of communal forms of resource appropriation and management (together with the local institutions which control them and drive conflict resolution), the contrast between trends inspired by the dominant liberal logic and the reality of pastoral practices is highly significant even when it is not manifested in open conflict or explicit opposition (Casciarri 2009, 2015). It was already evident in previous decades that the state, international agencies, and development actors constantly neglected the pastoral component, or, at the very least, conceived nomads as convenient livestock raisers for the market needs, far from pursuing an approach of real "pastoral development" (Mohamed Salih 1990a). With the increased power of global capitalism, and of its ideological support, the liberal intervention has become increasingly easy and disruptive for pastoral peoples, their way of living, producing, and thinking.

2.1. The Ahâmda, former pastoralists of Central Butana at the edge of Greater Khartoum

2.1.1. Transforming actors, factors, and processes in the Ahâmda society

At the time of my first fieldwork (1989-1995), the Ahâmda of the Khartoum Province were already in a phase of sedentarisation and transformation of their pastoral basis (Casciarri 1995, 1997). Some ecological and economic factors¹² pushed a large number of them either to reduce the width and frequency of seasonal movements or to form more permanent settlements, in villages on the strip nearer to the Nile in *byût at-tin* (mud houses) or in

12. These factors were mainly the drought of 1984-85, the presence of agricultural projects in the western part of their territory, and the proximity of Nile villages and of Khartoum as poles of attraction for the sale of livestock products and for manpower.

camps of the semi-desert area in *byût al-'arab* (huts) where they live all year long.¹³ But, despite a variety of strategies, and thanks to a greater diversification of domestic groups and a high flexibility of the options for assuring production, the group continued to centre its attention on pastoralism as an economic basis as well as a source of cultural values and social behaviour (Casciarri 1999). The ones who kept a habitat typical of a nomadic phase could consider the situation as temporary, and claimed they would start their cycle again if the ecological conditions were restored. The ones that started to rely more on wage labour often invested their incomes in livestock purchase. At the political level, the idea of a unique *gabîla*, showing solidarity in its inner relations, was confirmed by the existence of a common territory whose exploitation rights were conceived as collective, unalienable, and to be defended by the whole group.

At the end of this first fieldwork (1995), a certain resilience of the Ahâmnda to abandon pastoralism for a tighter integration in the market economy (and national context) left two future alternatives open. But by the time I returned to the field in 2006, I found that a set of new actors and factors, linked to the development of globalisation in Sudan, oriented the Ahâmnda towards almost total integration (or subordination), certainly strong and rapid, to mechanisms of the capitalist system, restructuring the socio-economic pastoral complex. The most striking aspect concerned their territory. Being considered and used as exclusive (in spite of the persisting ambiguity of the status of tribal lands in Sudan¹⁴), this physical and social space had been fragmented by several interventions with major ecological and economic consequences. The establishment of the second oil refinery of the country in the Qarri region (and the expanding structures related to the new "free market zone") had occurred in an area that was inhabited and exploited by the herds of the Ahâmnda and their neighbours, the Hassânyia. Other interventions followed this installation (so crucial for the Sudanese post-conflict economy): the building of a small dam on the Khor Al-Kanjar, the main seasonal stream of the Ahâmnda territory, which affected the status of hydrological and vegetal resources and the site of certain *farîg* (camps); and the construction of an asphalt road, in the middle of the desert, to link Khartoum and the refinery. Although the source of such intervention was the state (linked with emerging actors, like the Chinese), appropriation of land by private entrepreneurs, whose visible manifestations were the mushrooming quarries and sandpits for the production of building material, was opened.

The effects of such intrusion on the environment, then on traditional agricultural and pastoral practices, are obvious. But such direct interventions for commercial aims (in competition with the ones of pastoralism) cannot be understood without considering the demographic and economic expansion of Khartoum over the past few years (Denis 2005). Thus, this previously neglected rural zone (considered as one with minor interest), has become

13. In an article based on the data from this period (Casciarri 2002), I noted the progress of commoditisation through observing indicators in various spheres: the spread of modern transportation means, the change in dietary habits, the decline of handmade production, the inflation of marriage's costs.

14. In colonial times, nomad groups were already marginalised in the process of regularisation of land rights by the decision of considering all land non-individually appropriated (and registered) as "state land." The same principle was confirmed by the Unregistered Land Act of 1970.

close to the suburbs of the capital, with the following consequences: the development of communications, flows of humans and commodities, the discovery of potential profitability in marginal areas, and attraction of the urban market for employment opportunities. The latter is particularly important, as most settled nomads were forced to sell their manpower and become increasingly dependent on cash incomes and urban modes of consumption. Today, we can consider the Ahâmda of this region as “former nomads” and note that the factors and actors that have strengthened the typical dynamics of global capitalism have probably brought a definitive blow to the basis of production and reproduction of Ahâmda society as a pastoral one. As I will show later, the fragmentation of the territory, and its forced opening to the intervention of a capitalist triumphant economy, brought forth the parallel collapse of the *gabîla* as a political entity showing unity and solidarity. The spread of wage labour played a major role in the weakening of mutual aid links and communal management of resources.

2.1.2. Liberalisation and desocialisation of resources and of human relations

The technical transformation in resource access is perhaps the more visible aspect of global changes affecting local communities in the south. Anyway, by assuming that such communities are characterised by a strong embeddedness of the technical element (and, more generally, the economic domain) in social institutions (Polanyi 1944), the process of transformation we are focusing on becomes a basic space of analysis for anthropologists. Thus, the bulk of our scientific interest is in the set of practices and discourse that go together with such a dissociation between, on the one hand, society (its structures and values), and, on the other hand, the access to, and management of, natural resources. So, even if they existed before, during globalisation the privatisation and liberalisation processes take on a wider and more powerful dimension, and striving to be dominant, they bring to the progressive “desocialisation” of resources, a crucial phenomenon in the disruption of pastoral societies and their incorporation in global capitalism. The access to water (and land) as basic resources in the reproduction of life is the domain where such a desocialisation has the deepest effects.

Among the Ahâmda, two means of water exploitation were fundamental: the *hafîr*, handmade reservoirs for stocking rainwater; and wells. The way these water sources were managed corresponded closely with the different levels of coherence of the social organisation of the group. The *gabîla*, maximal unity, was the institution defining the formal appropriation of the territory (Bonte 1981) and its resources. Belonging (on the basis of agnatic kinship, real or fictive) to this unit guaranteed an egalitarian and exclusive right to digging wells, the duty to defend them vis-à-vis outsiders, and the modes of sharing work for the establishment or maintenance of these structures. At the bottom of the lineage articulation, the *awlâd* group, corresponding to the residential unit of the *farîg*, was responsible for the real appropriation through the management of minor works, the *hafîr* and shallow wells. The system of mutual aid and collective work, the principle of free water (and of inalienability of water resources), were basic and shared values. For some, the proximity of the Nile and its canals was a supplementary water source. As for other modern water sources, such as water towers, in the 1990s they were still few and, in the settled villages where they existed, their functioning was limited by the lack of fuel. In any event, the persistence of pastoral production ensured that the inhabitants of settled villages maintained their rights on the

hafir and desert wells in order to use them during seasonal transhumance. For this reason, the *gabila*, being an essential base for the rights on water, still had pertinence in spite of the growing diversification of livelihood strategies by the domestic groups.¹⁵

Over the last decade, different factors have created a strong differentiation both of the sources of access to water and of the underlying social networks: the pastoral production decline, the intrusion of new actors into the territory, the development of sedentarisation and the growth of settlements near the Nile, the uneven supply of modern water services. In the early 2000s, there were at least five different ways of getting access to water. *Hafir* and wells remained exclusive sources for the desert camps; the water towers with a supply system similar to the one of urban areas were present in some settled villages nearer to the Nile and the road; lorries and vans were used to transport water fetched in Khartoum or in sedentary villages by people engaged in wage activities outside the territory; the irrigation canals of agricultural projects or the refinery's water supply pipes were exploited by groups living nearby; finally, water cart (*karro*) transportation was used by marginal groups within some villages. Beyond these technical devices, a stronger differentiation of social relations related to water had been engendered. Because the sharing of access and management of water was one of the prerogatives of the *gabila*, such fragmentation (and also the qualitative differentiation between water at a cost and free water, bad and good water) drove to a parallel fragmentation of the social group. For example, one of the common complaints by some Ahâmda, was that tribesmen were refusing to contribute to collective works, thereby disadvantaging those still totally relying on deep wells (free tribal sources) that were progressively abandoned. Again, the development of market transactions by the purchase and sale of *hafir* water, a practice that was spreading among tribesmen (however, rarely with outsiders), sanctioned the breaking of the principle of free exchange of water and reciprocity among members of the same (kin) group. Finally, such fragmentation and individualisation also undermined the well-rooted capacity to ensure a rational use of water that takes into account the ecological context and its resources (both considered globally on a defined territory) because these resources were losing their status as the pivot of socio-economic organisation.

Although more obvious in the case of water, such fragmentation and loss of communal social values was also occurring in relation to land. The third founding element at the centre of "desocialisation" concerned forms of labour. The increasing weight of wage labour developed transactions linked to money circulation and created a greater dependency on cash incomes. At the same time it started to break the notion of socialised work that is not quantified solely in terms of time and money. The case of Ahâmda working (for money) for their tribesmen was no longer an exceptional one and was not condemned as it had been previously. Although such commoditisation trends were already visible fifteen years earlier,

15. Access for outsiders is limited to occasional primary needs of humans and livestock. In historical records we note the importance of the unity of the *gabila* as a source of exclusive appropriation of water resources because of frequent episodes of inter-tribal fighting for the digging of, or access to, wells and *hafir*.

during my fieldwork between 2006 and 2009, the impact of globalisation seemed to have undermined every sort of resistance to them.¹⁶

2.1.3. Inequalities and contradictions

Although the Ahâmda were never as egalitarian as their tribal rhetoric claimed, it is impossible to ignore that the recent transformations have deeply affected the group through a stronger stratification, backed both by economic and political parameters. Here, in addition to resource access, forms of labour are significant. Concerning the increasing percentage of families (or individuals) that joined the wage labour market, such integration has been done in quite uneven conditions. On the one side, there was a large number of proletarianised nomads, who only had access to precarious and badly paid jobs (as daily workers in agriculture, the building sector, etc.) which did not allow them to replace the contribution previously granted by pastoral and agricultural economy, yet, took labour force away from subsistence activities. On the other side, a small fraction entering into the business of “new” goods (like cars) or taking on the role of middlemen between local pastoral production and urban markets succeeded in earning larger salaries (even if fluctuating). Such achievement was facilitated by the possibility of exploiting one’s tribesmen (for example, for the owners of lorries and cars who buy milk from the camps and sell it in town with a large profit) and through a set of political connections that this élite developed, sometimes also thanks to their membership in the *lajna sha’bia* (popular committees).¹⁷ For the youngsters, born in a period of pastoralism’s stagnation, who have not benefited from the knowledge of their fathers or have not yet acquired a high educational level or professional training, there has been an increase in employment by the army, police or security services—an option formerly disregarded by the Ahâmda.

The different configurations in relation to territory, pastoralism, and labour correspond partly to the ones between the so-called Ahâmda of the *khala* (desert) and Ahâmda of the *bahar* (river Nile). In earlier times, the expression *nâs al khala* included all the Ahâmda that were labelled as *‘arab* (in the sense of “nomads”—Grandin 1980) and were conceived as different from people of the Nile villages and from urban groups. Recent changes determined a significant shift in the attribution of these labels. Not only were the labels *nâs al-bahar* and *nâs al-khala* applied to people within the same (tribal) group, but the development of socio-economic transformations widened the gap between them and decreased the degree

16. This desocialisation is coupled with the “desacralisation” of resources and social relations. In this sense, the “sacred” is not referring only to a religious sphere, but it is based on the founding value of the *gabîla* as a social unity whose ethos should push to maximal solidarity. The longstanding complaint of the elders that “today everything is done by money,” had become a harsh reality and, for some, a new positive value. I observed the same response concerning the privatisation of water in rural areas of southeastern Morocco (Casciarri 2008).

17. The role of *lajna sha’bia* in reshaping the local political environment seems underestimated by anthropologists, who still focus more on the “traditional” institutions. Those structures, formerly more rooted in urban areas (Hamid 2000), have lately become widespread also in rural areas where they overlap with the traditional forms of (tribal) power management.

of complementarity of these two poles of a single unit. In the mid-2000s, some Ahâmda of the *khala* still kept a notable autonomy regarding the use of collective traditional water and land resources, the presence of communal work and cooperation, and the priority allocated to pastoralism. They also had minimal occasional involvement in wage labour, which also limited their consumption levels. By contrast, the Ahâmda of the *bahar* started to be largely perceived as "town people" by their tribesmen—and this also with regard to the availability of services (water, school, electricity), of TV and mobile phones, or of expensive marriages.¹⁸ Thus, whether or not this was a new "class division," the formerly nuanced distinction between "people of the desert" and "people of the river," was increasingly widening. It is significant that the latter started to use the term '*arab*' to define the former, while hesitating to apply to themselves the label that just a few years before was one of the pillars of their identity claims.¹⁹ The same stratification between those two spatial poles was also visible within single residential units. This is the case of some larger settled villages, where the Ahâmda newcomers became spatially and economically marginal. The most significant development was that the *gabîla* no longer showed a constant concern for the situation of poor Ahâmda relatives. Even under critical circumstances (the building of the refinery, the dam, and the asphalt road), there was no reaction from the *gabîla*, not a common complaint representing collective interest for the protection of territorial integrity, nor a request made for equal access to services, or demands on its members to carry out communal works.

In the political domain, an opposition had been confirmed between "old" and "new" sheikhs, or between sheikhs and leading figures of the popular committees.²⁰ Without entering in open conflict with powerful figures, several Ahâmda complained that their "chiefs" had not sought their opinion for important decisions, such as the above-mentioned intrusion on their territory. The Ahâmda who brought a "modernist" discourse tried to disregard such positions as a backward refusal of change. Yet, the complaint was due less to a sort of archaic refusal of innovation than to the recognition of the negative effects of such transformations. Also, with the growing stratification of society, the individual's position vis-à-vis the new element could be very different. For example, the building of the asphalt road was welcomed by the ones with lorries and cars, as they engage in business activities between the desert and the

18. I noted elsewhere that marriage is a relevant marker of socio-economic stratification (Casciarri 2002). As the commoditisation of marriage transaction reached its highest levels, a lot of Ahâmda worried and saw in it a sign of loss of the collective (tribal) value of marriage. Even if the criteria of choice of the spouse seemed to be rather constant (the preference for FBD – Father brother's daughter – being well alive), the amount of money required for marriage had become exorbitant compared to the average living standards and cash availability.

19. I discussed, in an article about the "nomad identity," the historical value and the multifarious dimensions and connotations of this complex notion of '*arab*', primarily referred to nomad (Arab) groups in central and northern Sudan (Casciarri 1999).

20. This type of conflict was emerging already in 1994-95, at the moment of the constitution of the Rabta Al-Ahâmda (tribal league) (Casciarri 2006), but, whereas in this period the contrast was more visible between the Ahâmda of the Khartoum Province and the Ahâmda settled elite of the White Nile, in the mid-2000s it seemed to exist within the group itself.

town, or by the ones who planned to establish shops along the road. But the ones living in the *farig* mostly experienced the disadvantages of construction, such as the interruption of livestock routes, the lorry traffic disturbing the environment and the animals, and the increase in thefts by people coming by car from the town.

Nonetheless, there were some contradictions that are worth noting in this phase of transition and strong change. We just saw that more and more people remarked on the decreasing power and inefficiency of the *gabīla*, which, despite its permeable borders and constant mutations (Casciarri 2006), remained a pillar of this global socio-political organisation with its claim to tribal unity and solidarity until recent times. In some cases, the *gabīla* had the power to revitalise the link between Ahâmda of different groups and status. This is often connected to its instrumental use made either by the government, in its attempt of co-optation and control of Native Administration institutions, or by the interests of a local tribal elite. But even those marginal Ahâmda who regretted the “death of the *gabīla*” as the source of a spirit of sharing and collective behaviour, were still responsive to some occasional calls in the name of ancient solidarity. Two examples of this contradictory attitude follow. The first example concerns the occurrence of local inter-tribal conflicts. In 2008, in a confrontation between the Ahâmda and a neighbouring group claiming land rights on their territory, the whole *gabīla*, mainly under the guidance of some notables (paradoxically, the ones more linked to extra-tribal political dynamics), was pushed to rally to defend the ancestral communal rights and to oppose what was considered a violation of an exclusive “tribal” territory.²¹ This example shows that, although a united reaction is lacking in the case of territorial intrusions by the state, when the “enemy” is conceived as one of the same status (another *gabīla*) the tribal ethos is more easily reactivated. The second example of contradictory behaviour concerns the frequent calls made by the liberal state, compensating for its disengagement in the supply of services (schools, water, and so on), to voluntary work or cash contributions by the inhabitants—often thanks to the *lajna sha’abia* acting as an intermediary. The mutual aid tradition of the *nafir* is evoked by the state without concern for the contrast between its liberal individualist vision and the instrumental valorisation of collective traditions. This ambiguous attitude by the central power can also be noted in its intervention in local “traditional” leadership. While reshaping the tribal articulation and the system of sheikhs and *omda*, and claiming as a primary aim participation “from below,” the real objective seemed more often that of co-opting those near to the national trends and casting aside individuals that, even if endorsed by local traditional authority, were “outsiders” with regard to the ongoing change, and could cast themselves as defenders of collective tribal rights independently from the interests of the state or of private actors. The ambivalence was also evident in the shifting between two different criteria for grouping people: the one based on territorial contiguity; and the one, more in line with the tribal discourse, based on kinship proximity.

21. The conflict concerned lands lying near the new asphalt road. Even if these had previously a low value, their proximity to the new road opened the possibility for commercial exploitation. This brought the neighboring tribal group to claim the property of those lands, and the court to ask the Ahâmda to deliver oral witnesses to prove the historical ownership of their *gabīla*.

2.2. The Awlâd Nûba (Hawâzma): “Persistent pastoralists” in post-conflict Southern Kordofan

The second group I focus on in this chapter displays various similarities to the first one. First of all, as for the Ahâmda, among the Awlâd Nûba appropriation of resources (land and water) is a collective process, having as a base a socio-political organisation conceived in terms of agnatic kinship and segmentation. At this regard, we find the same embeddedness between economic, political, and social spheres, and a centrality of the commons and of non-wage labour, showing that use value prevails over exchange value, and that reciprocity and cooperation are seen as a duty between “the closest ones.” These are defined more as *akhwân* (brothers) than as *awlâd ‘amm* (brothers’ children), as with the Ahâmda. Inclusive kin groups are labelled, from smaller to larger ones, as *iyâl*, *khashum beit*, and *gabîla* by the Awlâd Nûba, while among the Ahâmda they are called *awlâd*, *fari’*, *gabîla*. This criterion of proximity, sealed by kinship relations, is to be found in the defence of common goods, in the collective settling of violence, and also in the exchange of women. Another shared feature is the importance of the genealogical idiom as a tool of representation of reality and of status definition of individuals, groups, and their roles and relationships. Finally, there is the importance, in practices as well as in discourse, of the FBD marriage²² and the claimed values of an identity as pastoral nomads.²³

But we also need to mention the features that differentiate the two groups. History played its role, and we have to distinguish between the Ahâmda, near to the historical context of central and eastern Sudan, and the Awlâd Nûba in western Sudan (Kevan and Stiansen 1998);

22. As far as the Ahâmda are concerned, the preference for marriage with *bitt ‘amm* (FBD) shows a high degree of correspondence between norm and practices when compared to other societies of the Arab Muslim world (Bonte 1994). Our sample of 485 marriages (405 first marriages), covering a period of almost one century for three lineages, gives the following figures: 25% of marriages are with “true” (non-classificatory) FBD, 48% with first degree cousins (FBD, MBD, FZD, MZD)—that are often also classificatory *bitt ‘amm* as an effect of endogamous alliances—and only 10% of marriages with people from outside the *gabîla* (mostly secondary marriages) (Casciarri 1997). The Awlâd Nûba’s sample is smaller (150 marriages); nonetheless, their preference is also for marriages with *bitt ‘amm*; father brother’s son’s right of preemption is respected and we observe that the marriages with a non-classificatory FBD are 19,3% (23,4% if we consider only first marriages), 64,7% with a classificatory one—often an agnatic cousin of the same *khashum beit* (five or six generations depth).

23. The socio-ethnic context makes the term used to define nomads more uncertain here. The term *‘arab*, is used as an equivalent of “nomad” among the Ahâmda, as well as in most parts of central and northern Sudan (Casciarri 1999). The Awlâd Nûba instead use the term *ruhhal* when they want to stress their identity as mobile herders (as opposed to settled people), while they use the term *‘arab* only when they need to specify that their identity as *baggâra* (a term that is not really used with regard to the ethnotribal parameter, and that can be also synonymous of “nomad”) does not make them similar to non-Arab Sudanese cattle herders (Dinka or other).

sometimes differences are visible at the cultural level of borrowings from neighbouring groups, with the Ahâmda influenced by eastern Sudanese groups (also Beja) and the Hawâzma more conditioned by the Nuba.²⁴ Then, there is the difference of ecological context: the Ahâmda camel and goat herders have had as a geographical reference the semi-desert Butana plains where they moved seasonally (on the east-west axis) until their recent establishment on the western strip of land near the Nile. The Awlâd Nûba, cattle herders, moved on a south-north axis, going from the dry season camps of the Sahelian zone, near Kadugli, up to the northern pastures in the region of El-Obeid. Another relevant difference is the importance of mobile pastoralism. In the period of my fieldwork, the Ahâmda were, for the most part, settled either in villages or camps, while for the Awlâd Nûba (at least a fair portion of them) the pastoral base was still fundamental to their productive system, and seasonal mobility still high. Finally, an element that was crucial in shaping the configuration of the Awlâd Nûba—and that was totally absent in the case of the Ahâmda—was their implication in the long civil war that ravaged the Nuba Mountains region between 1986 and 2003.²⁵

2.2.1. Transforming actors, factors, and processes: Common issues and different trends

The Awlâd Nûba²⁶ are part of one of the three subdivisions of the Rawawga, who together with the Halafa and Awlâd Abd El-'Ali form the Hawâzma section of Kordofan Baggâra and remain more strongly linked to mobile herding. The Awlâd Nûba lived off the exploita-

24. The weight of different historical contexts is also visible in religious practices. The Ahâmda make reference to various Sufi sheikhs of the Butana tribes, while the Hawâzma still claim their Mahdist affiliation and generally disregard Sufism.

25. The end of the war in the Nuba Mountains in 2003 (with its effects still playing out in the post-conflict context of 2005-2011) made it difficult to draw a clear picture of the related dynamics, as the topic was still highly sensitive in the discourse with local actors. Apart from the mentioned disruptions, we observed that, first, the effects of the war were quite different within the same group, and, second, that beyond the ideological contrasted vision imposed by the elites, cooperative relations persisted between Awlâd Nûba and Nuba. The establishment during the war of informal local “peace agreements” between Awlâd Nûba and some Nuba/SPLA groups demonstrate the complexity of such a situation. It is impossible to say what impact the new dramatic civil war started in the Nuba Mountains in 2011 has had on such dynamics.

26. Despite the Arab identity claimed by the Awlâd Nûba, the name of the group evokes ancient processes of mixing between this Baggâra section and Nuba groups of the region (MacMichael 1922; Michael 1987). This mixing was not easily acknowledged both because of the dominant position reached by Arab socio-political structures and ideology and because of the trend to stress the ethnic divide that has been reinforced by the war. Nonetheless, during my fieldwork, the Awlâd Nûba maintained strong economic relations with some Nuba neighboring groups (Logori, Sobori, Moro), had a certain degree of inter-ethnic marriage exchange, continued to establish some “brotherly” relations with Nuba, and shared some of the typical cultural features of the latter (dressing, dance and rituals, wrestling, naming).

tion of two geo-ecological zones: the lands in the Nuba Mountains region, around Kadugli, during the dry season (October-May); and the rich pastures of Northern Kordofan where they moved during the rainy season (June-September). This area has long been affected by the encroaching of mechanised agriculture on grazing lands (Mohamed Salih 1990b) and by the parallel drive towards the commoditisation of livestock and its products. Although these are not recent phenomena,²⁷ it is certain that over the last decade the impact of the dynamics of globalisation—liberalisation, land grabbing, growing marketing processes—increased both the state of dependence of the Awlâd Nûba and the conflict between pastoralists, or with agriculturalists, following the reduction of available lands. Certainly, the long first civil war in the Nuba Mountains was the element of the regional context that most conditioned the stability of this pastoral system. For almost twenty years, different Baggâra groups were affected by the conflict as civilian population or mobilised as irregular army members supported by the government. The material destruction brought on by the war, and the consequent losses (of humans, herds, and other goods), pushed some of them to shift to sedentarism or to remain linked to an impoverished form of pastoralism. In general, the access to the transhumance routes and to the territorial resources was affected by the conflict, and, even for groups that continued their mobile herding, different forms of aggregation of the domestic units during nomadisation had to be elaborated to answer security needs. Thus, after the war, the Awlâd Nûba found themselves in need of reconstructing a viable mode of exploitation of their territory, in a post-conflict context made more difficult by the reinforcement of land encroaching and commoditisation of pastoral production in the framework of globalisation. Nonetheless, it seemed that a fair part of the group still relied mainly on extensive herding, despite the increasing market exchange of labour, livestock, and its products. Even the groups that settled in Kadugli during the first war, diversifying their income sources, maintained strong cooperation links with their relatives, and thus kept their herds, with pastoral production holding a central place in their economy. Even if rarely, we also saw some cases of re-nomadisation after the war.

New actors, who became increasingly important in the CPA period (2005-2011), were the myriad of development and humanitarian aid organisations carrying out their interventions in the area. During the period of fieldwork, the presence of NGOs and of international agencies was relevant in Southern Kordofan, at the urban and rural level. They represented a possible source of income or funding for local projects, and their actions often conditioned the reshaping of tribal and inter-ethnic relations as well as the modes of access to resources on the territory.²⁸ Thus, war seemed to be a major factor not only for the effects of material destruction and the disruption of socio-economic relations but also for this new political and economic environment that it had helped to create and that we could better understand

27. Indeed, the Southern Kordofan Baggâra were incorporated into the market capitalist economy since colonial times because two main factors: the establishment of taxes collected by the officials of the Native Administration; and the development of commercial crops like cotton (Saeed 1982; Kevane and Stiansen 1998).

28. This is the case, for example, in the establishment of water points (mainly hand pumps), in the intervention concerning school infrastructures or resettlement of IDPs in their original region, and, also, in the revitalisation of "engendered" vernacular languages (Manfredi 2015).

within the wider context of globalisation, as far as the complex universe of “post-conflict,” “peace-building,” “conflict management” interventionism was concerned.

2.2.2. Liberalisation and de-socialisation of resources: A step behind

What is the link between social and economic spheres, which is here the main focus of our attention, for the Awlâd Nûba? Before turning to this question, let us say that the Awlâd Nûba relied on two different regimes according to the two zones they occupied. In Northern Kordofan, and along the transhumance routes, access to resources is not exclusive to specific socio-tribal groups. The Awlâd Nûba share, as other Hawâzma do, access to land and water not only with other Baggâra groups but also with camel herders (the Hamar and Shenabla). Instead, in the area considered as their *dâr* (homeland) in Southern Kordofan, the appropriation and access to wells, water sources, pastures, fields, and gardens is more clearly related to an exclusive lineage group. In the first case, conflict over resource access was more linked to the expansion of agricultural projects or other restrictions of available land; in the second case, it often stemmed from an illegitimate intrusion of users not linked to the lineage group having priority over resources—Nuba farmers as well as Hawâzma of other groups. It is interesting to note that, with regards to access to water, the lack of deep wells made the group holding the exclusive rights smaller than in the case of the Ahâmnda, where the presence of deep wells needed the collaboration of the entire *gabîla* for building, maintenance, and defence.

Generally, considering the parameters of access to, and management of, resources—together with the role of wage labour—it seemed that trends of incorporation of pastoral systems by capitalism, and the typical push towards desocialisation, were less evident here. As such, “desocialisation” of resources is often paralleled by the weakening of tribal institutions, a political feature that stems from the embedded dimension of economy in society. In fact, among the Awlâd Nûba, several phenomena showed that the *gabîla* “was still alive,” and functioned as a solidarity group, linked to the exploitation of territory by a pastoral mode of production, maybe also being a hindrance to the loss of social values in the management of resources. The operational nature of the *gabîla* was visible in different social dynamics: the actual relevance of sheikhs and *omda* and their link with kinship groups in the context of management of resources; the frequency of settling violence with the blood-price system (normally paid in cattle heads) by the agnatic group; and the status of “collective affair,” to be discussed by tribesmen and their authorities, granted to marriage questions²⁹ as well as to issues concerning women’s sexual behaviour. It is important to stress that the management of honour as collective symbolic capital, with its essential components of blood and women, is one of the basic supports of tribal institutions elsewhere in the Arab and Muslim world (Bonte et al. 1991; Bonte 1994; Bonte, Conte, and Dresch 2001).

29. Marriage institutions are extremely important as indicators of the degree of unity of the tribal group, both at the level of the preferential choice of spouses among the *banât ‘amm* (FBDs) and at the level of the tribal control upon money transactions, the inflation and “deregulation” of which are reliable markers of inner differentiation in contexts of liberalisation.

Finally, despite the implication of the Awlâd Nûba in market economy dynamics (wage labour, commoditisation, individualisation of economic strategies), and as a target of strong socio-economic change, it is necessary to remark that the group maintained a strong degree of socialisation on resources as well as the coherence and actual function of tribal institutions as a support of territorial appropriation.

2.2.3. Smoother inequalities and similar contradictions?

In spite of this resilience to the "desocialisation" of resources, we must not neglect the inner inequalities, existing beyond an official discourse about the egalitarian dimension of the *gabila*. Among the Awlâd Nûba we remarked some differences between the ones permanently established in Kadugli—in the Hay Goz quarter—and the ones living *barra*, "outside", set up as camps practicing seasonal transhumance. Nevertheless, beyond a different access to services and a tighter involvement in wage labour, a strong relation persisted between the fixed *farig* in Kadugli and the complementary mobile camps, in terms of sharing common territorial resources, cooperation and exchange of labour force, and solidarity in political matters. Instead, differences were more marked within the Awlâd Nûba for those individuals that chose to settle in Khartoum or other big towns. Here, it was more often a question of strategies that implied the individual and his family exiting from the wider sphere of solidarity and common behaviour.³⁰ There were also individuals that moved away from the territory (and from nomad pastoralism), like some Awlâd Nûba living in El-Obeid. We could consider them as a commercial elite, permeated by a modern entrepreneur mentality, that exploited the existing capital of kinship relations with nomad relatives but oriented it toward purely individual profit logics. In this case the difference was more marked, and the discourse claiming the solidarity and proximity of *gabila* members appeared as rhetoric and instrumental. Finally, we observed the signs of a progressive spreading, at the discourse level, of a liberal vision of pastoral production. Be it the result of state and donor interventions in past decades, aiming to co-opt Kordofan pastoralism in market economy,³¹ or rather the strengthening of this vision pushed by the globalisation context, this shift—which did not correspond fully to actual pastoral practices—could bring the seeds of a future growing stratification.

30. Also in this case, new marriage options are a significant marker of this breaking point, which is illustrated by the presence of marriages with some groups considered "farthest," such as other Arab Sudanese non-nomad groups, or Nuba, Beja, southern tribes, etc.

31. Between the 1960s and 1980s, Kordofan was targeted by development projects and intervention whose main objective was the economic valorisation of livestock production. During fieldwork, we remarked that some NGOs or international agencies continue to promote the integration into the market economy as the best way to development for local pastoral groups. In the discourse of some pastoralists, we found this sort of idealisation of the individual entrepreneur more turned to making money on the market by selling livestock to invest in other projects or to purchase consumption goods.

Also, in the political domain we observed some transformations that had a potential of progressive differentiation within the group. In fact, despite the importance still granted to tribal leaders, tribal institutions were not completely autonomous from external interests and pressures. With this complex interplay of inner dynamics and outer interventions, we saw the rising of a potential conflict between old and new tribal leaderships of Native Administration; here, the intrusion of the state aimed to carry out better control through the multiplication of the number of sheikhs and *'omda*—but with a weakening of their actual power—and through the imposition of new criteria in choosing them (preferring the younger and educated ones). On the other side, at least in the areas of permanent settlement (Kadugli and, to a lesser degree, the rural settled villages) the dialectic between *lajna sha'byia* and *gabîla* also played a role and appeared as a possible source of micro-conflict. In such a context, we can note some ambiguities and contradictions that we remarked also for the Ahâmda's case. The state ambivalence in this balance between a “modern” political and economic model (centralised and liberal) and a traditional one (decentralised and communal) is visible in the instrumental and incoherent use of local tribal institutions of “non-formal justice” for the solution of conflict and blood questions, and the appeal to collective mutual aid in the *nafir* for the supply of social services.

3. Anthropology today in Sudan: Theories, practices, commitments. An open conclusion³²

Just as a final point, I would like to come back to the 2008 Jubilee Conference intended to open a debate on the role of anthropology and the engagement of anthropologists working on crisis-ridden societies. The approach I mentioned at the outset of the chapter as being the framework for my data analysis seems to offer a reading key into this issue. The scholars drawing largely from Marxist tradition and radical anthropology attempted to establish a dialectical relation between theories and practices, driven by the will to produce a critical anthropological thought, and to develop a reflection on the risks and needs of anthropology's uses and misuses, engagements and disengagements. This final development does not stem from a simple expression of “good conscience,” rather it is intentionally considered as strictly linked to the analysis of fieldwork data presented here. Actually, on the one side, the analysis of ongoing socio-economic dynamics among both pastoral groups pushes to lend a crucial relevance to the debate on *how* anthropology could contribute to the change of a present situation; on the other side, the a priori choice of a committed anthropology brings our study to focus on the conditions of production and reproduction of southern societies within the framework of reproduction processes of capitalism in its global phase.

32. This final reflection has been produced, according to the suggestions of the Jubilee Conference's call, in the period of this event and the writing of the article (2008-2009). This means that the expression “today Sudan” refers here to the historical phase of the CPA (2005-2011), after the end of the civil war and before the independence of Southern Sudan

3.1. Anthropologists and "neutrality": A twofold issue

3.1.1. Neutrality: The choice of issues, categories and approach

Because of the collusion between anthropology and colonial domination, as well as of the persistence of an objectivist vision inherited by evolutionism, the question of neutrality began to be debated during the phase of political decolonisation parallel to the "intellectual decolonisation" of Western anthropologists and the development of a new generation of Third World anthropologists (Asad 1973; Ahmed 1979). Such a debate—unfortunately often removed in the last decades of *pensée unique*—raises the issue of anthropologists' neutrality both in its properly scientific and ethic dimension. As far as the former is concerned, the myth of neutrality and objectivity of anthropological work, which served to conceal the political compromise of colonial anthropology, has been strongly criticised. We are never using a purely objective "description" and phenomena are never "facts" ready to be caught; by denying such assumption we only "replace an explicit doctrine by an implicit creed," because choosing a topic, the categories to study it, and the approach to analyse it is already an affirmative option, a sort of non-neutral engagement (Cresswell and Godelier 1976).³³ Thus, the generation of radical anthropologists studying, between the 1970s and the 1980s, the incorporation of Third World peasantries by capitalism in the framework of uneven relations between North and South (persisting in post-colonial times) became conscious of the impossibility of neutrality as a standing point, and instead hoped that the focus on socio-economic relations in African societies could be a step for their positive transformation.

Lately, the youngest generation of anthropologists, formed after the ideological and political breaking point of 1989, started to remove from their approach and practices those basic elements of criticism. The loss of such awareness of the discipline seems to be linked to the decline of Marxist anthropology.³⁴ Today, the socio-economical settings brought on by globalisation—or rather, by its development in the last decades (Amin 1995)—seem to open a new space for the revival of such consciousness-raising, as well as for the renewal of the interest towards certain issues and categories. Indeed, the access to resources appears again as a central issue for the global comprehension of the processes affecting the communities we are studying in the South; because it is within this domain that we witness upsetting

33. In this context, the work of some Sudanese or Third World anthropologists (Asad 1973; Ahmed 1973, 1979) has also been fundamental in unveiling the imbrications of British colonisation and the approach of political anthropology, while stating that the same dilemma persists in post-colonial approaches.

34. Such a decline itself is influenced by extra-scientific reasons—the political international context set after 1989—and by the hasty association that has been made between Eastern "real socialism" regimes and Marxist anthropology, though the latter criticised since its beginning the dogmatic version of dialectical materialism imposed by the USSR. Paradoxically, the ostracism vis-à-vis Marxist anthropology has been earlier and stronger in France, the cradle of this school of thought.

changes, because the basis of material production and social reproduction of such groups are particularly targeted by the national and international actors of globalisation, because this domain is a sort of pivot between economic, politics, symbolic dimensions, because, finally, the inequalities and conflicts that ravage such societies are strictly linked to it. By accepting again the challenge of not being neutral, even in the choice of our privileged issues and categories of study, we may make our first contribution as anthropologists.

3.1.2. Neutrality: The question of anthropologists' commitment

The second component of the question of anthropologists' neutrality concerns more closely the manifest engagement with the people we study and their social transformation. This dimension also received special attention by "decolonised" anthropology starting in the 1960s. In this case, the Marxist and radical anthropology of pre-globalisation has been further criticised because of a certain paternalism, pretending to deliver the Word of Liberation to oppressed peoples around the world. Whether due to the failure of the political predictions for Third World countries, or not, the late generation of anthropologists grew up with a general refusal to take into account any engagement or turned to an unconditioned support for one's own "ethnic group" permeated by a questionable exoticism cut from wider reflection.³⁵

Thus, the idea of a stronger engagement within the dynamics of change—not to say liberation—of Southern societies has been the object of harsh criticism and has been marginalised, in the world order resetting after 1989, by a large part of anthropologists preferring to take refuge in an alleged neutrality. In the last years, the resurgence of some worrying trends is bringing this debate up again. This is the case of, for instance, the return of the sinister alliance between anthropological research and military interest in countries with ongoing conflicts. The Network of Concerned Anthropologists (2009) denounced the recruitment of anthropological staff for programs of the US army in Iraq (funded by private companies) to facilitate the tasks of the occupation forces. Similar cases, emerging in a period of global colonisation (Amin 1995), show us that the criticism of the political implication of anthropologists developed after decolonisation, is not, as we could have thought, a matter of fact for our deontology. This leads us to rethink the fragility of our status and the necessity of revitalizing the debate about neutrality/engagement. Between the total refusal of engagement and the risk of our co-optation for the cause of counter-insurrection, the position of anthropologists becomes more and more difficult in times of new world (dis)-order (Shaw 1994) and globalisation. Here, the hegemonic *pensée unique* is ambiguous. It claims the death of the ancient times where two models of society with their legitimating visions of the world opposed one another, but in reality it is just taking for evident one of those two conflicting models—the one conceiving liberal economy and Western political democracy as the absolute ideals to follow for the well-being of humanity—and giving it the status of a natural,

35. This is the case, for example, of the quarrel over the Tuareg rebellion in the panorama of French anthropology, sometimes more influenced by a long lasting fascination for the Tuareg myth (of colonial origin) than by a complex political reflection.

universal solution. As for other intellectuals, a narrow space is left for the anthropologists to think and act beyond this dominant paradigm.

3.2. Crisis-ridden societies and crisis-ridden anthropologists

The suggestion to expand our debate on the role and engagement of anthropologists in crisis-ridden societies is a stimulating and necessary challenge. Nonetheless, we cannot attempt it properly without admitting that we, and our discipline, are somehow also in crisis, and that such a crisis is itself a product of globalisation. First of all, our profession is in crisis because in most countries today, due to the liberal restructuring of the research domain and of a dominant utilitarian vision of knowledge, our studies are often not considered as profitable and useful, hence, worth being duly funded and academically supported. Thus, global capitalism pushes us to overcome such an impasse by becoming consultants for projects whose scientific limits are well known to us, by proposing research programs focusing on fashionable topics, by putting ourselves at the service of certain "study promoters" who are quite different, in aims and nature, from the environment needed to guarantee free and autonomous research.³⁶ Second, at the level of epistemological reflection, and with regard to the role and status of the discipline, the crisis is also visible in the fragmentation of schools of thought characterizing the post-modern period and the dismissal of *théories fortes* of reality interpretation (Ulin 1991)—in that regard, I previously evoked the decline of Marxist anthropology. Thus, when we work in countries like Sudan, we are often confined by the material and intellectual constraints set up by this complex and heterogeneous environment of intervention on the so-called crisis-ridden societies. This composite universe is managing, since the entry in the globalisation phase, a large part of the financial means and human or intellectual resources that are spent to "help" crisis-ridden societies of the South. It is formed by a multifarious set of actors (international development agencies, states engaged in cooperation agreements, NGOs, private corporations, international financial organisations as the World Bank or IMF)³⁷ who sometimes intersect in the same fields, carry out similar objectives, and, in a unseen way, share a common jargon and conceptual background made by "fetish" notions (governance, civil society, poverty reduction, gender empowerment, peace-building, etc.) which, while claiming to be neutral, are strongly ideological and also penetrate in the scientific research domain (Gledhill 2005).

36. With different degrees, such dynamics of liberalisation of the academic contexts are similar in the North and in the South. Thus, if for Southern anthropologists, this new enrolment aims to compensate very low salaries, for Northern anthropologists it aims to overcome unemployment or the dismantling of the retirement pensions system.

37. In continuity with his remarkable work on Sudanese peasantry in the 1980s, after his experience in the humanitarian sector of NGOs, Duffield (2001) recently produced an interesting critique, showing the underlying reasons of the "unnatural" rapprochement of different actors having a shared aim to guarantee the political stability and economic subordination of the "dangerous" peripheral societies in the post-modern age. Some Sudanese scholars (Ahmed 1982) warned us early about the possible negative evolution of this "consultancy anthropologist" category, looking at the increase of expatriate consultants in Sudan.

Here is maybe the core of the issue of our involvement. As anthropologists doing research in a country like Sudan, our effort could be to pursue an autonomous action and reflection that could lead to positive and definitive changes in crisis contexts as well as a constant decoding of categories and concepts (and their uses in the field), whereas globalisation and its ideology pretend to assess their unquestionable value. The notion of crisis itself, and its use, is evidence of this approach. Like Amin suggests (1995), we passed from a long phase, between the end of the Second World War and the end of the Cold War, where various governments and systems (the Eastern sovietism, the Western welfare state, the Third World nationalism) shared a similar engagement in national development, giving a primary role to the state, to the present phase, the one of global capitalism, where the notion of development itself is being replaced more and more by that of “crisis management”: the latter inspiring most interventions by the North (or by the international organisations backing its interests) in the South, but neglecting the hypothesis of a definitive radical solution of this crisis.

As a parallel phenomenon, the growing role of humanitarian action and NGOs (most of which are now almost completely dependent on governmental financial support) contributes to promote a vision of peoples of the peripheries as “mouths to feed or bodies to heal” (Hours 2002), as if the idea that those countries can become autonomous and pursue a self-sustained development had been abandoned. Furthermore, the growing part NGOs have in supplying services (water, schools, electricity, health care) allows the states of the South, in the wave of liberalisation, to free themselves of tasks previously considered a national duty (Nègre 2004). Thus, it seems that the withdrawal of the state from its role of national developer has become the goal of humanitarian action, after being promoted for profit interests by the supporters of global capitalism (such as the World Bank or IMF) or local bourgeoisies. As anthropologists, we are in the middle of this context, and are often constrained to think and work within this framework, taking for a fact that “there is a crisis,” but prevented from seeking the real, global and historical reasons of such crisis and demystifying the reductionist and reassuring interpretations more oriented towards the “naturalisation” or “ethnicisation” of the Third World crises.³⁸

Yet, nobody better than us, as anthropologists, thanks to our fieldwork knowledge about human societies and their dynamics and to our scientific historical background, can take over this criticism of a conceptual set—which, claiming an avowed neutrality, is used with nonchalance as a sort of passkey—in order to unveil its implications and the issues at stake, at the ideological level as well as in their application in the globalisation context. A starting point could be the criticism of some fetish notions or euphemisms, not to say schizophrenic matching of aims and tools, typical of this global environment, which we cannot ignore as researchers. To give an example, I see the widespread use of the notion of poverty as one of such dangerous euphemisms. The notion replaces the more disturbing concept of “exploitation,” and suggest a sort of regrettable condition of the human being that allows those historically

38. In this regard, Davis (2001) has remarkably illustrated how, since the early phases of capitalist expansion (nineteenth century), most crises in the colonial world have been attributed to natural factors, such as droughts, while hiding the political responsibilities in the future creation of an underdeveloped world. Also, the work of anthropologists is important to show how in recent crises, like the one of Darfur, identity or ethnic conflicts are better explained as resource-based conflicts (Assal 2006).

responsible for such "poverty" (the World Bank's action towards the poor being the clearest illustration) to stand today as champions of the struggle against poverty (Chossudovsky 2003; Gledhill 2005). Another example of what I called a schizophrenic attitude concerns the gap between declared objectives—and related guidelines for a study's focus—and the proposed applied interventions. For instance, the general reconsideration of the importance of the commons among African rural peoples—ascertaining their function in the reduction of poverty and conflict—does not seem to prevent the donors who award funding for such studies to propose the everlasting magic solution of privatisation and marketing increase. In a certain sense, it is as if we were constantly asked to put our knowledge at the disposal of studies for "crisis solution" but not being allowed to go further in our analysis should our study lead us to state that crises will not be solved without touching their real causes, and then getting rid of the ultraliberal system that some governments of the South promote today in total conformity with the diktat of global capitalism.

With the micro-scale cases of the Ahâmda and Awlâd Nûba, I attempted to analyse dynamics of change that affected in the first half of the 2000s two pastoral groups within the context of the national and international influence of global capital reproduction in Sudan. The comparison suggests that societies that share several basic similarities with regard to socio-economic, political, and symbolic features can have different reactions to the effects of common factors of the global environment. In the case of the Ahâmda, the process of "desocialisation" of resources and parallel collapse of tribal institutions looked more advanced, whereas among the Awlâd Nûba, despite the early intrusion of capitalism in the region, the communal management of resources, and related local political institutions, seemed to have held up more strongly. In both cases, I focused on the same domains of analysis (and used the same categories); namely, the access to, and management of, resources and their transformation. In a context which can be read, as some scholars have, as a "New Scramble for Africa" (Southall and Melber 2009), the focus on resource management stands as a privileged domain for an anthropological analysis that aimed to grasp in a holistic way how nature and society, economy and politics, or material and symbolic elements, interact in the context of rural (pastoral) communities in countries like Sudan. It also allows—particularly in the phase where the penetration of global capitalism targets the access to resources as a main space of intrusion—to understand the passage from a situation where economic production strategies, social reproduction patterns, and multifold political institutions are thoroughly embedded in local societies, to one where water, land, and labour (and the symbolic representations that are associated to their settings) become "desocialised" commodities, by way of the "great transformation" that processes of capital development on a global scale attempt to achieve.

In Sudan, as well as in other countries of the South, the uneven effects of globalisation, with regard to power access, wealth sharing, and viable reproduction of livelihoods still need the attention of social scientists. The reproduction of ancient forms of domination (be it between rural and urban, periphery and centre or within classes and genders) and the creation of new ones, with their high potential for conflict—and the establishment of states of "permanent crisis"—cannot be ignored. Anthropologists can offer an understanding of globalisation "seen from below," through the eyes and behaviour of local communities (Gledhill 2008). Drawing from a longstanding tradition of dynamic and radical anthropology that produced its analysis on Sudanese and other peripheral societies, and updating it based on the "global situation"—or, as we referred to before, a "colonial situation" (Balandier 1951, 1967)—

we could find useful tools to produce an in-depth understanding of the current processes of change in crisis-ridden societies, like Sudan. At the same time, through our criticism, we could also unveil the ideological support of globalisation, which heavily condition the space and environment of our contemporary research. Finally, we could better define in which change, for whom, and with whom, we need to be involved if we want to go back to being “concerned anthropologists.”

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Chapter 9

Conflicts on the move— looking at the complexity of the so-called “resource-based conflicts” in Western Sudan

Leif Manger

Introduction

My first fieldwork in Sudan was in the Kheiran area of North Kordofan and lasted through all of 1976. The second substantial fieldwork I did was focused on the Liri area in South Kordofan, with stays in the southern parts of the Nuba Mountains during various periods from 1979 until war broke out in the area in 1985. A major focus of my work at that time was on resource management, which was a key theme in the ongoing research collaboration between the anthropology departments in Bergen and Khartoum. The general aim of the research was to show that human resource utilisation systems in Western Sudan were, and are, far more complex than anticipated in development circles (see e.g., Haaland 1980), and also that local resource management existed in cases where Western onlookers had concluded that it did not. We thought it important that policy-makers and planners alike have information on various types of problems related to the working of production systems in rural areas of the Sudan and that the various policy options dealt with by such people be based on realistic assumptions about the driving forces behind existing patterns of utilisation. An important part of this work was to define what this “realism” consisted of. Were the linkages between people’s adaptations and available local resources in Kordofan

characterised by people's over-utilisation of a finite set of resources, requiring a focus on *resource management*? And, if that was the case, was such over-utilisation caused by population increase or by the introduction of more intensive technologies in productive life? That is, was it population-driven or investment-driven? Or, were we dealing with situations of conflict that were not necessarily related to any absolute over-use of resources but that had to do with other factors that were rather social and cultural as well as political in nature, thus requiring a focus on *conflict management*?

A considerable part of my early writing dealt with such issues (Manger 1981, Manger, ed, 1984, Manger, ed, 1987, Manger, 1994) and as this was also the period I got acquainted with Sudanese anthropology, I find it appropriate at this conference, marking the 50th anniversary of the anthropology department in Khartoum, to revisit Western Sudan and some of the debates surrounding it. As many causes of conflict in the region of Western Sudan are related to natural resources, both land and water, this requires an understanding of the way people deal with access to and the use and management of natural resources at the local level and the social structures in which they are embedded. However, one should not accept at face value that conflicts have such resource management as their "root causes." Rather, we need a broader focus within which wider economic, administrative, and political contexts are made relevant. What such a broad presentation shows is that not all resource conflicts are based on a situation of resource scarcity; rather, they are political in nature and have to do with the workings of the political system, including the Sudanese state. But once conflicts erupt they tend also to be interpreted in tribal and ethnic terms and can be linked to other types of conflicts, leading to their escalation. Hence, an increase in levels of conflict, which we have seen in Western Sudan, cannot automatically be interpreted as another example of the many gloomy accounts of the "degradation" of African environments or as an indication that all conflicts are environmental in nature, thus requiring resource management solutions. The way in which conflicts have evolved in Western Sudan also seems to require a focus on the state and on the concept of "governance," in this case "bad governance"; i.e., the reproduction of autocratic leadership, corruption, and the collapse of states into warring factions. This suggests a need to look at people's use of, and control over, resources at many different levels, thus permitting a consideration of processes of power and authority.

The example of the Hawazma nomadic group

I want to try to establish the empirical complexities involved in the field of resource management by following the migration cycle of the Hawazma pastoralists and problematise the various types of relationships they get involved in along their migration routes. As part of this exercise I will discuss some key challenges to our understanding of the problem of resource management, of conflict management and of so-called "resource based conflicts." The migration of the Hawazma Baggara (for more empirical detail see Abdel Hamid Mohamed Osman Abdel Rahim 1986) takes the members of the group from the area south of El Obeid, in North Kordofan and all the way south towards the western banks of the White Nile, to northern Shilluk-land, around Kodok and Kaka, and to southern Shilluk-land, around Tunga. During these migrations, they pass through the Nuba Mountains. The northern part of this migratory system is known to the Hawazma as *al qoz*, representing the

areas between Dilling and El Obeid, then there is *al sa'id*, which is the Arabic word for “south,” in this context denoting the Nuba Mountains areas, and finally, *al bahr*, which is the Arabic word for “ocean,” here meaning the River Nile. This migration is of course an adaptation to environmental factors, people moving south in the dry season to exploit grazing areas along the Nile, and also to catch the early rains (*rushash*) that will provide pasture in the southern Nuba Mountains, moving north to their home *dar* in the area between Dilling and El Obeid and pushing even further north depending on available pasture. But other contextual factors are also at play, major ones being the desertification in northern Kordofan, which increases pressure among the groups at the northern end of the trek; the big mechanised schemes in Habila, Beida, and Tusi in the Nuba Mountains, which interfered with migration routes in a way similar to that of the Renk area; and the general situation of insecurity due to the civil war in the southern parts of the migration cycle. The Baggara arrive in the Shilluk areas during the dry season, in late January or early February, to exploit the *toich* areas that are so basic to all groups in the region. Then they leave the area by the middle of May, when the early rains make the presence of flies and the clay plains themselves difficult for the cattle to navigate. They join cattle and families and move to the southern Nuba Mountains area where they exploit the early rainfall. The movement northwards depends on local rainfall, and is a result of pragmatic choices relating to the needs of the herds, and available labour power in the households. On the whole they need about fifty to sixty days to reach the *goz* area, and by mid-July/August the tribe is gathered there in different camp concentrations. By the end of the rainy season the Hawazma will move out of the *goz* area, again depending on availability of water. Young men may attend to agriculture, whereas others start the difficult trek southwards, again through the Nuba Mountains, where the tribe is scattered, then, towards the end of January, they will come together again and form bigger camps in order to enter the *bahr* region.

With the Hawazma into the Upper Nile region

The southern part of the Hawazma migration cycle, *al bahr*, the western bank of the White Nile in the northern parts of the Upper Nile region, is dominated by the Shilluk. But there are also Dinka and Nuer communities in the areas, although the majority of these groups are found east of the White Nile, from Renk southwards towards Tonga, while the Nuer are found south of the Dinka groups, along the Nile and along the Sobat River.

At the core of the adaptations of these groups are the basic economic systems in the region, with pastoral groups and sedentary groups partly utilising the same areas. The Arab nomads come into the area during the dry season to exploit the available grazing resources along the banks of the Nile (*toich*). These groups are the Gawama, the Rufaa al Hoi, the Awlad Himeid, the Misseriya and Hawazma Baggara, people from Liri, and the people of the White Nile, such as Selim and Ahamda. Even Beni Amer might enter the area, as do the Fellata Umbororo. On the western bank of the river a somewhat “symbiotic” system has developed between the Shilluk and the Hawazma. The present-day Shilluk economy is based on animal husbandry (primarily cattle, sheep, and goats), on agriculture (durra and some maize, tobacco) and on fishing and hunting. Gardening has become very common among the Shilluk, but this is a very recent introduction and does not date further back than the 1960s. Both agriculture and animal husbandry are dependent on rainfall, which affects the annual flooding levels.

The relationship between the Hawazma and the Shilluk is of course dependent on both groups getting access to the important resources in their two different production systems. The ecological system of the region is characterised by a rainy season in which people are confined to limited, higher-lying areas that must accommodate both agriculture and grazing. When the river flood recedes in the dry season more land becomes available, and the good grazing presented by areas along the river (*toich*) provides important dry season grazing. The variations between rainy season areas and dry season areas affect the movement of people, and the availability of such areas affect levels of conflict. For instance, a good rainy season may leave good pasture many places and allow for a dry season in which the groups are scattered, with limited potential for conflict. A bad rainy season will force people towards certain areas where water is available in the dry season, which increases the conflict potential. Many conflicts must be seen in the context of this basic adaptational game in the region.

When conflicts arise their solution is dependent on existing institutional contexts for conflict management. In this respect the Shilluk represent a special case as the group has a strong and still viable centralised political organisation in the form of the Shilluk Kingdom, based on and reinforced by a religious and ritual system. This system represents an example of a traditional system in which local leaders still have legitimacy and therefore can act on behalf of their inhabitants in dealing with visiting Arab pastoralists. In times of conflict it is the legal system of the Shilluk that is the base on which mediation is sought. The Shilluk area is divided into a series of local courts, each under a *jago* (village head). All the local courts are put directly under the *reth*'s authority. A certain number of villages form a court district. Two courts, Gumbadam between Kodok and Fashoda, and Atigo in Tonga, are important Shilluk courts. If there is no agreement about the outcome of a trial, appeal can be made to the *reth*, who will summon the *jago* or the accused, depending on the matter, to provide an explanation. If there is any doubt about whether the accused has been given justice, a new court may be convened, this time in Fashoda. The result of this trial is final since the court is overseen by the *reth*. The laws of the Shilluk are based on customs and traditions preserved in songs or by elders of certain lineages who see to it that the traditions associated with specific legal matters are maintained. It is general practice for a *jago* or even the *reth* to consult elders in connection with specific cases, but this consultation is advisory.

The Shilluk system stands out clearer if compared to the Nuer system, which is more "anarchic" and thus provides fewer possibilities for containing conflicts, not only with the Arabs but also with the Shilluk and the Dinka, as well as within the Nuer groups themselves. Unlike the Shilluk, the Nuer have no traditional system of authority to impose law and order. The stability provided by structures of social and political organisation among the Shilluk have to be created over and over again by the Nuer. In this they depend on special individuals who can act as mediators, among them the *ruic Naadth* (leaders of the people). This role was developed in opposition to foreign aggression, and is one of the most important elements in the resolution of disputes among the Nuer. *Cieng* is another role, which denotes persons with influence in a segment of a tribe. Their significance was greatest in a period when political cohesion on a tribal scale was at its lowest. They were persons with special qualities; e.g., generosity, wisdom, and good temper in settling disputes between others, ability to hold the group together, and bravery and powers of leadership in war. Another was the *gat tuot*, or the bull of the herd, now designating a headman, a position held in a lineage.

In the absence of a legal system for enforcement of the law, settlement was not easily achieved. A local conflict could thus develop into a state of feud between the groups concerned. In such a case there were recognised procedures among the Nuer centred on the *kuaar muon* or *kwac* (leopard or skin chief). Though he had no political or executive authority comparable to the Shilluk *reth* to compel warring parties to come to agreement and no force to compel them to abide by his decision, all the Nuer respected him and this respect was a force that helped make warring parties comply with suggested solutions.

The role of history

Conflicts are not only generated by competition over natural resources. In many of the areas into which the Hawazma move, the past civil war between northern and southern Sudan was a basic cause of instability between groups. And as we know, this is a conflict with deep historical roots. Part of the problem was the Islamic and Arabic penetration of the South by groups from northern Sudan, a penetration that had different dynamics in different areas and in different periods. In their areas the Shilluk in Fashoda stopped Muslim penetration into the south during the pre-Turkia period (before 1821), whereas during the Turko-Egyptian period (1821-1881) slave trade expeditions into the areas increased and created havoc in the Shilluk areas. The regime of the Mahdi (1881-1885) and his successor, Khalifa Abdullahi (1885-1898), only controlled few areas so it was not until the early decades of the British Condominium (1888-1956) that there was a serious “pacification” in the south, through direct colonial intervention, through involvement of Christian missions, and through continuous commercial exploitation. But little of this helped develop the southern areas. At the end of the Condominium, rural areas in the south were still ruled according to customary laws, and the use of “native administration” tended to discourage modern education. Hence, the southern communities remained underdeveloped, and only when the British had decided on Sudanese independence did the question about Southern elites arise, elites that could help bring their areas into the national political system. Hence, instead of developing an elite of the northern type, with privileges, the south continued to be exploited by Greek, Syrian and Armenian, and northern Sudanese merchants, some of whom eventually benefited from large scale production of grain, and the cultivation of cotton and tobacco. The Closed District Ordinance of 1922 introducing travel restrictions did little to change this (see Daly 1980, Mayo 1994). But there were differences, for instance, between agriculturalists who were pacified and co-opted into the colonial system first, and pastoralists who joined later. Lack of integration or lack of education generally kept the southerners out. A region like the Southern Sudan, being a region with large resources, was thus kept under old-fashioned exploitation.

This general history is an important background for understanding the civil war periods that have occurred between northern and southern Sudan, from 1956 to 1972, and from 1983 to 2005. Without going into too much detail (see Johnson 2002), the civil war has of course affected the levels of conflicts between the groups we are discussing. In the most recent phase of the civil war an important part of the general conflict situation was represented by the use of tribal militias. Local militias did play a big role in the type of conflicts that dominated the areas in which the Hawazma had their summer grazing during the 1990s and into the 2000s. Looking at southern Sudan in general, such tribal militias for instance can be related to tribal conflicts in the areas of Bor Dinka, Murle (Pibor), Lou Nuer of Akobo, Anuak of Pibor, Mundari of Juba, and the Toposa of Kapoeta. As the militias could be co-opted by the

government in the north, Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) counterattacks were directed at such militias and their tribes, and thus got local communities involved in war-like activities. Of particular importance in the Upper Nile areas we are discussing were the splits among Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) units in the early 1990s, with Riek Machar and Lam Akol as "Nasir commanders." Through their relationships with the Government of Sudan (GOS), the rebels within the SPLM could obtain weapons from the GOS in Malakal, and with them the commanders armed groups of fellow citizens. The potential conflicts we described above, based on resource competition and ethnic tension, were further intensified and made bloodier by the use of modern firearms. This situation was relevant for conflicts between the southern groups themselves (for instance the Lou-Jikani conflict that was known as a "Nuer civil war"), but also for the relationship between the southern groups and the northern, Arab and Muslim groups, as represented by the Hawazma Baggara. The resource-based conflicts thus came together with the political conflicts within a civil war, which again was linked to religious and ethnic boundary processes. This complex situation becomes more evident when we follow the Hawazma into the Nuba Mountains.

Passing through the Nuba Mountains

As we follow the Hawazma into the Nuba Mountains, away from the Nile River, a system emerges that on a general level in many ways is similar to the one we have described. The Hawazma meet both cultivators and other pastoralists, and the local environment, as well as the local institutional situation and the civil war, deeply affects the relationships between groups. But in spite of overall similarities it is important to realise that the processes are played out differently in the Nuba Mountains compared to the northern Upper Nile. It is this local and regional "playing out" of the processes that is important to catch, not only for an academic understanding of the problems but also for designing viable solutions for the future.

The Nuba groups in the Nuba Mountains region live both on the mountains and in the plains, and they cultivate different types of fields called *house fields*, *near fields*, and *far fields*. The first two types are in and around the villages on the sandy soil. Quick maturing varieties of sorghum, maize and beans are planted here together with peanuts. Income from off-farm activities, such as collection of grass, fruits, and tubers, have also been important, especially for women and the poor. This rather intensive cultivation evolved as a response to population pressure, a population pressure brought about by the pre-colonial Sudanese context of Arab slave raiding attacks on the Nuba, blocking access to the plains and forcing the Nuba into the hills for their protection. However, since the British pacification of the area until the present civil war started in the mountains (mid-1980s), a general development occurred through which a majority of people moved down from the hills and became increasingly dependent on the distant fields on the clay plains. Such fields were cleared by fire (*hariq*-cultivation) and planted with slow maturing sorghum together with sesame and beans. Apart from rain-fed cultivation, settled people also keep some animals. Cattle, goats, and some sheep and camels (pigs are also found among some Nuba groups) are the most common. Successful animal keepers may make agreements with the Baggara nomads on their seasonal migrations to northern Kordofan, thus better exploiting available resources. Or the Nuba may also establish themselves as nomads, joining a Baggara camp. It should be said, however, that such strategies have changed due to war and to hostile relations between Arabs and Nuba.

The major cash crops among small farmers in the Nuba Mountains are sesame and ground-nuts. Then there are the cash crops introduced by the government, primarily cotton. This crop ran into problems and was significantly reduced during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A new strategy that has been appearing in the field of commercialisation is horticulture. Gardens have been developed in areas with suitable soil and availability of water. This strategy is particularly evident in the eastern parts of the region, and shows the willingness of local farmers to engage in new activities when they see they can benefit from it. Charcoal production is yet another source of cash income. As an alternative to local cash cropping the Nuba have a long history of labour migration, both within the region but also to Khartoum and other major Sudanese towns.

In addition to small-holder cultivation, the “pre-war” region also presents us with some agricultural schemes that have been introduced as a result of public development policies. One type is the mechanised small-holder scheme administered by the Nuba Mountains Agricultural Production Corporation (NMAPC) which aimed at expanding the cotton production in the region that we already mentioned. A second direct state intervention in the agricultural sector was the introduction into the southern Nuba Mountains of large-scale mechanised schemes, comprising farms of 1,000 acres each. These were administered by the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) established in the 1960s. The first scheme of this type in the Nuba Mountains was Habila, in the late 1960s, and further south, the Beida scheme was established in 1976. Unlike the modernisation schemes, these types of schemes were not aimed at small-holder farmers, but rather at people with capital who could afford the investments. It was the group of *jellaba* traders and leading state representatives who most effectively exploited this opportunity.

The impact of the schemes can be seen on several levels. First of all, they represented processes through which the Nuba lost land to Arab groups within the NMAPC schemes and to traders and other business groups in the MFC schemes. Economically, the MFC schemes have been a success for their owners. The profits reaped by the traders are considerable, and this success has created increasing income differences in the region. The traders’ position as the dominant economic group in the area has been further strengthened while the workers, i.e. the local farmers and poor migrants from the south, have remained poor, with the schemes providing a vital additional income for these groups. Ecologically, these vast schemes also have an impact. First, due to the lack of rotational practices, the farmers let the land deteriorate; when this happens, they get a new scheme. This is contrary to the rules of the MFC, but experience shows that the rules are not applied. The schemes thus appear to be places of agricultural mining rather than agricultural farming. This means that the agricultural value of this land is reduced and that such areas, even if they are transferred to Nuba ownership, would need rehabilitation. The schemes also take up large areas that were previously part of pastoral migration routes.

In the Nuba Mountains the Hawazma pastoralists are together with different groups of nomadic pastoralists who are present during certain parts of the year. Apart from the Baggara groups, there are some nomadic West African groups (Fulanis in the Sudan are called *Fellata Umbororo*). All the groups have interacted with the local Nuba, in peaceful as well as not so peaceful ways. There are cases of tribes making agreements, facilitating when nomads can utilise farming areas, but there are also cases showing that pastoralists trespassed on local

farming areas. On the other hand, the pastoralists have also suffered from the establishment of the mechanised schemes.

History

The history of relationships between groups in the area is related to the situation on the southern frontier in eighteenth and nineteenth century Sudan. The distribution of adaptive groups in the region during this period was very much influenced by the problem of security. Like the Upper Nile, the Nuba Mountains were a frontier region subjected to human and economic exploitation by the various power holders that controlled the regions to the north. The general theme during this period was the exploitation of the Nuba Mountains for ivory, gold and, most importantly, slaves. The power holders mentioned were Muslims, who were attacking the non-Muslim Nuba populations, the Nuba being the main target of slave raids. A basic problem for the Nuba was thus how to organise their defence, in order to survive in their home areas.

The identity of the slave hunters varied, but apart from official slave hunting expeditions organised by the states themselves, the main groups involved were the immigrant groups; i.e., the Hawazma pastoralists and the *jellaba* traders. The Hawazma used the Nuba Mountains area for pasture, which brought them deep into the mountains and into contact with the inhabitants. During these migrations the Hawazma would raid and enslave different Nuba groups. The system varied. In some hills they would develop relations with Nuba leaders, who would provide slaves from other groups in order to save their own populations. In other areas the Nuba were raided directly by the pastoralists. In all instances, however, the system was based on military superiority.

For the pastoralists, the slaves served many purposes. They were used as herders as well as cultivators on the fields the pastoralists had in the northern parts of the mountains, where they had their bases. Slaves were also passed on to the rulers of the Northern Sudan as payment for taxes that otherwise would have been paid in animals. The institution of slavery and the pastoralists' involvement in slave raids solved a number of problems within the pastoral adaptation, like labour problems as well as problems with the rulers. It also left the pastoralists with the time to supplement their incomes by hunting ostriches, giraffes and elephants, which were all important in the trade of the day.

During the Mahdiyya, the Hawazma were one of the Baggara groups that refused to follow the call by Khalifa Abdullahi to come to Omdurman. Instead of going to the capital, the Hawazma went into hiding in the mountains. This brought about the development of new relations between the Hawazma and the Nuba. Due to Hawazma dependence on the assistance of local populations to help them escape Mahdist troops, more peaceful relationships than before developed, now with some cases of intermarriage between Nuba and Arabs.

After the Mahdiyya, the British policies of pacification and economic development also affected the pastoral Hawazma. For the pastoralists, the abolition of slavery took away their main supply of labour and forced them to start doing the herding and cultivating themselves. Many pastoralists lost much of their livestock during the Mahdist wars and were therefore less nomadic than before. They took up cultivation in the Nuba Mountains, especially

cotton growing, to earn money to rebuild their herds. This led many of the Hawazma into an agro-pastoral adaptation, and only a minority continued to lead a purely pastoral life. A division of labour developed among the Hawazma in which some members of a family would be nomadic, while others would be sedentary and exploit local opportunities. Similarly, with the growth of the urban centres, new markets developed for milk and members of the pastoralist groups also settled here, keeping milk cows in town and selling milk to the inhabitants. Finally, wage labour within the towns provided new opportunities (Abdel Hamid Mohamed Osman Abdel Rahim 1986).

This was the situation, then, when the civil war erupted in the Nuba Mountains, with the SPLA military campaigns starting with the attack on the village of al Gardud in 1985. Eventually the SPLA took control over several areas in the mountains. During the civil war GOS always defined the SPLM/A presence in the mountains as a result of the war itself, and decided to deal with them and their collaborators as rebels, occupying territory that legitimately should be controlled by GOS. The government used tactics that exploited the situation described above. The government of Sadiq al-Mahdi armed Arab militias (*murhaleen*) and employed them in warlike activities in West Sudan, both in south Kordofan and south Darfur, a practice that continues in certain areas today. In the 1990s, the present Khartoum regime staged a military *jihad* campaign both to depopulate the Nuba areas and to force their version of Islam and Arabism upon them, forcibly recruiting Nuba for the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) denying them access to land necessary for survival, and relocating them to so-called “peace villages” in the north.

The SPLM/A presence in the area dates back to the mid-1980s, with many Nubas being involved in the armed struggle and occupying the leading positions of the movement in the area. In the territories that SPLM/A took over, an alternative political and administrative system emerged, with a separate parliament, civil administration, and judiciary. Civil society organisations, schools and a development agency (the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation) also were established. These achievements emerged in the context of the civil war, and represent in many ways institutional developments that were special for the Nuba Mountains, and that were not paralleled in the South, for instance the Shilluk area we discussed.

The Nuba area was the first area to benefit from the cease-fire established in 2002. The cease-fire was remarkably successful in putting an end to open warfare in the Nuba Mountains. But, paradoxically, some of its central features—increased stability, increased freedom of movement, the opening up of areas hitherto considered no-man’s lands—re-introduced new sources of conflict that the war had caused to subside, all of them tied to the issue of land. These include the return of pastoralists and their herds, the return of the mechanised farming equipment and the return of people, all of which represent challenges for developments in the area after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005.

During the war years, large tracts of the region, particularly at the foot of hills or in-between mountain ranges, became off-limits to pastoralists who feared the SPLA. Pastoralists became less present and the interaction between Nuba and Baggara, such as the Hawazma, decreased. Traditional migration and transhumance routes were disrupted. Reciprocal agreements, both those rooted in tradition and those that were court-brokered, that had governed the passage

of herds over agricultural land fell into disuse. In other areas, forcibly displaced Nuba no longer interacted with the nomads. The cease-fire changed this. Pastoralist groups became increasingly visible again after 2002, leading to increased tension locally. Since the pastoralist groups are Arab, and the Nuba, at least in the areas under SPLM control, saw the presence of pastoralists as a provocation on the part of the authorities, they feared the increased pastoralist presence as a cover for the deployment of militias that would make up for the withdrawals of government troops mandated by the cease-fire. Furthermore, it is undeniable that settled and nomadic populations are once again competing for resources—water, land—that they lost the habit of sharing. This comes against the backdrop of a decade and a half of bloodshed. It will not be easy—and probably not possible, at least for some time—to revert to pre-war mechanisms to govern the interaction between nomadic and settled communities.

The war also affected the schemes. During the war years, the conflict curtailed the expansion of the schemes in many parts of the region because large tracts of land were not secure enough—from the perspective of the potential scheme landlords—to allow for the required investments. Again, since the cease-fire and the peace, this has changed. Fertile plain areas that were once no-man's lands between the SPLA in the hills and the areas of unchallenged government control are now safe and open to free circulation. These areas are especially attractive to investors because they are not currently occupied—the communities that once farmed them remaining displaced—and are in good ecological shape, having lain fallow for years. Mechanised farming activity is on the rise in areas of existing schemes: in Habila, acreage under cultivation is increasing, according to local authorities. There are also reports of ongoing efforts to introduce mechanised farming in areas where there had been none in the years of the war, such as areas to the east, west, and south-west of Kadugli. The unwelcome return of the tractors triggers concern and anger with local communities, on both sides of the frontlines.

Ethnic tension built up in the area through years of war is likely to continue. Ethnic tension is always a factor and a potential source of conflicts, but during the war it has increased due to the arming of the Baggara militias (*murhaleen*) in order to attack Nuba as part of the war strategy, and also because of political rhetoric on both sides. What is needed, if peace is to advance, is for local leaders to engage in a new strategy aimed at building down ethnic tension. To do this, meetings within groups as well as between groups are needed, with the message that peace does not imply that any groups with legitimate claims in the region are to be discriminated against. This also requires an environment in which trust can be built, and not a violent environment that shows people that the opposite is the case. Local mechanisms for dealing with conflicts must be established, or re-established, as there are many cases of the peaceful interaction between Nuba and Arabic groups, both neighbouring groups engaged in cultivation in the same areas, and among the settled cultivators and the pastoralist groups that move through the areas at certain times of the year.

It is not possible to see long-term solutions here without the involvement of local groups of people and local and traditional socio-political structures. As many such structures have been marginalised by several Sudanese regimes, an important challenge is the restoration of the legitimacy of such structures, not in order to restore a traditional system for its own sake, but as a channel for the necessary basis of legitimacy for the many difficult decisions that will have to be made in order to establish a viable peace process. This relates for instance to the

role of local authorities. The Nuba have had a variety of traditional leaders, ranging from the *mak*, which is a political position parallel to *omda* and *nazir* among Arab tribes, to various types of religious and spiritual leaders such as the *kujor*, the rainmaker. Although people in such positions played important roles in dealing with land tenure issues, it is important to keep in mind that it was as mediators in conflicts they played this role, not as interveners in the productive life of people. Hence, we should keep in mind that although restoring such local figures might be an avenue for development, there are limits to their authority, and we should also remember the historical lesson of how such local elites could play exploitative roles vis-à-vis their own population. We see this also in the contemporary situation. During the period of the current government many Nuba tribal *Meks* and Arab Chiefs have been sacked and replaced by others who revealed a considerable “Islamicist commitment” and it is this Islamicist commitment together with loyalty to the regime which is now the precondition for holding a tribal office among both the Nuba and the Arabs. The *Meks*, now renamed *Amirs* (Paramount Chiefs), have been re-functionalised by the state and their main modern function during the war is to recruit fighters for the *jihad* against the rebels rather than organising inter-tribal affairs in a peaceful and friendly manner. It is important to discuss to what extent such traditional, local leaderships can play a role, and it is important to be aware of its constraints. The sharing of interests between local elites and a government, or the co-opting by the government of the same elites may be one such problem area. Another is that it is no longer clear who these traditional leaders are. Individuals from the same families may play different roles in the political game, and we need to look at individuals rather than institutions. Part of the problem here is that the traditional elites have been challenged by new elites who have questioned the legitimacy of the traditional ones.

The rainy season in North Kordofan

The northern point of the Hawazma movement is in North Kordofan. One of their areas is the Gawama tribal area, which extends from Um Ruwaba in the east to the vicinity of El Obeid in the west, an area with some 350 mm of rainfall. Before the civil war, the Hawazma used to stay in the area from late July until mid-September, but during the years of fighting along their migration routes in the Nuba Mountains they stayed longer, raising suspicions as the war also made them carry arms wherever they went.

The history of the Kordofan region is one of early commercialisation. Trade routes were traversing the areas from west to east, and north to south. There was never a political unity in the area, like in Darfur, where the Sultanate of Darfur provided an overall political system under which tribes were allotted their space. Rather, Kordofan was an area that was controlled by the Darfur and the Funj Sultanates at different times, then came under Egyptian control in the 1870s, was central in the Mahdiyya uprising, and then controlled by the British during the Condominium rule until Independence in 1956. Attempts at state-building in the region (Musabbaat and Tegale) were short-lived. All through these periods the Kordofan “tribes” were fluid groups that hardly qualified as tribes at all. The British, however, succeeded in resettling and amalgamating the scattered tribes in larger territorial *nazirates* that had the support of central authorities. As we know, this system was abolished by Nimeiry, but was brought back in the 1980s. As a consequence of this history, and also because of Kordofan’s proximity to the Nile Valley, urban based commercial groups came to play central roles, and were able to exploit local people, partly through political (often based on marriage)

alliances with local tribal leaders, partly through their involvement in the general process of commercialisation, often represented by illegal trading. Their involvement was both in agricultural produce, particularly in cash crops such as gum arabic, but the same groups also influenced the area culturally, and brought people living there closer to the lifestyle of the riverain groups in the Nile Valley. Hence the relationships between traders and local tribes were exploitative and integrative at the same time. As was the relationship between Kordofan and the Nile Valley in general, a fact that helped shape local conflicts. Conflicts were and are there of course, but they tend to remain local in nature. They did not spread in the way we shall see in Darfur, nor are they conceived to be linked to the wider national conflict of race, as is increasingly happening in Darfur, and even more so in the south.

The "hosts" in our case are the Gawama cultivators. They grow millet, sorghum, sesame, sorghum and *kerkade*. In the same area are also the Bidariya (the people of El Obeid), who are cultivators as well. The picture is further complicated by the presence of the Shanabla transhumant pastoralists (Sebeihat section, some forty households) who have their base camp close to the Gagrur village (three to four kilometres) from which they go on their transhumant movements. Their area of origin is in the White Nile and they rear cattle, sheep, goats and camels. They spend the rainy season along the new highway, then move to Gumaiza to the north-west where they spend January-March. The hot summer (April-June) is spent in the camp near Gagrur. Being Shanabla, the Sebeihat are considered landless, but they do benefit from the various types of derived rights such as intra-community land loans, heritable use rights, rental and share-cropping arrangements.

The general trend in the area is characterised by demographic growth, by the introduction of tractors (people from Kosti rent out tractors that are used locally in Kordofan), by increasing rain-fed agriculture per household, from three to four *makhammas* in the 1960-1970s to thirteen to fifteen *makhammas* at present, the commercialising effect of the highway established in 1990, which for instance has made it easy for people to travel to El Obeid to buy what they need, a trend that is changing local exchange relations, and increasing investment in livestock by locals as well as urban traders and government employees. All of this has created a process of environmental degradation through the overuse of resources.

A separate factor illustrates the involvement of the Sudan government and also their relationships to foreign commercial interests. The description is based on a case presented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (Saddig et.al, 2007)) report discussing resource-based conflicts in the larger Kordofan region. It relates to the traditional collection of gum arabic in Kordofan. Apart from cultivation of grain and various types of vegetables and fruits, an important source of income in Kordofan has been gum arabic collection. The collection of the gum from the *hashab* trees (*Accacia Senegal*) provided people with traditional cash crops. The right to tap such trees was given by *sheikhs* and *omdas* of the tribe, if the trees were on virgin land. The right to trees on fallow land (*gineina*) followed. Hashab trees yield after about five years (one to five lb. per tree) and remain productive for fifteen to twenty years. Then the trees are cut and the land cultivated for four to five years. This system of inter-cropping also provided browse for animals, wood for the house and eventually charcoal incomes when finally cut. Thus, the agricultural cultivation of millet and groundnuts, animal husbandry and gum-tapping constitute the basic aspects of the farmers' strategy of survival in Kordofan. The Sudanese state has always been involved in the marketing of

gum arabic, as the product was handled through a parastatal organisation, in this case the Gum Arabic Corporation. But as the following case presented in the same report shows, this is about to change (ibid, 81-82).

In 1997, a concession to plant 38,000 feddans with acacia trees for export was given by the GOS to a private company called Malaysian-African Agriculture Company (Jandeel) in Shikan, a locality forty kilometres east of El-Obied towards El-Rahad, south of the railway line. The concession was to last for twenty-five years, and it gave the company access to a vast area, going from Kasgil to Rahad. This affected the tribes of Gawama, Bedirya, and other small tribes associated with them, whose base is in the area covered by the concession, as well as nomadic tribes periodically entering the area. More specifically, the concession deprived pastoralists from two of their most important wet grazing areas (Mughasha and Ghanama), blocked some pastoral routes, and also encompassed several village farms. The concession was granted through a federal law, namely the Investment Encouragement Act of 1990. Although the state also has a Committee of Land Disposition, which should in theory grant concessions to private investors on state land and work in harmony with federal investment authorities, this particular concession did not pass through the committee. At the local level, while the traditional leadership of nomads was not consulted, there were rumours that some village sheikhs of settled farming groups did not object to the concession because the company bribed them.

The company tried to placate the population by making token donations for social and community services, but continuous complaints found their way to state authorities from different locations. The company itself resorted to using guards and security personnel to prevent animals from entering the area under concession, while farmers as well as pastoralists continued to regard this investment as an infringement upon their customary rights. Most of the resistance however came from pastoralists whose routes were blocked: both state authorities and the company realised somewhat belatedly that pastoralists could stage a serious confrontation because they were armed. Hence, around the time of interviews carried out by the authors of the IFPRI report, an agreement was concluded between the state of North Kordofan and the company, stating that (i) 1,500 feddans of land would be deep-ploughed and seeds would be disseminated in this area as grazing land, so as to make it an alternative stock route for affected nomads, (ii) sheep and cattle would be allowed to graze in the company's plantation, as they would not cause harm to Hashab trees, (iii) hafirs would be built for settled communities affected by the plantations.

One of the lessons learned in this case is that lack of transparency and consultations could lead to dangerous speculations. In this case, states the IFPRI report, "Some pointed to a conspiracy and hidden agenda behind the grant, as acacia is not normally planted on, or even suited for clay soil. The natural site for such trees is said to be sandy soil. They thus doubted the developmental objectives of the plantation, and tend to think that it might be a form of land speculation or else to lay claim over an area (known but not yet disclosed that it is) rich in minerals" (Shazali 2002). Due to the frequent reoccurrence of complaints it seems that a partial solution like the one provisionally suggested by the above agreement may not hold beyond the short term, hence the conflict is as yet unresolved.

General culture history perspective

Obviously, the above situation can be described as one of "crisis," and certainly, a lot of development-oriented thinking has gone into various forms of "crisis management." Changing the perspective to a more long-term approach, looking at a broader history of adaptation, will produce a different picture. Let us indicate some major dimensions of such a perspective as it relates to our discussion.

The basic parameters of human adaptation in the areas we have discussed are characterised by rather extreme ecological *variation*. The major types of ecological gradients in the region, such as dry lands and wetlands, river basins, mountains and plains have all in different ways affected the distribution of settlements and population movements and the distribution of productive activities such as cultivation and grazing. The human responses to this variation as well as to climatic fluctuations have traditionally been to develop adaptive patterns that have been flexible enough to cope with the variation and to minimise risk. This coping has been characterised by seasonal movements across zones, by combining many types of activities—cultivation and animal herding, hunting and gathering, wage labour, etc. Such a mixed economy places demands on the labour power, knowledge and organisational capacity of economic units.

Cultural and political boundaries have also been affected by this type of adaptational game. Population movements, historically as well as contemporary ones, can be understood in this context. Such movements and adaptations have also forged links between groups, violent ones such as cattle rustling and raids, and peaceful ones such as marriages, reciprocal relationships built on sharing of animals or collaborative labour creating networks. Regional markets and trading centres as well as towns were important meeting places that further added to the development of relationships. The same can be said for the development of various power centres. The Sudanese state centre was and is in the Nile Valley, but the exploitation of the savannah areas was a basic mechanisms in maintaining the viability of the state.

Such a broad cultural historical perspective allows us to connect many developments. The perspective opens for an understanding of the distribution of groups. We can see how adaptive processes, such as coping with drought or shifts between agriculture and pastoralism, have not only been adaptive processes but have also been characterised by shifts in identities (e.g., Nuba becoming Baggara). And we can see how such links affect the borders between groups, making them fluid rather than fixed and how the groups, seen as "moral communities," might not coincide with the borders of ethnic groups or eco-zones.

But we also need a wider perspective on the development of the contemporary states, how boundaries have interfered with existing links between groups, how problems between groups become nation-state problems, and how commercialisation, urbanisation, and general modernisation shape the adaptive responses of groups. We also see innovative processes, e.g. smuggling, becoming important strategies for people living on the borderland. Similarly the arming of the states as well as local groups, give many problems an escalating character. Applying the perspective will also show that the groups have not been static entities, captured within their "traditions." There has always been differentiation, people who succeed and people who fail. Poor people are vulnerable during droughts, rich people might benefit

from the same drought. We see that understanding the notion of “the local” in no way can be confined to a local space alone. Local people are neither confined to local space nor are they isolated from wider spheres of society. Urban associations, elite associations, “clubs,” important individuals with education, holders of political office, civil servants, and traders may all play important roles vis-à-vis local populations as can members in the diaspora, and “the local” cannot be understood without mapping the links between such groups and understanding their activities. We should also question simple evolutionary perspectives about the relationships between agriculture and pastoralism and rather see them as processual adaptive consequences, as responses to management processes affected by systemic interdependencies.

The role of the state—the case of land tenure

The land tenure situation in Sudan is not unlike the general African situation, in which indigenous land tenure systems are specific to particular ethnic groups, and have evolved in the interaction of culture and environment over the centuries. They have been defined by the factors discussed above: local climate and ecology, the quality of land resources, population density, level of agricultural technology, crops, markets, kinship organisation, inheritance patterns, settlement patterns, political organisation, religious significance of land, and patterns of ethnic conquest, dominance and rivalry. Tenures are often “communal,” but this does not mean that everyone has equal access to them. Rather, there is a hierarchy of rights, available to members of the group at different levels, from the rights to individual plots at a local level, rights that may vary with the type of land use (cultivation versus pasture, irrigated land, land with trees, etc.), to the rights in a general territory (*dar*), being available at a tribal level. There are also rights within traditional political units, originating in pre-colonial states, such as the *hakura* system in Darfur or *wathiga* in Funj. The different levels are tied together by rules of descent, or ethnicity, defining insiders and outsiders. But there are also secondary tenures, so-called derived rights, such as share-cropping arrangements, rights of way and water and rights of wives in their husbands’ land. Many conflicts occur as a result of outsiders’ infringement on the insiders’ rights, but conflicts may also arise as a result of tension within the group itself. Such internal conflicts of interests are based on the different types of positioning, and different types of interests among the units and individual actors themselves. Young men may want to work as hired workers to earn money for bride-wealth rather than work for their fathers, as the fathers obviously would like. Young, unmarried women may want to work selling tea. While married women may want to allocate time for their own fields, rather than work the joint household fields.

It is unlikely that a farmer or a pastoralist would have an academic understanding of this system. Rather the rights are understood as being very concrete and located in time and space, and have to do with a person’s chances of survival. Thus, we can only access their thinking through concrete cases, in which we see the specific ways any person acquires rights. Questions such as what the first farming experience (on parents land) of an individual is, what land right (at marriage) is in the person’s own right, what plans for the future a person has, are to take us into the concrete world of the user. This requires a time dimension that shows how units are established, how rights are acquired over the generations. This personal basis is important also because land tenure changes often start as individual deviance from the norms, as we see in the early establishment of gardens on communal lands, introducing

elements of private ownership rights that later can be developed. Such systems have been dynamic and have changed with use and time. It is likely therefore that some of the types of conflicts we see today also have appeared earlier, and that people have been able to deal with them in the past. This of course gives cause for some optimism in looking backwards in order to learn from the past, but contemporary conflicts also have their own dynamics and must be related to a wider, contemporary environment. And it is at this point that the general context of a national land tenure system comes in.

If we look at the tenure situation from a longer perspective we see the important role played by the Sudanese state in affecting local outcomes. Both the colonial rulers and the subsequent independent regimes in Sudan have greatly affected the state of affairs. Through colonial rule a commercial sector was developed with tenure arrangements inspired by Western forms, coexisting with traditional forms that remained under subsistence agriculture. A problem in this development was that the colonial outsiders saw traditional tenure, as it was based in kinship rules, as being "private," and did not recognise the way the kinship and descent systems were interwoven in larger systems defining political units. Western-inspired systems, on the other hand, were seen as under public law, thus producing a basic inequality in the systems within the emerging nation-states. With colonialism, and Native Administration, the higher levels of this tribally based system were given status as "native elites," making tribal leaders part of the public system, whereas other, lower level parts remained "private" and received little attention. This also created a situation in which Native Administration leaders could acquire more power to interfere in the system than what was traditionally available to them. We see this clearly in the Nile Valley, where the British registered agricultural land, and where the traditional elites of the day could acquire estates. In the Central Rangelands the British introduced "grazing lines" to divide pasture land and cultivation and local orders stipulated how the rules of the game were to play out. Special *dar* areas were designed with specific rights for those who belonged there, and for those who were passing by. The system was controlled by the Native Administration leaders, such as *nazir*, *omda*, and *sheikhs*. Water points were also opened and closed to regulate movement. This period represents a flourishing of pastoral development in the central rangelands in the Sudan.

The period of independent regimes saw a lot of land tenure legislation, a basic one being the declaration of state ownership of nearly all land through the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, an act which also instituted a leasehold tenure system (Shazali 2002). In the Sudan case traditional tenure continued, but the state used its powers to acquire land for development of modern schemes. The choice of models was related to basic ideological outlook, and the Sudanese law introducing this came in the early, socialist-oriented years of the Nimeiry regime (Nimeiry took power in 1969). The argument was that a leasehold system was more consistent with the traditional situation in which the state was supposed to operate as a "super-tribe," playing the role of the tribal leaders. However, the state did not develop as a neutral factor, but rather became an operator in its own right, using the laws and the system to establish enterprises that benefited the supporters of the state. The Mechanised Farming Corporation (1968) was one mechanism with which to achieve this. Other parastatals were created to deal with other sectors. In spite of the Islamisation efforts in the 1980s, leasehold remained the tenure on which the government makes land available for development projects, both in irrigated and rain-fed areas. Rents are nominal, and lack of political will to deal with slack conservation and husbandry requirements and the lack of will to stop mechanised cultivation

outside scheme areas have added to the problem in the traditional sector, particularly for the pastoralists using the areas. This also fuelled conflict. Rather than providing order, the policy has facilitated processes of further land grabbing by the elites. In 1980, still within the Nimeiry period of power, the tribal “homelands” of various groups were also abolished, making it difficult for people to keep outsiders out. This happened at a time in which the need for movement into certain areas became more important as a result of drought and war.

With the current regime taking power in 1989, with its policies of decentralisation and federalisation (spelled out in the National Comprehensive Strategy of 1992-2002) (ibid), there is considerable institutional chaos as far as dealing with resource management is concerned. Schemes have blocked pastoralists and taken land from local cultivators. The legal system is not protecting the rights of local people, rather it is turned against them. Policies of privatisation have led to a situation in which people do not get services they cannot pay for themselves. And the land grabbing goes on through the privatisation policies now dominant. Rich farmers and pastoralists can develop strategies with scheme owners for their own benefit, but the ordinary people are losing out. At the national level the federalisation of the regional system has further divided the areas into smaller administrative units. With federalisation, the various states are now the context for institution building and for legal decisions, tasks that before were carried out and supervised at the federal level. One problem is basic finance. The highest authority is the state governor, then a state council with legislative powers, and state ministries. This level is supposed to get financing from the central government through the National Fund for State Support, but only obtains such funding after submitting applications, based on their plans. Such money may come, or may not come, injecting insecurity into the system, and turning the focus of the leadership away from matters on the ground to the collection of taxes and the tapping of other revenue sources (that are also weak) in order to cover higher level spending. Within the new states all action relating to the grassroots level is supposed to be carried out on the *mahliya* level, where there is a local council with an executive officer. They are supposed to deal with agricultural development, education, health, pasture management, forest, soil conservation, and water. But, as at the highest level, these people are busy collecting revenue from crops and livestock and some services in order to cover their own salaries. The collection of *zakat* is also important as the collectors receive a part of the money collected. Taxes are also levied for crossing *mahaliyat* boundaries. Sometimes outsiders are actually encouraged to cross such boundaries in order to generate taxes, whereas, in the case of pastoralists, this may create problems. The important consequence of this lack of basic resources is that only services for which people pay themselves will be provided. Such a reduction of government “subsidies” may be sound in macro-economic terms, but as an offer to people who struggle with staying alive during droughts or other similar instances it might be less advantageous.

Hence, the logic of a local administrator, being concerned with his small, administrative unit, is not paralleled with the logic of local people, particularly pastoral ones, who derive their thinking from the totality of their adaptive systems. The result is a situation characterised by land tenure chaos as well as by institutional chaos. This insecure tenure situation brings several consequences that negatively affects people’s livelihoods. First, tenure becomes insecure the moment one rents out land, since renters might claim rights for themselves. And they can succeed by pledging support from village *sheikhs* who may use this in political games. Renters do not pay rent, claiming the land is theirs. If land is along watercourses and can be

used for irrigation such land may be sold, and thus also enters into the calculus of private investments by people in the commercial sector.

The role of the state—the case of traditional mediation mechanisms

Mediation, or *judiyya*, is established tradition in northern Sudan and can be embodied by a *faki*, a wise man, and a traditional leader, the leader of the cattle camp or a Native Administration leader. They all have mediating roles, or *ajawid*. Common to all is their accepted roles as wise people with knowledge of the traditions. And, as we have seen, many types of conflicts appear all engaging the *ajawid*. A *judiyya* session ends with establishing a settlement and agreement that re-establishes some sort of balance and social harmony between the parties. Hence, the aim is less to find the particular truth in the situation and more to reach a point where both parties can live with the definition of what has happened. In order to do this, rhetorical skills are important, appealing to the wisdom of the parties and to their honour, but the process is also political and requires the parties to agree.

In the colonial period, law enforcement institutions such as courts, police stations, and prisons were established, but also traditional, native administration courts that were closer to the local situation. At a lower level of conflict local mechanisms are still in use, and it is possible to work with such mechanisms. In many cases people refer their problems to such institutions rather than government courts, a fact that shows the lack of legitimacy enjoyed by the government. A case directly involving the Hawazma was reported in the Khartoum Monitor of July 3, 2002, and concerned a settlement in Dilling between the Birrgid and Dar Bakhota sections of the Hawazma (Khartoum Monitor 2002). Specifically, in 1992, it was competition for a local chieftainship that started a conflict. Over the years the Dar Bakhota threatened to evict the Birrgid. The conflict resolution process started with a period of mediation that took the form of seven separate sessions with each party, and two common sessions. There were several walk outs but one *ajawid*, an *Amir*, managed to keep the process going. A six-point charter was signed, calling for peace and reconciliation, for return of land to the Hawazma and the continued *Omodiya* for the Birrgid/Awlad al Hilal under the Amir of the Hawazma. UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance for the original research into the conflict and supported the mediation process. The BADYA Centre for Integrated Development in Dilling and the Peace Studies Centre of Dilling University also played a role. The agreement is also attached to UNICEF's willingness to provide development inputs. An important point to remember is that the colonial situation did not represent "the traditional" in its pure form, but was rather a time when specific factors were combined in specific ways, a fact that must inform today's discussion on the re-establishment of Native Administration mechanisms. And as the Dilling example shows, new institutions have entered the scene that will affect traditional mechanisms in their own ways. In addition to these local factors come the links to diasporic communities, a process we know little about.

The colonial government, as well as independent ones, also organised larger conferences to settle disputes. Such conferences were for larger tribal conflicts, and the practice has continued. One example is that of the recurrent conferences between the Dinka and Baggara. Historically, the Baggara and Dinka held annual tribal meetings (*zufur*) along the Bahr el

Arab/Kiir River in which *diya* was paid, and abducted persons returned. Such agreements reappeared during the civil war period. Dinka and Baggara made agreements around peace markets in Bahr el Ghazal, overseen by local peace committees. This helped the Baggara access dry season pastures, and it helped local populations access commodities, in addition to becoming focal points for returnee abductees. The markets were taxed by the SPLA. They were neighbourhood agreements negotiated more by traders than local traditional leaders. The Dinka Ngok and Messiriyya peace agreement shows us an example of a more comprehensive peace agreement. It was concluded in 2002. The Dinka had been displaced by the Baggara through earlier raiding around Abyei, and they received little protection from the SPLM. Hence they went north or south, away from the area. From their base in the Abyei government, *murhaleen* and the troops of the Dinka commander Kerubino Kuanyin Bol carried out raids towards the Tuic Dinka of northern Bahr el Ghazal, an action that produced a severe famine in the area in 1998. In January 2002, an agreement was signed, witnessed by tribal leaders, by a provincial commissioner and the commissioner of the European Union in the Sudan (Johnson 2003). The agreement only set out a willingness to live in peace, and did not specify terms. Although rather local in nature, the agreement has allowed Dinkas to travel from Khartoum and to cross the river along the corridor opened by the agreement. However, specific grievances, such as abductions, were not addressed, nor were the limits of the agreement's jurisdiction spelled out. To some it is an agreement that is valid "from Wao to Khartoum," others interpret it locally, as applying to local sections of the Dinka and Baggara, and to certain migration routes only. But examples abound. The Kababish of Kordofan and the Zayyadiyya, Meidob and Berti of Darfur have had a number of conferences (1932, 1957, 1982, 1996, 1998). In the South, there was a conference on April 15, 1975, between Bor Dinka, Murle (Pibor), Lou Nuer of Akobo, Anuak of Pibor, Mundari of Juba, Toposa of Kapopeta (Hunud 1977, 136). The settlement in Wunlit between the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal and Western Nuer adds to this. Such larger conferences represent a possible avenue to engage larger groups, and warrant some attention.

In government-sponsored conferences of mediation, the government decides time and venue for the conference, it asks the parties to select representatives, it chooses an *ajawid* and it appoints the chairperson for the conference who is then assisted by a team of specialists from the attorney general, the magistrate, the police, local government officer, etc. But the involvement of government in the settlement processes has become more complicated as the government itself is party to many of the conflicts. It is no longer a neutral arbitrator, but has its own interests in the process. One of these interests is controlling the tribes themselves. As we have seen above, the involvement in commercialisation processes or in the running of mechanised schemes make government officials into key actors in conflicts. In one case, in the Arab-Masalit reconciliation conference in Darfur, the government denied the *ajawid* the right to dig deeper into one root cause of the conflict, the partitioning of the Masalit Sultanate into Emirates. Also, *ajawid* without local backing and respect can be chosen. One particularly serious form of government intervention in tribal conflicts has been the support for tribal militias, *murhaleen*, among the Baggara. Ever since the days of Nimeyri the state has been helping in providing arms to certain groups in order to help the state do its job. The Baggara *murhaleen* could be used against the Dinka and the Nuba as part of the civil war. We also see that the same militias can be turned against other groups in the north, as the Rizeigat-Ma'alia conflict, the Rizeigat-Masalit and Rizeigat-Zaghawa as well as the Arab-Fur conflicts show. The integration of such groups into the structure of the Popular

Defence Forces has not helped ease the situation by providing government control. Rather, it has provided government legitimatisation for its activities. The establishment of emirates in the tribes has undermined the position of the traditional *nazirs* and *omdas*, giving power to new individuals and groups whose position is legitimised by their links to the government rather than their links to their people. The federalisation of the country has further undermined national action and also people's participation in national processes. Increasing taxation without any visible return further adds to the reduction in government legitimatisation.

From resource management to conflict management

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the situations we have reviewed are not only characterised by resource-based conflicts, but by a host of different conflicts that may also change over time. This brings us squarely back to the role played by the Sudanese state in dealing with various peripheral groups, particularly blacks who are regarded as not being proper Muslims, and as Africans, rather than Arabs. The political tensions inherent in these issues surfaced in Sudanese politics in 1982, with President Nimeiry's introduction of the September Laws, giving Islamic shari'a law dominant status in the Sudanese legal system, also within the realm of criminal law (*hudud*). Seen from within Sudan it was obvious from the beginning that this was a political move, meant to boost the president's weakened position. This was further underlined by giving the Muslim Brothers a central political role. However, the effects were devastating. It not only ended the era of optimism prevalent in the 1970s, but resulted, as we know, in political turmoil that swept Nimeiry's regime away and in a civil war that might tear the country apart. An important element of the conflict is the definition of the Sudanese identity, and the application of the shari'a made clearer to people of Southern Sudan, as well as to northern groups such as the Nuba, that their identity was at stake and that their position as equal citizens in their country was far from settled.

However, the problem did not originate in 1982. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent periods when there was an active pursuit of slave populations. The British colonial policy was aiming at isolating the African populations from Arab and Muslim influence. This policy was based on a positive discrimination, but served as a stumbling block for later attempts at integration. During the 1960s, there were attempts by various regional groups (Beja, Nuba, Fur, as well as southern groups) to create political organisations that could further their interests in the new national centre and counter the dominant position of the national parties, the Umma and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). With Nimeiry's takeover in 1969, such organised political forces were abolished. They were replaced by the Sudanese Socialist Union, a party and a national force meant to bridge tribal and regional differences. The success at ending the civil war in 1972 and the ambitious development strategies of the 1970s actually provided a considerable optimism. However, no real integration took place and the old elites remained dominant in Sudanese politics.

Rather than making the problem into one of resource management, the issue could rather be how to compose a national identity in the Sudan in which not only Arabs and Muslims feel at home but also non-Arabs and non-Muslims. Reading the available literature on Sudanese history and society, it is easy to be struck by the extent to which the processes of Arabisation

and Islamisation have been taken for granted in the history of that country. One basic assumption among Sudanese elites seems to be that this wave of socio-cultural change is a natural process, and that it rolls by historical necessity from the “centres” in the Nile Valley towards the “peripheries” in eastern, western, and southern Sudan. It follows then that it is only a matter of time before the whole country is Arabised and Islamised. One tragic effect of such assumptions is that the political realities behind this spread of Arabism and Islam have not been dealt with in Sudanese politics. The problem is not one that can be isolated to the present regime and this civil war. Obviously, the Islamists in Khartoum go further in expressing their intentions towards Arabisation and Islamisation than earlier regimes and they make no secret of their views of people not belonging to this type of identity. The policies of the present regime thus dramatise the issue of race in Sudanese politics. But the issue of defining and constructing a Sudanese identity will not go away with this regime and, unless it is solved, the future for the Sudan looks bleak indeed.

What we have seen in the cases discussed is also a version of the general processes mentioned above. Certainly an argument about the spreading of conflict can be sustained, and we need a particular focus on the role of the state in these conflicts. The Sudanese people have always regarded the government (*hakuma*) as above the people, as a guarantor of law and order and hence being an entity one could appeal to in problematic times. This has been part of the basis of legitimacy of the state vis-à-vis its people. But the Sudanese state, as most other African states, has moved through developments after independence that can be characterised by a privatisation of the state, a militarisation of the state around such private interests, hence, the legitimacy of the same state is undermined.

Also in the types of conflicts we are talking about here we see how the modern Sudanese state is more and more becoming an independent player in these conflicts. The end result is the crisis we see. People are squeezed by drought or by war. The general political development is unfavourable to nomads and leads to increasing problems between local people. However, there are also people who benefit from the developments. These are civil servants, military people, politicians, and big traders who are in the political game and who can exploit their relations within the privatised state. So-called development inputs are not based on proper planning procedures but rather on the private interests of individual actors. Political representation is based on elections only to a limited degree, more and more we see that key officers are appointed, an appointment based on loyalties to the state rather than legitimacy from the people. Although these developments still to a certain extent have an ethnic dimension the general development is towards a group of winners who are close to the state apparatus, and an increasing group of losers who are not. Winners and losers are represented in most groups in the Sudan. This is truly a vicious cycle.

Summing up this discussion we may easily end on a note of despair. There is not much hope in the situation in Western Sudan for a process that might facilitate development. And there are no shortcuts to development, and simple models based on “popular participation” may seem as far-fetched in solving problems as is government coercion.

But local people like the Hawazma, the Shilluk, the Nuba and the Gawama, to mention some of the groups dealt with in this chapter, are centre stage of these problems. They are victims of large processes and struggles through which they become marginalised and neglected.

And they represent a basic resource for any effort to overcome the problems. The indigenous "development planning" that is embedded in their social organisation must be tapped. Their socio-cultural organisation, which also represents the experience of previous generations must be utilised, not because it constitutes a perfect management system, but as a starting point. Pastoralists have broader agendas that do not particularly fit with those of the powerful groups, nor with those of the development planner. But both states as well as planners do well in paying attention to such local groups. If this is to be the case, the challenge is as much in the broad direction of providing "good governance" as it is in the more narrow direction of providing sound "resource management systems."

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Chapter 10

A Sudanese anthropologist doing fieldwork in Norway: Some critical reflections

Munzoul A. M. Assal

In forgetting the collective inquiry in which he is inscribed, in isolating the object of his discourse from its historical genesis, an “author” in effect denies his real situation.
(De Certeau 1984, 45)

Introduction

How and why a Sudanese anthropologist ends up doing anthropological fieldwork in Norway are certainly two interesting questions that require some sort of reflection. It is true that what I ended up doing does not represent a novelty, but the practice of anthropology has for a long time been a one-sided process: First World anthropologists do fieldwork in the Third World. While it is certainly not the first or last fieldwork done by an anthropologist from a Third World country in Norway or another similar context, it is necessary to reflect on it, not the least in the context of anthropological debates that began during the last quarter of the twentieth century, which are still relevant to the kind of experience this chapter is about.

The anthropological links between Sudan and Norway go back to the early 1960s when Fredrik Barth, who came to Sudan as a UNESCO professor, did fieldwork in Darfur and taught anthropology at the University of Khartoum. The link continued during the 1960s

and 1970s through the studies and work of Gunnar Haaland, Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, Gunnar Sørbo and Leif Manger, and many other younger Sudanese and Norwegian anthropologists. Norwegian students came to Sudan to do fieldwork and Sudanese students went to Norway for their postgraduate degrees. In fact, the first doctoral degree at the department of anthropology in Bergen was awarded to a Sudanese anthropologist.

My link with Norway was indeed facilitated by the academic relationship between the universities of Khartoum and Bergen. I first met Leif Manger, whom later became my doctoral advisor, on August 25, 1995, at a workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Prior to that, I saw Leif at the department in Khartoum while I was an undergraduate student, and at the time I was not sure who this tall *Khawaja*¹ was. While it was the British anthropology model on which the department of Khartoum was established (Ahmed 1982), the Norwegian school significantly affected the development of the department and anthropological work during the 1970s and beyond. As an undergraduate student of anthropology, I was privileged to have Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed and Sharif Harir, who studied in Bergen, as teachers. In the honours class, I was exposed to two seminal contributions by Fredrik Barth: *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea* (1975) and *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987). It was then that I decided to go to Bergen for my postgraduate studies. I had the chance to go to Germany, but Norway was my first choice.

On August 14, 1998, I arrived in Bergen. In applying for the programme in Bergen, I was encouraged by Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed and Gunnar Haaland who were worried that the Khartoum-Bergen link, which started with an academic agreement signed in 1981, was breaking down. Due to political developments in Sudan, the long-standing academic agreement was annulled in 1995 and through the whole of the 1990s; communication was kept at its minimum. Indeed, my travel to Norway was an individual initiative, which was supported by old-timers. Probably there was nothing novel in my travel to Norway. Many Sudanese anthropologists, e.g. Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, Salah Shazali, Sharif Harir and Abdel Hameed M. Osman, went to Norway during the 1970s. Like previous Sudanese anthropologists, I was supposed to spend one year in Bergen and return for my fieldwork in Sudan. But as I was ending the year in Bergen, I thought it might be a good idea to do fieldwork somewhere else. And there were a couple of suggestions: Gunnar Haaland suggested Nigeria and Ethiopia, while Leif Manger suggested Yemen. For some reason, both Nigeria and Ethiopia felt awkward. Yemen was my choice. But I could not get a research permit and hence my visa application for Yemen was not successful. That is when Leif Manger suggested I formulate a project on Norway. While in Bergen, I noted the presence of Somalis and Sudanese who were mostly refugees. For the Sudanese, Norway was conventionally a place to study. For the Somalis it was different. I got interested in refugee issues and decided to work among Somalis and Sudanese.

From one perspective, this is indeed “conventional” anthropology. Instead of going home for an “auto-anthropology,” I did my work in a foreign country whose language I would have to learn (and eventually I did). Yet, it was not so simple. I did not do my fieldwork among native Norwegians even though Leif Manger’s idea was to have me doing fieldwork

1. Khawja is a Sudanese term used to describe a white man.

among the natives. My work was on Somalis and Sudanese in Norway. Members of these two categories were at different liminal stages of their lives (Turner 1967). Some were still in reception centres (this is a Norwegian name for refugee camps) waiting for decisions on their asylum applications, others got residence permits, and yet others were already Norwegian citizens when I started my work.

The above experience got me into different sorts of debates and warranted a reflection. When I went to Norway, the debate about the future (and the past) of anthropology was at its peak. In particular, the future of conventional ethnography, based on traditional fieldwork, was hotly debated (see below). And since my study somehow falls within the grey area of anthropological fieldwork, it was necessary to get involved in those debates. My project on Somali and Sudanese refugees drew some curiosity. Some of my doctoral Norwegian colleagues got interested in having a Sudanese doing fieldwork among refugees, while some professors in the department wanted me to do real exotic fieldwork in Norway; studying native Norwegians that is. I got strong support from staff and colleagues and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Bergen provided financial support for my fieldwork in Oslo. Yet, I wondered whether what I was doing was real anthropological fieldwork or not. I did fieldwork in Norway, yet Norway was not my home country. I studied my own people, yet they were in a different home. I studied other people too (the Somalis), yet they were neither in their original home, nor in my own. This was an experience that required some reflection. It needed to be situated within some recent discussions on doing anthropological fieldwork in Norway.

There is a connection between my personal experience and the general anthropological field of knowledge I am engaged in. Added to this, the process of fieldwork in Norway has been quite a learning exercise for me. In talking to Somalis and Sudanese, I came to realise that the constructs of “subject” and “researcher” are categories of thought, more than being given adjectives that correspond with reality. As a researcher I share a lot of common experiences with the people I study. Perhaps what makes me different is my authorial position, which is based on my systematic attempt to acquire knowledge about Somalis and Sudanese in Norway, and also the fact that I have not experienced being an asylum seeker or a refugee (at least not yet!). This chapter is a reflection on my experience throughout that research project. It is also a critical reflection on recent critiques on ethnographic practice.

In the following pages, I shall contextualise my experience of doing fieldwork in Norway within the debates of ethnographic fieldwork and auto-anthropology. I will first reflect on some of the prevalent anthropological critiques. Then I will elaborate on my personal experience and also say a bit about anthropological fieldwork in Norway in light of the higher education reform in the Norwegian institutions. I will end the chapter with a reflection on my interaction with Leif as a friend and an academic advisor.

On the critique of ethnography and fieldwork tradition

The debate about the uncertain status and future of anthropology has been going on for a while now. Much of the current debate is informed by a perception of perennial crisis in

the discipline. Such perception stems from the fact that there has never been an agreement on what anthropology really is or where its future lies. While earlier debates on the problems of anthropology focused primarily on the encounters it had with colonialism (Asad 1973; Magubane 1971), it is now widely acknowledged that the roots of anthropology's malaise can be traced to the breakdown of its central paradigm: scientific ethnography (Ahmed and Shore 1995; Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fox 1991; Grimshaw 2001). The authority of modern social anthropology in the beginning rested on objective reporting of first-hand experience gained with exotic peoples through the practice of fieldwork. Objectivity has in fact been one central issue in anthropology. The question of objectivity has also been closely related to the epistemology of difference. How "distant" an anthropologist or ethnographer should be is one challenge that confronts the native ethnographer:

Why not try objectivity? You ask. This distancing device served well enough to secure the reputations of anthropologists in days gone by. Surveying her objects with an omniscient gaze, the virtual anthropologist sometimes attempts to prove herself real by setting out to occupy the "I, Ethnographer" position with a vengeance. It is bad enough to study a fringe topic; why risk calling attention to an ethnicity shared with "informants" or committing a stigmatised sexual identity to print? ... To remind the reader that society casts the Native Ethnographer as "one of them" would be to acknowledge that the author has helped create the universe she observes....

Now this objectivist stance is not bad as a form of resistance to the ways that nativisation reduces people to one-dimensional representatives of "their" putatively homogeneous society or community. But the author who writes "I, Ethnographer" ignores at her peril the impact of the specific social positioning upon her research. And she pays a price when she bows to pressures to disembodiment herself in order to disavow nativity. (Weston 1997, 171)

The challenge for the intellectual authority of anthropology, which is based on scientific ethnography, was spearheaded by the publishing of *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Instead of clinging to the old-fashioned ethnography, the authors of *Writing Culture* call for the adoption of experimental writing strategies, which will dialogically include the peoples studied as active subjects. In other words, there is a loud call for creative subjectivity. The increase in the number of indigenous ethnographers is seen as a contributing factor to rethinking the ethnographic tradition (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 9). The increase in the number of indigenous anthropologists is also connected with a humanist turn in anthropology (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989, 1991, 1993, 1999, 2000; Jackson 1996, 1998, 2002). This humanist turn stresses what matters to ordinary people; the ordinary, over the extraordinary.² In many ways, this critical turn in anthropology seems to be a negation of an objectivism that represents anthropological monographs as factual reports of phenomena observed scientifically in the field. However, in emphasising creative subjectivity the call is not for

2. However, in her research among Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki (1997, 89-93) questions the current rampant tendencies of looking at anthropology as the science of the ordinary. As she points out, the emphasis on the ordinary, the everyday, and the routine tends to direct attention away from those things that the refugees she works with care about most: the extraordinary events that had made refugees out of them, and the atypical and transitory circumstances of their lives in refugee camps.

a project that would be an antithesis of conventional ethnography. The call, as the proponents of creative subjectivity put it, is to extend ethnography beyond the rigidities of unproductive objectivism (cf. Clifford 1997b, 216; Abu-Lughod 2000, 263).

Ethnography has more to it than a prolonged stay in an exotic place. Maurice Bloch (1998, 51-2) argues: "Observation must be guided by the dialectic between empiricism and theoretical hypotheses." Bloch is critical of ethnographic critiques, notably *Writing Culture*, which advocate simple acceptance of what informants say:

The ultimate conclusion of such an approach is that an honest ethnography should consist of, more or less, the verbatim recording of conversations which have taken place between the ethnographer and his informants. And because of the somewhat showy humility of the author in this type of work, the informant's words hold prime position. Since there is no reason to highlight the words of any particular individual, ethnographic texts ought to become merely an array of quotations. Quotations from women and men, old and young, important or not, all should be juxtaposed without order in a monograph without structure, since organising the text would result in the imposition of an author. (Ibid., 42)

In the end, observes Bloch (ibid.), "this mock naïve approach constitutes as radical a theoretical fundamentalism as that of the cognitivists, though going in an opposite direction." While in *Writing Culture* the critique was a general attack on ethnographic writing, subsequent critiques (Clifford 1997a; Marcus 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Moore 1999; Thomas 1999) focus on the practice of anthropological fieldwork. The publication of *Anthropological Locations* (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a) thus marks a systematic critique on the practice of fieldwork in anthropology. In *Anthropological Locations*, the call for a *post-exotic* fieldwork runs across all contributions in the text. A central issue in the text is that the epistemologies behind the notions of the field and fieldwork have remained curiously unexamined (also see Bråten 2002, 190-1). Gupta and Ferguson (1997b, 11) question the taken-for-granted notions of what counts as anthropological knowledge, as decreed by fieldwork. What counts as "a field," nonetheless, remains obscure in most anthropological texts. Gupta and Ferguson call for the need to move from "spatial sites to political locations" (ibid., 35). They also attempt to specify what a "field" is.³ The strength of their argument lies in the point they convincingly make: in many anthropological texts, the world has appeared as a mosaic of discrete cultural groups, resident in compact geographical locations (see also Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Malkki 1992, 1995). For a long time, anthropology proscribed research that does not focus on localisable and stable groups. This means that many worthwhile, but non-traditional, issues would not get off the ground as a result of the territorial metaphor in anthropology.

3. In this regard they had this to say: "...anthropology's 'field,' it seems to us, has more often been grasped as a place of terrestrial concreteness than as an abstract space within which invisible forces might meet. Anthropologists going to the field expect to get mud on their boots; like the other 'field scientists,' they have aimed to discover not disembodied fields of force, but a reality repeatedly described by such adjectives as *messy, flesh-and-blood, and on-the-ground*" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b, 41; emphasis in original).

But the problem with much of the prevalent critiques on ethnographic practice is that they fail or choose not to take into account three interrelated issues: the subjective anthropologist; his understandings and mobilisation of current anthropological theory; and the multi-layered ethnography of the people studied (Lewis 1999, 138). The thing anthropologists call ethnography is the product of many different voices and not simple dialogue. Lewis is particularly critical about post-modernist critiques framed in the language of invented tradition:

What many post-modernist critics heralded as an invention of tradition or a novel analytical paradigm was already firmly ensconced in the analysis of political legitimation and identity formation in a tradition running as far back as Malinowski and Ruth Benedict. (Ibid.)

Thus,

The choice is not between regretting the past and embracing the future. Nor is it between the anthropologist as hero and as the very model of post-modern major general. It is between, on the one hand, sustaining a research tradition upon which a discipline ... has been built and, on the other, “displacing,” “reworking,” “renegotiating,” “reimagining,” or “reinventing” that tradition, in favour of a more “multiply centred,” “pluralistic,” “dialogical” approach, one which sees poking into the lives of people who are not in a position to poke into yours as something of a colonial relic. (Geertz 2000, 117)

Some of the critiques in *Writing Culture* and *Anthropological Locations* are problematic for a number of reasons, as the quotes from Bloch (1998), Geertz (2000) and Lewis (1999) show. But they are relevant, in some ways, for my case. First, the two groups I studied, in their present realities, may come under the category of non-localisable groups. My fieldwork was done in Bergen and Oslo; both are definite and localisable spots on the ground. Yet, a compound of other factors stretching far beyond Bergen and Oslo affect the lives of Somalis and Sudanese among whom I did fieldwork. Their life projects are linked to places other than where they were living at the time of my study. Even in Bergen and Oslo, people are on the move all the time. Some people whom I interviewed in Bergen left for Oslo or other places in Norway, others moved from Oslo to Bergen, while others left Norway altogether. All this took place while I was doing my fieldwork. Thus, apart from the agency a certain locality exerts as a concrete spot in which specific events or incidents take place, locality can no longer be fetishised the way it used to be in conventional anthropological writings. What remains important, however, is the difference a certain locality makes for, or in, the lives of people inhabiting such locality. For instance, there are differences between Bergen and Oslo, in terms of work opportunities they provide for Somalis and Sudanese, and in terms of the organisational requirements they impose when it comes to issues of politics, ethnicity and meeting with the Norwegians (Assal 2004).

Second, I am more or less in the position of what Weston (1997, 163) calls “virtual anthropologist”; i.e., “the colleague produced as the Native Ethnographer.” As a native Sudanese anthropologist, I am required to weave a delicate spin between subjective and objective stands, between being *native* and *ethnographer* at the same time. I had done fieldwork in the Sudan for previous graduate studies before going to Norway but at that time it did not occur

to me that being both native and ethnographer could be theoretically and epistemologically problematic and challenging. Doing fieldwork among Sudanese outside the “habitual” or “natural” home is a challenging exercise. The challenge in Norway is even subtler because issues of immigrants and refugees are at the centre of both academic and political debates. More often than not, I find myself dealing with a perceptive audience that is very much fed with all sorts of twisted media coverage about immigrants and refugees, and refugees who would like to have their version of the story told to the same audience.

More on my personal experiences relating to the Norwegian context

Doing fieldwork in Norway, including Bergen, “the home” of many of my colleagues in the anthropology department, got me involved in general debates about doing “anthropology at home.” When I started my project in 2000, I received support from colleagues and staff members at the anthropology department in Bergen. Yet, for a while, the idea that I was doing fieldwork in Bergen (where the department is located) seemed unfathomable for many, and ironically I myself entertained such scepticism for some time.⁴ My position for sure invites a host of different readings and interpretations about my text. My text may be well received by some people. Yet, others, who read it as a protest against the discrimination aimed at the people I studied, may resent it.⁵

In spite of the unfailing support I received during various stages of my project from colleagues and staff members in Bergen, the question of “what real anthropology is all about” kept resurfacing. When I started my fieldwork, the kind of responses I received from staff members and colleagues in Bergen were mixed and ranged from a “That is wonderful” and “You will be the first to do this kind of research” attitude to “What kind of research will you be doing here in Norway anyway?” “Are you really in the field?” “Hey, you are supposed to be in the field!” Thus, while there seems to be a consensus about the importance of my project, in that it may eventually contribute to the debates on minorities in Norway, there are some people who are not sure whether the kind of fieldwork I was doing is really

4. Out of more than twenty doctoral students at the anthropology department in Bergen, only five were doing fieldwork in Europe: three in Norway (their projects are all about immigrants’ issues), one in Germany, and one in Cyprus. The rest are distributed mainly between Asia and Africa, the main regions for traditional ethnographic research. Even at the MA level, the majority of students do fieldwork outside Europe, but in recent years there has been a shift to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics.

5. During my fieldwork in Oslo (August 2001), I was invited by the Institute for Social Research to talk about my project. While my presentation was welcomed by the audience and stirred valuable discussions afterwards, a senior anthropologist in the institute stated: “You made me nervous. You presented a detailed account about Somali and Sudanese refugees in Norway, yet you made flat generalisations about the host society.” She was right. My response to her was that it was because Somalis and Sudanese were at the centre of my fieldwork that I was able to provide a detailed account on that front, and that somebody else may need to study the “host society.” As I see it, this is basically a problem of positioning but it can also be the result of other practical problems.

anthropological (see Howell 2001, 23 for a similar point). The belief in the “epistemology of distance and otherness” (Passaro 1997, 152) is still rampant in anthropology, and is viewed as the best route to objectivity. In this way, claims to authority can be made and legitimised through jeopardising the social, or even the physical, well-being of the anthropologist. It was a source of reflection and thought to have a colleague of mine include in his research budget the cost of “flashlight” and a “mule,” which would be used in his fieldwork, while I was worried about the costs of taxi, apartment rent, bus and train tickets and, importantly, telephone calls during my fieldwork! It was also a source of much thought to have a professor in the department show me the marks of old wounds he sustained on his legs and feet during his fieldwork in Africa.

Despite many claims to the contrary (cf. Moore 1999; Thomas 1999), there are plenty of grounds these days for charging someone with a failure to perform real anthropology (cf. Howell 2001). Some studies are dubbed less anthropological than others. Such studies, argues Weston (1997, 170), include “studies of Europe . . . , studies that traverse national borders, studies ‘up’ instead of ‘down,’ studies of ‘one’s own,’ studies that refuse to exoticise that stigmatised.” While in recent years anthropology has started *coming home*,⁶ doing fieldwork in Europe still has a long way to go and faces some problems. Funding is one problem, and one issue that I must talk about is the complicity of granting institutions or bodies in resisting currents of change in the discipline. To the extent these bodies are keeping traditional notions of “the Third World countries,” “home country,” and “regional areas” afloat, attempts to do anthropological fieldwork outside those “Third World countries” will be obstructed significantly. While there is a significant move, brought about by the recent critiques in anthropology, to rethink the domain of anthropological knowledge and practice, granting institutions can still be a notorious blockage to the rethinking efforts. Thus, while my colleague who was planning to do his fieldwork in his home country had his research money released, my application for funding was rejected on the grounds that my fieldwork was not in my home country. “We regret to inform you that your application for support for fieldwork in Yemen has been rejected since your study plan does not qualify for funds because your fieldwork will be in Yemen, and not in your home country” is the reply I received from the State Educational Loan Fund.⁷ My papers had to be sent to the Ministry of Education and Church for a final decision on the matter. And after four months of waiting the decision was that, “the Ministry has given us the permission to give you money for fieldwork in a second country.” My delight was short-lived because, when I resubmitted my application for fieldwork allowance, I was confronted by the fact that Norway is not included in that “second country” category, and was thus again told “the Fund does not support fieldwork in Norway. What it provides is a train ticket, costing no more than NOK 360, -.”⁸ Through the support of the department, the Faculty of Social Sciences provided financial support for my fieldwork in Oslo.

6. “Coming home” is a loose phrase used to describe the state of doing anthropological fieldwork in Europe or the First World.

7. Lånkassen’s letter dated July 7, 1999 (Saksbehandler: J. Saltnes).

8. This is less than the standard student fare for a return train ticket between Bergen and Oslo.

Encouraging natives to study their own folk has been one of the issues featuring in recent anthropological critiques (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Gullestad 1984; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, 1997b). But despite statements to the contrary (cf. Moore 1999, 8), “native anthropology” is still glued to the areas where anthropologists traditionally did fieldwork. Both students of anthropology from Third World countries and their Norwegian colleagues still end up doing fieldwork in areas where anthropology traditionally thrived, therefore subverting the calls for bringing anthropology home.⁹ There are both native and non-native Norwegian anthropologists who did major fieldwork in Norway, but they are a minority. Questions of anthropological authority between “expatriate anthropologists” and those who do their anthropology at home in Norway started to come up recently as a result of the involvement of Norwegian anthropologists in immigration debates.¹⁰ For some critics, “the process of taking anthropology out of ‘the field’—the geographically distant and exotic lands of Others—is far easier than taking ‘the field,’ i.e. colonial thinking, out of anthropology” (Passaro 1997, 148).

I should mention that there is certainly some change in fieldwork practices in Norway as a result of the *kvalitetsreformen* (quality reform) in higher educational institutions. The reform was introduced to internationalise higher education in Norway. Some Norwegian anthropologists (cf. Broch 2002; Bråten 2002) raised some concerns about the possible negative impacts of this reform on anthropological fieldwork practices, especially for master students. The last issue of *NAT* (Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift—*Norwegian Journal of Anthropology* 4, 2002) was devoted to addressing epistemological and practical challenges facing traditional fieldwork practices as a result of the “quality reform.” Bråten (2002, 187-96) discussed the possible effects of the reform on master students and also argued that there are certain *myths* about anthropological fieldwork that need to be demystified. It is probably too early to conclude that these policies are likely to have negative impacts on the practice of anthropology in Norway (an argument supported by both Broch and Bråten), but I believe that more Norwegian students at the master level will opt for doing fieldwork “at home.” This also means that those students who do fieldwork at the master level in Norway will likely continue the same fieldwork for their doctoral research.

Signe Howell (2001, 16-24) expresses some scepticism, even “worry,” (ibid., 16) about “auto-anthropology.” Howell has rich experience of exotic fieldwork in Malaysia and Indonesia. But

9. It is important to note that “home anthropology” in Norway is growing, both in terms of doing fieldwork and engaging in theoretical discussions. But the focus is generally on immigrants. However, traditional anthropological fieldwork is still hailed by Norwegian anthropologists (cf. Howell 2001). A brochure featuring one of the programmes administered in the anthropology department in Bergen reads: “Admission is open to applicants from countries which are given priority within Norwegian development co-operation. But preference is given to applicants from countries where the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen has special research involvement.” In no way I am against giving preference to students from the Third World, but we need to put the whole issue in the perspective of the historical developments in the discipline. However, since 2003 the MA programme in Bergen enrolls both Norwegian and foreign students.

10. Anh Nga Longva (2001). See also Hannerz (1998, 250) for a general, but similar, discussion.

in recent years she started doing fieldwork in her own back yard—Norway—about kinship and transnational adoption. Her scepticism about doing fieldwork at home is based on the methodological and analytical challenges she faced while doing fieldwork in Norway. The main problem identified by Howell is that when doing fieldwork at home or among one's own, the anthropologist will not experience "culture shock," which is necessary for methodological strength. Howell also observes that participant observation is enormously difficult to practice in Norway, and therefore those who do fieldwork home resort to supplement their insufficient material from other secondary sources (newspapers, TV programmes, etc.). Howell argues that the increasing tendency to conduct fieldwork at home brings serious challenges to anthropology. She also underscores the point that the tendency to conduct fieldwork at home must not come at the cost of doing fieldwork in *ukjente strøk* (unknown territories) (ibid., 23). From my own experience in Norway, nothing is wrong with TV and newspapers as sources of information in societies where the press not only structures social relationships, but also policies that affect lives. In the Norwegian context, the press is indeed a valuable source for anthropological enquiry.

Few people will probably disagree with Howell's observation about the challenges facing the practice of fieldwork at the moment, at home and *ukjente strøk*, and many will agree with her that some of the classical field methods cannot be sustained under the changing circumstances we are experiencing at the present time. Howell seems to imply that letting participant observation go will result in decontextualised research, which will therefore be remote from the realities of the people or phenomena being studied. Howell agrees with Malkki (1997, 89) and implies that the everyday or the explicit is not what anthropological knowledge should be based on. Bloch (1998, 17) emphasises the explicit or the everyday: "One fact we always and rightly stress when explaining how our way of going about things contrasts with that of other social or cognitive scientists is the importance we attach to the everyday." Participant observation as a modality is useful and can still be practiced. What is at issue is the kind of research we are doing, or the kind of data we are looking for. Despite some suggestions that traditional participant observation may not be possible or suitable in contexts like the one I dealt with in Norway (cf. Bernard and Good 1987, 34), participant observation was an important technique during my fieldwork. Whether we are looking for explicit or hidden knowledge we should be attentive listeners, recognise the situatedness of our intellectual work and affirm our connection to the ideas, processes, and the people we are studying (Callaway 1992; Malkki 1997, 96).

Howell's argument that doing anthropology among one's own precludes the possibility of deeper understanding and reflection on the phenomena under study is debatable.¹¹ Reading my work (Assal 2004, 2006), the reader may walk away with the understanding that my analysis on the Sudanese (my own people) is more robust than it is for the Somalis. It is true that some domains are not as accessible as others, even when we study our own people. I have not done fieldwork among native Norwegians, but my experience during the four years I spent in Norway is that the way social relationships are structured among na-

11. The depth and rigour of some native texts counter the legitimacy of scepticism about native anthropology. In Norway, the contributions of Marianne Gullestad (1975; 1984) are good examples of rich anthropological texts based on native ethnography.

tive Norwegians is one reason behind Howell's uneasiness with doing fieldwork at home. A Norwegian anthropologist observes: "Norwegians are very conservative when it comes to social relationships among themselves, and more so with others. They do not get into close social contacts with other people easily."¹² Fieldwork involves establishing social relationships and here I would echo Bourdieu (1999, 608-610), "if its objective of pure knowledge distinguishes the research relationship from most of the exchanges in everyday life, it remains, whatever one does, a social relationship," and, after all, "social proximity and familiarity provide ... conditions of 'non-violent' communication." It has never been clear in anthropology how much an anthropologist is supposed to blend in the social settings he or she studies in order to have deeper understandings about the phenomena under investigation. There is no doubt that studying refugees represents a challenge for participant observation. The lives of Somali and Sudanese refugees extend to spaces and experiences beyond the reach of my observation. I could never share the experience of being a refugee or being discriminated against in the job market, because I never was a refugee and I never applied for a job in Norway.

A tribute to Leif

Over the years, my relationship with Leif as a friend and an academic advisor grew in ways that go beyond personal contact. I knew Leif while I was in the final stage of my undergraduate studies, through his works, *Trade and traders in the Sudan* (1984) and *From the Mountains to the Plains* (1994). As mentioned in the introduction, I first met Leif in 1995, during a workshop in Ethiopia, but my relationship with him was consolidated during the course of my study in Bergen. At my doctoral party in Bergen on September 19, 2003, I remarked that "Leif Manger is Sudanese." My remark was based on my close contact with Leif in ways that I consider typically Sudanese. The Sudanese are famous for keeping *thick social contacts* with each other. Leif's prolonged engagement with Sudan, as a student and scholar, exposed him to such thick social contacts. Not unexpectedly, he brought his experience to Norway and as such it was never a problem to pop into his office at any given time. Never did I need to make an appointment with Leif. Leif's thick social contacts with non-Norwegians drew the curiosity of some Norwegians. Asking me who my supervisor was, my Norwegian language teacher remarked: "I do not know Leif personally, but I used to see him on university grounds during the 1980s, with Gunnar Sørbo and lots of foreigners."

The academic advice I received from Leif through the different stages of my postgraduate studies and beyond is invaluable. But the support I received from Leif is not only academic. During the course of my studies in Norway, my relationship with Leif was a process of *home-making* for me. The social environment Leif and his wife Karin created is something that I will always remember. We often times go to *Wesselstuen* in Bergen for dinner and engage in academic discussions about my project and Sudan. We also go there during the visits of Sudanese academics and friends.

12. Personal communication with Fredrik Barth (Bergen, January 30, 2003). See Longva (2003, 16-26) for a similar point of view.

Leif's passion for Sudan and Sudanese issues got him involved beyond academia. He offered his knowledge and professional experience in many occasions, not least during the peace process in Sudan, 2002-2003, although his upfront way of saying things caused him to be kicked out from the peace negotiations in Kenya. In relaying this experience to me he said: "Both the SPLM and the Sudan Government did not want me." I told him: "This is a sign that you were right." We academics often are in the sidelines even though the knowledge we produce is vital and can save lives. Through his advice for the UN and expertise, Leif contributed to the implementation of development projects in Sudan. His involvement in Sudanese issues thus goes far beyond the benefits students of anthropology got. In ending this chapter, I would like to pay him this tribute for what he has given me personally and for his support for anthropology and anthropologists in the Sudan, and the country at large.

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Chapter 11

Pluralism and governance in Sudan: Reflections on the local and national perspectives¹

Ahmed Al-Shahi

My introduction to the ethnic and cultural diversity and plurality of Sudan started when I taught the social organisation of two southern Sudanese tribes: the Dinka and the Nuer.² Then this diversity became more evident when I met a group of postgraduate Sudanese

1. A version of this chapter was read at the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House), London, 2006, at the conference on “Sudan: Building on the Peace Process in the South,” Middle East and Good Governance Group, and at the conference of the “Project for Arab Democracy,” St. Catherine’s College, Oxford University, Oxford, 2006. I am grateful to the staff of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Khartoum, for their invitation to deliver my paper and for their hospitality during the conference to discuss “Anthropology in the Sudan: Past, Present and Future” held in October 2008 to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the department. I am grateful to my wife, Anne, for her valuable editorial comments.

2. The late Dr. Godfrey Lienhardt taught a course on the tribes of southern Sudan at the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Baghdad, where he spent a year (1955-56) on secondment from the University of Oxford.

students, both northerners and southerners, first in London and then at Oxford University during the first military regime (1958-1964). Their concern was the unsuitability of the military regime after only two years of a democratic regime, which had not given democracy time to mature. Further, the parliamentary graduate constituencies allocated to the educated class were abolished and thus this class lost its political influence. Southern Sudan at the time was going through its first civil war (1954/55-1972) and this group of educated people saw this conflict as a threat to the unity of the country.

The tribal and ethnic diversity of the Sudanese I met in the United Kingdom was a fragment of the vast diversity that I encountered when I went to Sudan in 1965-1970 to teach at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Khartoum. During this time I carried out my anthropological research on the Shaygiyya tribe of northern Sudan, followed by further intermittent research visits between 1970 and 1989. The department offered a course for second year students, "Sudanese Communities," in order to introduce some examples of the complexity of the cultural plurality and diversity of the country. I took part in the teaching of this course with my colleagues Ian Cunnison, Talal Asad, Lewis Hill, Wendy James, Jim Farris, and the late Farnham Rehfish. I am pleased to learn that the course continues to be part of the teaching programme of the department. Further purposes of the course were to incorporate the research findings of the staff and to encourage the students to undertake anthropological/sociological research when the opportunity arose.

My input in the teaching of the social anthropology of Sudan continued when I joined the Department of Social Studies at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne (1975-1996). I retired in 1996 but my interest in Sudan has continued through research, writing, and the "Sudanese Programme" at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, co-organised with Mr. Bona Malwal.³ Our objective in establishing the programme is to give a neutral platform to Sudanese to express their views about issues concerning their country. Further, our position is to be above politics, ethnicity and religion. The main participants at the conferences and lectures of the Sudanese Programme reflect the ethnic and cultural plurality of Sudan. After nearly fifty years of dedication to the country and its people, in discussing the theme of this paper I hope to make a critical but constructive analysis about some of the problems facing the country. I am grateful to my former colleagues and students, the people of the Nuri community and others in the Shaygiyya region, and Sudanese friends elsewhere for their friendship and hospitality.

The discussion in this paper is based on my interest in the ethnic and cultural plurality of the Shaygiyya region in particular, and of Sudan in general. The Shaygiyya is a large riverain tribe located on the bend of the Nile in the Northern Province. It has a distinctive history and through some of its members, since independence in 1956, it has participated in civilian and military regimes. Contrary to popular belief, northern Sudan is as diverse and plural as

3. The "Sudanese Programme" was established in 2002. A number of conferences, workshops, and talks were organised, which academics, politicians, businessmen, military personnel, women's organisations, refugees, civil servants, lawyers, doctors, and people from other professions, but mainly Sudanese, attended and participated in. For full details of the programme's past, present, and future activities, consult <http://sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/Sudan.shtml>.

other parts of the country. Throughout history, the north encountered settlement of different peoples through their incorporation and migration within the region and the country. Among the Shaygiyya, the dominant tribal group, there are other tribal groups such as the Ja'aliyyin, Bidairiyya, Rikabiyya, Jabriyya, and the descendants of Turks or Europeans who came with the Turco-Egyptian conquest of 1820-21; also an indigenous group, Nuba (assumed to be the original inhabitants of the region), Nubians, ex-slaves, and gypsies. Over time each of these groups has become dependent on the other and each has contributed to the development of the region. Inter-marriage and economic dependence have brought them closer but they remain proud of their tribal affiliation. This local dimension of identity is portrayed by a local northern proverb, *al-'irig dassās* [the root goes deep]. Tribal affiliation and its diversity have played, and continue to play, a significant role in the politics of the country. Further, among the inhabitants of this region there is diversity of religious affiliation: followers of the dominant Sufi order, the Khatmiyya; followers of the National Islamic Front; and followers of other Sufi orders such as the Idrisiyya, Shadhiliyya, and 'Ijaimiyya. Diversity can also be observed in people's political affiliation: followers of the dominant party, the Democratic Unionist Party (the party representing mainly the Khatmiyya followers); followers of the current ruling National Congress Party; followers of the National Islamic Front; sympathisers with secular politics; and those who have no political affiliation. This process has shaped the composition of the present-day population of this tribe and, whatever the particularities of this composition, people regard themselves as Sudanese belonging to a sovereign state. But they also perceive themselves in a diverse perspective so that the imposition on them of an exclusive unitarian, political, religious, and cultural ideology is unlikely to have credibility. My analysis in this paper is largely based on the Shaygiyya's own perspective on diversity and governance.

In many developing countries people are not consulted on the form of the state under whose power they live. This is particularly the case under military regimes or one-party systems of government, and Sudan had its fair share of such regimes. Thus, inevitably the state is imposed and legitimised often with the use of force. The ethnic and cultural mosaic at local and national levels is colourful and challenging but it has its own detrimental political implications as has been shown in the recent history of many African countries, including Sudan. The constituent characteristics of Sudan's mosaic are: tribalism, religion, ethnicity, cultural differences, language, and political affiliation.

But how can the plurality and diversity be fitted to a state that will have the respect and legitimacy of its people? The ideology and practice among the Shaygiyya and other communities in the north is that **cooperation** and **tolerance** are vital for the continuity of good relations among themselves and between them and the state. Otherwise, polarisation and discord, which are becoming common in Africa and elsewhere, are likely to cause conflict. The Shaygiyya people at the local level realise that they cannot impose their own traditional political loyalty over fellow community members as this creates conflict and consequently puts a strain on the social life of the diverse community. Thus, social relationships come first and political differences second. The Shaygiyya's political affiliation and ethnic diversity under undemocratic regimes are of little concern to the central authority. Why then does religious, ethnic, and political loyalty continue at local and national levels? Tribal and religious leaders, who inherited their position over generations, were officially empowered during the Condominium rule (1898-1956) as it was recognised that the Native Administra-

tion was expedient both in accommodating the traditions and diversity of the country as well as in governing the country through local leadership. But successive democratic and military governments have not been successful in developing alternative viable systems that would lessen the significance of, and reliance on, ethnic, religious, and tribal loyalties.

Some educated Sudanese, including among the Shaygiyya, are dedicated to their professions and to the service of their country and have struggled to undertake their commitments despite adverse political circumstances. Other educated people are under the illusion that Sudan's experiments in democracy have failed to take root in the country and that democracy among people in the rural areas has not reached maturity. Hence, one may ask what makes democracy difficult to implement and if the cause lies in the opportunism of the privileged classes or in the political, cultural, and ethnic diversity of the country. The unconvincing answer given to these questions by the educated class is that Western-style democracy is not consistent with the values of the Arabs/Muslims. Since independence in 1956, this privileged class has generally dominated successive governments and has consistently chosen to ignore the political reality and aspirations of the diverse population. Neither the army nor the group of educated people, referred to as the "elite," have wanted to learn from past experiences of government misrule and abuse of power.

In discussing these issues, I am relying on my fieldwork observations as well as on data on the country's political history to interpret the special case of the Shaygiyya in Sudan's ethnic and cultural plurality. My argument is that to shape a central political system through the army and the educated class, and from an urban perspective, and to impose it on the rural population is not conducive to the development of the democratic process and to political stability in the country. The local dimension of the democratic process stems from the cultural traditions of local people that have parallels in other parts of the world. The local political experiences of people in the Shaygiyya region are specific to them and are valued by them. On the many occasions I have sat at meetings, formal and informal, listening to farmers, professional groups, and officials discussing problems and future development in the region, an instructive perspective has emerged on how people conduct themselves at such meetings. Commotion, interruptions, frayed tempers, and protestations are distinctive features of these meetings. The people present are allowed to express their diverse viewpoints so that usually a consensus emerges after a great deal of time and effort. The outcome promotes understanding and collective responsibility for the decisions taken. People may be divided along political, social, ethnic, and economic lines, but these should not override the need of the community. At national elections, people vote in accordance with their different political loyalties. But these differences are not allowed to interfere with their commitment to normal social relationships. Even in local conflicts people are reluctant to take their cases to the official courts as this will result in estrangement among people and coolness in relationships. Rather, they prefer to solve their disputes among themselves and invariably reach equitable solutions. This process has developed out of local people's experiences. But the "elite" has ignored local models as coming from rural areas that are perceived as underdeveloped and backward. Under a democratic system of government the local model of politics is given expression through the ballot boxes. However, it is under authoritarian regimes and one-party systems that the diverse local models are not represented in the political process.

The involvement of the Khatmiyya Sufi order in the politics of the country goes back to the nineteenth century. For some time I have heard the educated remark that the Shaygiyya are *nās sīdī*, or ‘people who follow their master’, which means that they will follow whatever course their master prescribes in the field of politics. This description assumes that the Shaygiyya are neither rational nor intelligent enough to pursue an independent line or to make a choice in the political process. It is counterproductive to deny people’s rights and loyalty for considerations of religious and political affiliation. In local and national elections the Shaygiyya have always voted for candidates representing their traditional religious and political orientation and who normally win these elections. There are political parties based on religious affiliation to be found in Western countries, India, Israel and the Middle East and the Shaygiyya are no exception in adopting a political loyalty based on religious affiliation. Even the National Congress Party, the political organisation of the present regime in Sudan, has among its members followers of the National Islamic Front.

It is important to briefly look at the collapse of democratic experiments in Sudan, which can be attributed neither to the failure of local politics nor to the diversity of the country. The fluctuations in Sudan’s political history between democratic and authoritarian regimes are well researched and documented by Sudanese and non-Sudanese.⁴

During the first half of the twentieth century a number of political groupings emerged as the key political players with traditional religious affiliations: the Mahdists who formed the Umma Party (UP); the Khatmists who formed the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), which later joined forces with the National Unionist Party (NUP) and formed the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP); the Islamic National Front (NIF); and the Republican Party (RP). The Communist Party (CP) and a number of southern Sudanese parties, chief among them the Sudan African National Union (SANU), represented secular groupings. With the exception of the CP, RP, and NIF, which are largely urban-based, the strength of the other parties has depended on the traditional support of the rural population. Thus, local and national politics have become intertwined. In particular, in the rural areas, the UP and DUP have continued to enjoy the allegiance of their followers, both men and women, despite the efforts made by successive military regimes to curtail their influence and power. I do not think that the Shaygiyya will abandon their religious and political loyalty because the army or the “elite” would like them to do so. All the parties cited above have played their roles, with varying degrees of influence, before and after independence in 1956. Whatever squabbles, shaky alliances, mergers or splits, the political parties followed the democratic process with all its imperfections. There is no “perfect” democratic model to be emulated, as democracy is a dynamic and ongoing process. The Shaygiyya, as well as other tribes throughout the

4. There are many studies of politics in Sudan, which vary in emphasis, content, and depth of analysis. Among the most popular works are those of Al-Rahim (1969); Abdel Salam and De Waal (2001); Abdel Salam and Hurreiz (1989); Akol (2001); Alier (1992); Al-Shahi (1986); Anderson (1999); Madut-Arop (2006); Bechtold (1976); Beshir (1974, 1975); Deng (1995); El-Affendi (1990); Garang (1992); Hamid (1984); Holt and Daly (2000); Johnson (2001); Khalid (2003); Kok (1996); Lesch (1998); Mahjoub (1974); Malwal (1981); Niblock (1987); Nyaba (1997); Patterson (1999); Ruay (1994); Sidahmed (1997); Sidahmed and Sidahmed (2005); Voll and Voll (1985); Warburg (2003); and Woodward (1990).

country, value democratic governments as through such regimes their wishes and choices are accommodated and respected.

The first experiment in democracy came in 1956 when national elections were held and a civilian government was elected to rule the country remaining in power until 1958. Squabbles among political parties were seen by the “elite” and army officers as a sign of weakness and, consequently, as a failure of democracy. Thus the army took over power in 1958 on the pretext that they would rescue the nation from political and economic turmoil. Some members of the “elite,” who saw their chance to make an impact and to achieve power, collaborated with the military regime. Military takeover in the name of nationalism, socialism, communism, and anti-colonialism was, and still is, fashionable in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. At the time, educated people thought that the traditional holders of power in these countries had been nurtured by various colonial powers and thus they were conservative in their outlook and politics. As usual in a military regime in Sudan and elsewhere, political parties were banned, censorship of the press was introduced and human rights were suspended. This was contrary to the wishes of the vast majority of the rural communities that are accustomed to freedom of expression and respect of political plurality. During its six-year rule, the military regime achieved success in the field of development, a common feature of military rule, but its anti-democratic record was not a match to its economic achievements. The suppression of political plurality and the continuing and escalating war in the south were the main reasons for the popular uprising in 1964, which led to the downfall of the military regime. It is ironic that the uprising was initiated by educated people and in an urban centre, Khartoum.

The second democratic regime (1965-1969) was characterised by the usual political infighting and competition between political forces for power and authority, a situation not uncommon in democratic regimes throughout the world. The civil war in the south continued during this regime and while people at the local level desired a resolution of the conflict, politicians did not have the conviction or the will to achieve this. But the four years of democratic rule were conceived as the heyday of democracy in Sudan. Political alliances were formed and then dissolved reflecting the necessity for the inclusion of political diversity. However, the impasse between the north and the south, the rift within the UP, lack of major economic development, the continuing rise in the influence of the NIF, and the shifting alliances of political parties led to the collapse of the regime. Again, this was mistakenly attributed to the failure of democracy rather than to a lack of will and determination to give democracy a chance to take root and gradually to flourish.

For the second time, the army took over power in May 1969 and remained in power until 1985. The major achievement of this regime was the 1972 peace agreement with the southern Sudanese—the Addis Ababa Peace Accord—and the granting of regional autonomy to the southern regions. This was hailed as the first successful experiment in solving the problem of ethnic and cultural plurality in Africa. In its attempt to establish a political base and legitimacy for its rule, the regime established the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU) as a one-party system to replace the traditional political parties, which were seen by the army as the cause of instability and underdevelopment. A one-party system, though promoted by their educated founders as an inclusive organisation, was in reality an authoritarian form of political organisation serving the interests of the regime’s policies and personnel. In this context

the rights of the diverse groups to express their political distinctiveness were denied. To join the SSU became a matter for joking in the Shaygiyya region. Furthermore, the SSU attracted discarded members of the “elite” who supported the regime. The regional autonomy of the south was dismantled when the administration was decentralised, a decision contrary to the Addis Ababa agreement and in negation of the rights of the plurality. Realising that the regime was losing power, Nimaïri introduced, in 1983, the Islamic Shari`a criminal laws as a measure to gain sympathy and support from the Muslim north and from conservative Arab/Muslim countries. But neither the Shaygiyya nor many people in the north, east, west or south gave Nimaïri the support he wished for. The southerners saw this development as a signal of the cultural and religious domination by the Arab/Muslim north and a further erosion of their rightful status in the state. Thus Anya Nya II was formed, which later became known as Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), acting as a political and military organisation fighting for southern Sudanese ethnic, political, and cultural rights.

Nimaïri’s regime could not withstand the pressure of failure in its domestic policies, the public opposition to the regime, the beginning of the second civil war in the south, and the country’s international isolation. These factors led to the third take-over by the army and a transitional military/civilian council (TMC) ruled for one year (1985-86). The Shaygiyya and others welcomed its collapse as they saw in it the restoration of their traditional political power. During its short stay in power no serious attempt was made to end the civil war in the south nor to discuss the future status of the Shari`a laws. Rather, the TMC chose to pass on the responsibility for a solution to these problems by handing over the reins of government to a third democratically elected government. This multi-party government, a much favoured system of rule, stayed in power from 1986 to 1989 and from the start it was besieged with shifting alliances, a characteristic of Sudan’s political system. The leader of the SPLM/A, Dr. John Garang, and the leader of the DUP, Sayyid Muhammed Othman Al-Mirghani, met in 1988 in Asmara, Eritrea, and an agreement was reached. This came to be known as the Sudan Peace Initiative (SPI), recommending the freezing of the Shari`a laws until a constitutional conference was held, a ceasefire, and the search for an equitable solution to the problem in the south. This agreement was internationally hailed but did not find favour with the government initially. It was also welcomed by the Shaygiyya as their religious and political leader, Sayyid Muhammed Othman Al-Mirghani, assumed the role of peacemaker in the conflict, seeing that the agreement was important in recognising the rights of the southerners. For a year, the SPI awaited as the Constitutional Assembly rejected it first and accepted it reluctantly in 1989. However, this approval came too late for it to be implemented when the army took over power, for the fourth time, on June 30, 1989.

The new military regime came to be known as the National Salvation Revolution. It has been in power from 1989 until the present time. The regime pursued the war in the south and, as usual under military regimes, suspended all political parties, though recently they have been allowed to resume their political activities. The regime introduced the National Congress Party (NCP) as an inclusive political organisation not dissimilar in principle to the SSU. Not surprisingly, the rural population sees the NCP, the creation of an educated class, as the rulers’ party.

Since 1983, a number of regional and international attempts to solve the problem of the south have been unsuccessful in ending the civil war and in coming to terms with the ethnic

and cultural diversity. The government embarked on a dialogue with the diverse political opposition groups that resulted in the resumption of their political activities. Furthermore, a number of meetings held in Kenya to end the civil war in the south culminated in the signing of a number of protocols in January 2005, which formed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA was saluted as a significant step towards recognising the rights of the southern Sudanese as distinct ethnic and cultural groups. The Shaygiyya and others welcomed this development as the civil war had constituted a drain on human and economic resources of the country.

While the civil war in the south has been resolved, since 2003 another serious conflict has erupted in Darfur. The destruction, killing, and creation of a large population of displaced people within the country and in Chad have become not only domestic problems but have also acquired an international dimension. Inter-tribal conflict among the Darfurians as well as between them and the government, international interference, and a lack of development in the region are all factors that keep the conflict going and fuel animosity. Darfur, like the south, is a complex and culturally diverse region and it is unlikely that a central government can succeed in imposing its will on the local population. It is only through dialogue and the acceptance of equality of diverse groups in this region that the problems in Darfur can be addressed. The Darfurians have fragmented into a number of factions making it increasingly difficult to reach an acceptable peace agreement in the region. The consequences of the conflict and of civil wars in the south, east, and west have been little felt in the north. But the Shaygiyya are always of the opinion that it is counterproductive to suppress the rights of the diversity.

It is important to identify the groups that are viewed by people in the Shaygiyya region as an obstacle in the path of accommodating plural religious, political, and ethnic loyalties. Since independence in 1956, Sudan has had forty years of military rule and nine years of democratic government. Frequent fluctuations between democratic and army regimes and shifting allegiances of the educated class,⁵ and particularly the “elite,” have not been conducive to good governance, economic development or political stability. The educated class is usually urban and remote from the rural population. It is ironic that when educated people are out of power, they complain about lack of democracy, yet when they are in power they tend to deny people this privilege.

Typical of many developing countries, there is a gulf between the wishes of the diverse rural population and the decisions of the urban rulers and the “elite.” The experiments in adopting different forms of government in these countries, such as monarchy, republic, theocracy, army rule, proportional representation, and multi-party democracy have not bridged this gulf. It is vital to give expression to the diversity in these countries through a democratic system that has the acceptability of all. Though this may not be easy to achieve it is a realistic solution in order to avoid rebellion and military confrontation. Otherwise minority groups, encountering unfair treatment, will exploit any opportunity to work singularly or together to undermine the legitimacy of a regime, often with reliance on outside help.

5. My critique of the role of the educated Sudanese in the state is in Ahmed Al-Shahi’s “The Elite Minority: Educated Sudanese and their Role in the State” (2002).

Sudan, in its present day boundaries, is a country created by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956). But some of the people within these boundaries have expressed interest in pursuing self-determination, federalism, regional autonomy, and even secession from the country. People feel that they are different from each other but their differences have brought unequal benefits. In a pluralistic and diverse country like Sudan secession may be a quick solution to resolve ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, but it can lead to the creation of small entities that end up in ceaseless quarrels about borders and resources. Thus, if Sudanese want to live together then what are the alternatives to the breakup of the state?

It is constructive for Sudan to take into consideration the endemic and continuing discontent expressed by its diverse people. The policy of accommodation is to explore a political, administrative, and legal system that will take into account the rights of the diversity. One common comment in the Shaygiyya region is that diverse people should enjoy their rights, *hugug*, which is recognition of the necessity for accommodating the plurality. The civil wars in the south (1954-1972 and 1983-2005) have drained the resources of many governments, alienated Sudan from the international community, destroyed the infrastructure of the south, and killed and displaced thousands of people.

It is hoped that there will be no return to the ethnic and military confrontation that has been a major feature of north-south relations since shortly before independence in 1956. The vote on self-determination to remain within the territorial framework of Sudan or to seek a separate state will give a fundamental right to the southerners to express their political will. So far the southerners, the Beja people, and a faction of the Darfurians have reached a settlement with the northerners. This is a positive move towards accommodating the plurality. Discontent and disagreement among many factions in Darfur are further problems for the Darfurians, for the government, and for international mediators. While northerners and southerners have different ethnic and religious affiliations, people in Darfur share with the northerners one religion, Islam, and in the case of some tribes, Arab descent. Reconciliation is a welcome move but should not be through a piecemeal approach as this would divide local people and would create animosity among locals and towards any government.

“Consociational” democracy reduces tension and conflict among the diverse groups. A supporter of this type of democracy, such as Lijhart, states that, “consociational democracy means government by an elite cartel designed to turn democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy” (1966). While the “elite” in Sudan can make important contributions to the development of democracy, I believe that this “cartel” should not have the monopoly of power as their participation in the political arena in Sudan has been unproductive for the promotion of democracy. Further, to promote this “cartel” is to ignore the rural peoples who have real political power in the event of local and national elections. The “elite” and army officers are rightly of the opinion that conflicts in the country are the root of political instability but their role in solving these conflicts has not helped to promote understanding of the diversity and the need for its unity. Advocates of “consociational” democracy argue that plurality and diversity can be represented through coalitions or by proportional parliamentary representation and a fair distribution of governmental positions and resources. These arrangements are desirable and workable if a particular country adheres fairly to the above stipulations and could be said to apply to the recent political development in Sudan when the government and the SPLM signed the CPA in order to end

the second civil war (1983-2005). This is a beginning but other ethnic, cultural, or political groups have been left out and it is vital that there be equality and proper proportionality of the plurality in the peace process.

The solutions advocated by “consociational” democracy are not easy to achieve and they require commitment, collaboration, and patience. Consensus democracy and inclusivity of the ethnic and cultural plurality can help in resolving conflicts and enhancing a policy towards the legitimacy of the state in Sudan. Specifically, in the Shaygiyya region local people see any government as a provider of services to its people and in partnership with local people but not as a decision maker. Most improvements in services are largely due to the efforts of locals despite the taxes they have to pay for the state. But the present regime has undertaken three projects in the Shaygiyya region, two of which local people welcome as beneficial to their community and its economy. First, the building of the asphalt road known as *shiryān al-shimal* (artery of the North), between Omdurman and the Fourth Cataract; second, the recently completed bridge linking Merowe and Kareima. The third project, the yet to be completed Hamdab Dam at the Fourth Cataract, is controversial, locally and internationally. Legitimate worries have been raised about the submergence of the archaeological sites, the future use and users of the land that will be brought under cultivation, and the future circumstances of the inhabitants who were relocated to new sites. One certain benefit of the dam will be to control the water of the Nile and prevent the constant inundation of the lowlands lying southwest of the dam. In the midst of these changes, it is expedient to listen to the local people in order to achieve acceptable development. On the whole, cultural and religious differences are understood by the diversity in the country, despite government interference, such that any government in Sudan will gain acceptability by granting equal political participation to the diverse groups. Whenever a military regime or one-party system falls, then the Shaygiyya and other people in the rural areas reinvigorate their allegiances and take their traditional political loyalty to the ballot boxes. They have done this in the past and there is no reason why they will not do it in the future. In other words, like other members of the diversity, they will reassert their political distinctiveness in a diverse state.

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Identity conflicts and culture concepts: Insights from Sudan

Jay O'Brien

Introduction

Concepts of culture and group identity are in contentious flux. Western ideas that functioned well enough for purposes of colonial domination began to be challenged as Africa gained independence. Postcolonial intellectual ferment has produced valuable insights and conceptualisations better suited to a project of liberation. Yet identity-based conflicts have proliferated all over the world in recent years, and the dominant discourse about them seems to have reverted to primordialist notions. It is time to take stock of the critique of culture and identity concepts and to articulate a systematic progressive conceptualisation. I offer this paper as a contribution to this process.

The crisis of modernism

All over the world people seem to be responding to appeals that in some sense are framed as rejections of civil society as defined in the modernist project and represented in the various forms of the secular nation-state. Movements embrace non-rational forms of religion, ethnicity, family, race, etc., in Sudan as elsewhere. Is there a unified Sudanese identity, or is there an essentially separate South Sudanese nationality deserving of its own state? What about the people of Darfur? These are the questions people are now debating—and fighting over—not only in Sudan, but also in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and many other places amidst upheavals in the global political order (O'Brien 1993, 1998).

The social realities of the world outside Western Europe never fit neatly into the modernist framework of “civilization” and “rationality” for aggregating people and regulating social conflict.¹ Few of the nation-states created by Europe in Africa bore any relationship to any reality other than the imperial designs of the colonizers. For the most part, though, and with spectacular exceptions, Africans seemed to accept the nation-state as the framework within which to sort out their conflicting projects. Indeed, most accepted—at least tactically in the short run—the specific nation-states bequeathed to them by colonialism, a position enshrined in the OAU charter and a contributing factor in its demise.

At a gathering at Michigan State University of Sudanese intellectuals studying or working in North America immediately after Nimeiri was overthrown in 1985, there was a heated discussion about how to end the civil war and guarantee the rights of Southern Sudanese against future infringement. At one point an Eritrean observer intervened, saying that coming from the debates over Eritrean independence he was struck by the fact that all the participants in the Sudanese debate clearly positioned themselves in the discussion *as Sudanese*: all of them identified themselves as Sudanese and accepted the Sudanese identifications of the other participants, however much they might disagree among themselves about the nature of Sudanese identity and how best to organise the Sudanese state. In the case of Eritrea, in contrast, the parties to the debate could not even agree on who they were—some claiming that Eritreans were Ethiopians and others insisting they were not.

A few years later Eritreans successfully established their own nation-state—initially with the blessing of the Ethiopian state, but soon slipping into renewed conflict—while the question of Sudanese identity has since been thrown into massive confusion. There are those who insist that profession of a very stern vision of Islam—which they claim is the only truth—is an integral aspect of Sudanese identity. Some go beyond to demand Arabic language, if not Arab ethnicity, as a condition of membership in the nation. In the South there are those who have come to see their region as a separate nation that should have its own state, and there are others who have come to the conclusion that regardless of how they identify themselves, the Northerners are untrustworthy and Southerners must protect themselves by establishing a separate state. How many of the “Southerners” living in the North, many of them born there, would be welcomed “home” to reclaim their farms and pastures? Would the Northern government compel “Southerners” living in the North to “return” to an independent “Southern Sudan”? Or could the central government flood the south with “northerners” to vote for unity in the independence referendum?

To the extent that social science has addressed such issues, it has tended to fumble around with open or veiled notions of atavistic nationalism and parochialism (Colson 1969; Richards 1969); the conflicts, irrespective of concrete differences, are most often represented as expressions of the recrudescence of ancient ethnic hatreds. We are told that Serbs and Croats, Tutsis and Hutus, Poles and Lithuanians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Northern and Southern Sudanese, “Arab” and “African” Darfurians, and so on, have “always hated

1. At the level of analysis I am referring to here, Marxism and other oppositional modes of thought shared the basic belief in progress and other aspects of the framework of modernism (Marx 1976). On this issue see O’Brien and Roseberry (1991), particularly the Introduction.

each other” or that one side has always preyed upon the other. Communist dictatorship or European colonialism suppressed the freedom to express this hatred for decades along with all the other freedoms it suppressed (so the story goes), and the coming of freedom has brought forth an orgy of ethnic hatred. Scratch the surface of most available explanations and the answer actually offered is something to the effect that these ethnic conflicts “persist” (meaning that their true home is in the past and that they therefore have no living substance) because the groups in conflict are insufficiently civilised to have “advanced” beyond such petty quarrels. The question of why so many serious conflicts bearing cultural appearances should erupt all over the globe in such a short period of time at this historical conjuncture scarcely gets raised. Surely we can do better than this.

Time-space compression in the late twentieth century and the ugly face of globalisation

I suggest that it would be more fruitful to investigate the global political-economic crisis that has resulted from post-1973 processes: an acute and traumatic spasm of what Harvey (1989) calls “time-space compression.” The economic processes involved arose from a combination of technological breakthroughs in the mastery of space—especially worldwide instantaneous communication—and a conjunctural shift from centralised Fordism to “flexible accumulation” dominated by global and instantaneous processes of circulation. In this process, premium has come to be placed on accelerating turnover of capital, proliferation of virtual forms of capital (electronic, paper), and so forth, rather than on output ratios and other measures of productive efficiency. The savings and loan scandal in the United States and several waves of spectacular bankruptcies and corporate takeovers, followed by the more recent mortgage crisis, have been manifestations of this process visible to the public, along with break-neck “downsizing.” There have been parallel political processes growing out of the revelations of corruption and cynicism by high-level politicians in the fall-out of these scandals and related disasters, such as the Watergate, Iran-Contra and Enron scandals in the United States and similar political and financial disasters elsewhere.

Economically, the poorer export-dependent countries have suffered devastating consequences from the energy crisis and the collapse of raw materials markets following 1973 and the long-term changes in international food markets that followed the US-Soviet wheat deal and widespread famine in 1973. The consequences for the rest of the world have been significant too, if not uniformly so disastrous. The rise of the European Union as a major global player has also been important.

Culturally, all borders have been bleeding, even more rapidly than they did during the heyday of global Fordism when cheap labour flowed between nations as freely as capital. Many European countries now have sizeable racial minorities while countries as diverse as the United States, Sudan, Thailand, and Sweden have taken in enough refugees from political turmoil and economic chaos to affect their social and political make-up deeply. Estonia, having chafed for decades under Soviet occupation, achieved liberation on “national” terms only to confront the problem of how to define and organise an “Estonian” nation-state with

a very large minority population of ethnic Russians born and raised in Estonia. When the Yugoslavian republics sought to go their separate ways, they stumbled into warfare, apparently over the brute fact that the constituent nations did not coincide on the ground with the would-be states: their nations were not geographic facts. While it is significant that so many conflicts have taken cultural forms articulated in terms of identity and belonging, this must be a starting rather than ending point for analysis if we are to understand any specific conflict.

A globalised international culture, defined principally in commercial consumerist terms, has begun to take shape. One can travel to most world cities and find Coke to drink and very likely eat a burger and fries at McDonald's. Authentic Levi's jeans and Nike shoes can be bought nearly anywhere, and international pop stars draw huge crowds and television audiences on all continents, including at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Live-Aid concert broadcasts are bounced off satellites to all continents simultaneously, with hotlines open everywhere to accept pledges of donations from around the world to feed starving Ethiopians, Chinese earthquake victims, Southeast Asian tsunami victims, or Darfur's refugees. The dark side of international charity is international competition in which local survival often appears to be available only at the cost of the destruction of communities elsewhere.

The shrinkage of space that brings diverse communities across the globe into competition with each other implies localized competitive strategies and a heightened sense of awareness of what makes a place special and gives it a competitive advantage. (Harvey 1989, 271)

As broad segments of the middle classes in the "industrial" countries find their standards of living eroding dangerously and the poor in those countries increasingly marginalised into homelessness, permanent unemployment, drug addiction and despair, the ideas of progress—of upward mobility and trickle-down growth—are increasingly exposed as empty promises. In Africa, where progress is called development, the crises of the 1970s in many places wiped out the advances of the 1960s, and economic conditions for the masses have deteriorated still more since then. Development has been revealed as yet another false hope. Indeed, all over the world, increasingly, all truth, stability, and coherence—in short, the entire ideational edifice of modernism—seem falsified in the face of fragmentation, volatility and incoherence. Under George Bush II in the United States, long the self-declared champion of modernisation and the rule of rationality, science itself has come to be seen as a matter of opinion and values.

After the global pool hall: Reworking basic concepts

The dominant Western conception of culture is one that is emptied of all social, political, economic, and historical content. Historically, the development of the social sciences out of European moral philosophy proceeded from the foundation of political economy as the study of the dynamics of wealth and power to the separation of politics from economics as the studies of autonomous phenomena. Somewhat later, social relations were abstracted from their political and economic content and conceived as containing a separate substance that

defined the discipline of sociology. History, in its turn, was reduced to the chronicle of events, and anthropology and psychology took up the study of what was left, namely difference (see Wolf 1982). Individual difference became the preserve of psychology and the residue then became the diagnostic content of culture: pure and arbitrary group difference. As such it appears as inherently irrational. It is thus entirely analogous to individuality as understood by modernism and constitutes the collective personality of a group of similar individuals. My favourite colour is red and yours is blue. There is no explanation and nothing to discuss between us. I am Irish and like potatoes while you are Sudanese and prefer *kisra*. End of story.

The cultural relativism that officially supplanted the racism of nineteenth century evolutionism formally endowed these irrational differences with equal value. Potatoes are no more superior to *kisra* than red is to blue. Fine so far. However, since culture is the domain of the irrational and the arbitrary, it occupies an inferior status to rationality in the modernist project, where *progress* is deemed to extend the domain of rationality at the expense of the irrational. *Science* grows as *religion* contracts. With *progress* and universal schooling people are held to become more rational, more aware of scientific knowledge, and therefore more alike. Irish eat fewer potatoes and Sudanese eat less *kisra* as both adopt nutritionally balanced diets or Coca Cola habits. But at national celebrations I still eat potatoes to celebrate my Irish heritage and you eat *kisra* to show you are Sudanese. Our learning does not alter our respective favourite colours.

In accordance with this modernist notion of culture, we may tell our children different stories about how the world came into being, where the first people came from, and how our particular people became potato lovers or *kisra* eaters, but it is understood that as educated people we know about the Big Bang theory, Darwinian evolution, and so forth, and even if these theories are not conclusively proven, we know that some sort of natural forces—unseen and ineluctable even if unknown—are behind things, and we make sure our children realise that the old stories we tell them are just fairy tales our ancestors believed in the days before modern science.

Progress, according to modernism, shrinks the domain of culture to correspond to the dwindling realm of the irrational and aesthetic as science and rationality expand. Civil society replaces tribal society, and culture is reduced to ethnic food, music, folk dancing and surnames. Sociology, political science, and economics study civil society. Of course, not everybody progresses equally rapidly. Therefore, modernist thought gave us anthropology as the discipline to study the cultural differences of “tribal”²² societies that hadn’t yet advanced.

Anthropology and the study of difference

Discourse on ethnicity and related issues seems to be problematic, for its anthropological guardians as much as for their cousins in neighbouring academic and policy-making fields. While a variety of approaches to the study of ethnicity have emerged in anthropology in

2. “Tribal” is merely one of the most recent in a chain of euphemisms that have been substituted for *primitive* or *savage* in recent decades. As such, its core meaning differs little from that of “preliterate,” “preindustrial,” or any of the others it has followed.

recent years, fuzzy primordialist notions seem still prominent, not to mention predominant in popular conceptions. Few anthropologists would now claim that ethnicities are immutable primordial identities, and, indeed, a number of anthropologists have helped develop an understanding of the mutability of ethnic identity that acknowledges notions of situational identification, ethnic assimilation, colonial construction of ethnic units, and ethno genesis.³ Nevertheless, the primordialist notion remains strong outside the discipline, and often seems implicit in the concrete analyses of many anthropologists who otherwise reject primordialism.

Eric Wolf characterises contemporary social science as preoccupied with dividing its subject matter into distinctive cases, or societies, “each with its characteristic culture, conceived as an integrated and bounded system, set off against equally bounded systems” (1982, 4), and concludes that:

By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls. (Ibid., 6)

What is missing is an appreciation of the interconnectedness of social and cultural phenomena and the historical contingency and internal differentiation of the units, which present themselves for analysis at any particular moment.

I am not simply referring here to changes in cultural identification. Anthropologists have long recognised that cultural identities change. Unfortunately, their understanding of such change has been framed by a situational (or instrumentalist) understanding of ethnicity that, according to Worsley (1984, 246), tends to assume a market model in which individuals make choices, such as which ethnic identity to embrace, without constraint in much the same way that American consumers select which make of car to buy. The result is that the role of inequality and power relations in restricting the field of choice, and ultimately in shaping the larger cultural constellation, is left out. In particular, such a model of ethnicity is incapable of grasping the nature of cultural dynamics within and between societies divided by class.

Cabral’s contribution to a theory of culture

Amilcar Cabral, in contrast, was centrally concerned with social inequality and power relations and approached culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination and developed a theory of cultural mobilisation for liberation. Cabral’s theory has been the object of academic study but has not had the impact it deserves on social scientific thinking about culture (see O’Brien 1977). Though foreign domination generally does not provide the main immediate context for specifically cultural action in the situations we are currently concerned with as it did for Cabral, he treats colonialism as merely one form or level of domination and his most basic concepts remain useful.

3. Indeed, the analysis developed here owes much to the critical work of others. On Sudan see Asad (1970), Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed (2003), Duffield (1979, 1981, 1983), and Mohamed Salih (1994, 1998). Also see Barth (1969), Wolf (1982), Worsley (1984), Solway (1994), and Comaroff (1997).

For Cabral, a culture is simultaneously an expression of and the embodiment of a people's history:

Whatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and it reflects the organic nature of the society, which may be more or less influenced by external factors. History allows us to know the nature and extent of the imbalances and conflicts (economic, political and social) which characterize the evolution of a society; culture allows us to know the dynamic syntheses which have been developed and established by social conscience to resolve these conflicts at each stage of its evolution, in the search for survival and progress. (1973a, 42)

Here Cabral deploys culture at two distinct levels of analysis: at one level he discusses it as an ideal expression of a people's history and way of life, while at another level he treats culture as itself material, as the embodiment of a people's history, as their mode of living itself. His botanical metaphor moves back and forth between culture-as-flower and culture-as-(flowering-)plant. This metaphor stresses the dynamic quality of culture:

Just as it happens with the flower in the plant, in culture there lies the capacity (or the responsibility) for forming and fertilizing the seedling which will assure the continuity of history, at the same time assuring the prospects for evolution and progress of the society in question. (Ibid.)

It is, in fact, this dynamic aspect of culture that Cabral was most concerned with. His interest in the cultures of his people was not redemptive in the sense that the ethnographic enterprise was conceived as a redemptive mission meant to save vanishing "traditional" cultures out of time as they evaporated under exposure to expanding, modernising western cultures (see McGrane 1989; Fabian 1983). He did not wish to place traditional cultures under glass in a museum as mementos of the past, but to tap into their liberating potential to advance the struggle for liberation.

In order for culture to play the important role which falls to it in the framework of the liberation movement, the movement must be able to preserve the positive cultural values of every well-defined social group, of every category, and to achieve the confluence of these values in the service of the struggle, giving it a new dimension—the *national dimension* [original emphasis]. Confronted with such a necessity, the liberation struggle is, above all, a struggle both for the preservation and survival of the cultural values of the people *and for the harmonization and development of these values within a national framework*. (Cabral 1973a, 48; my emphasis)

To play this role, cultures had to be subjected to critique, for "[I]t is important not to lose sight of the fact that no culture is a perfect, finished whole. Culture, like history, is an expanding and developing phenomenon" (ibid., 50). Warning that uncritical exaltation of traditional

culture and blind acceptance of all of its aspects could be as harmful as racist colonial denigration had been, he argues:

Culture, the fruit of history, reflects at every moment the material and spiritual reality of society, of man-the-individual and of man-the-social-being, faced with conflicts which set him against nature and the exigencies of common life. From this we see that all culture is composed of essential and secondary elements, of strengths and weaknesses, of virtues and failings, of positive and negative aspects, of factors of progress and factors of stagnation or regression. From this also we can see that culture—the creation of society and the synthesis of the balances which characterize each phase of its history—is a social reality, independent of the will of men, the colour of their skins or the shape of their eyes. (Ibid., 50-51)

The commonalities among cultures stem not from any mystical or racial unity, but from the shared or common aspects of their history. In particular, insofar as they are the cultures of dominated peoples they embody that shared history of domination and of resistance to it (see O'Brien 1977). As they ally in a common struggle against domination, they forge a broader shared history and thereby a wider cultural unity. For Cabral, in the movement he led, the goal was the formation of a nation free of both foreign domination and internal relations of domination. The role he envisioned for cultural mobilisation was the creation of a national culture, both more and less than the sum of its several cultures.

Beyond the boundaries of the liberated nation-state in formation, Cabral was also aware of and concerned to promote wider international cultural processes. To a greater or lesser extent all who had experienced imperialist domination had important experiences in common, a degree of shared history that must be reflected in common cultural developments within each. To the extent that other aspects of the material life of people everywhere were similar, they must also share common cultural elements. Indeed, Cabral's idea of mobilising Africans on a cultural basis was always conceived against a backdrop of his conception of a global culture corresponding to the global political economy created through imperialist expansion:

It is important to be conscious of the value of African cultures in the framework of universal civilization, but to compare this value with that of other cultures, not with a view of deciding its superiority or inferiority, but in order to determine, in the general framework of the struggle for progress, what contribution African culture has made and can make, and what are the contributions it can or must receive from elsewhere. (Ibid., 52)

It should be clear by now that we are here dealing with a notion of culture that is a far cry from the notions of radical difference predominant within social science. Most importantly, it is not an idealist conception of culture that has been emptied of all political, economic, and social content and reduced to pure, arbitrary difference. Most emphatically, the reverse. As such, it is a conception of culture that gives rise to notions of identity that similarly have non-arbitrary content that includes and emphasises commonalities drawing people together rather than differences driving them apart. Cabral expressed it as follows:

In the formation and development of individual or collective identity, the social condition is an objective agent, arising from economic, political, social and cultural aspects which are characteristic of the growth and history of the society in question. If one argues that the economic aspect is fundamental, one can assert that identity is in a certain sense an economic reality. This reality, whatever the geographical context and the path of development of the society, is defined by the level of productive forces (the relationship between man and nature) and by the means of production (the relations between men and between classes within this society). But if one accepts that culture is a dynamic synthesis of the material and spiritual condition of the society and expresses relationships both between man and nature and between the different classes within a society, one can assert that identity is at the individual and collective level and beyond the economic condition, the expression of culture. This is why *to attribute, recognize or declare the identity of an individual or group is above all to place that individual or group in the framework of a culture.* (1973b, 65-66; my emphasis)

This passage goes to the heart of the problem of conceptualising culture as a potentially inclusive and harmonising social force. But to establish identity through placement in the “framework of a culture” is to do an about-face from the standard procedure in social science, for which identity lies in separateness and uniqueness. Cabral shows us why a liberating concept of culture cannot be static, content-less and arbitrary and must be dynamically historical and expressive of the relationships among people and between people and nature.

Wage labour and ethnicity in twentieth century Sudan

Implicit in my critique of western thinking about culture is an understanding that the core structure and dynamics of cultural systems cannot be theorised at a general level, but must be located firmly within particular fields of social relations. I take up the challenge here in the specific field of the social relations of the agricultural labour force developed in Sudan under the impact of capitalist penetration in the twentieth century. This labour force came to be structured and expressed in ethnic terms on the basis of principles that were fundamentally constituted in the context of capitalist incorporation (see O’Brien 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1988; Ali and O’Brien 1984).

British conquest in 1898 brought capitalist penetration that reshaped Sudanese social and cultural processes, groupings, and identifications. The British saw their colony south of Egypt as containing two distinct sorts of people, Africans and Arabs. Africans were regarded as primitives lacking any civilisation, while Arabs were acknowledged to have built a great, though long decadent, civilisation. The European “civilising mission” in Sudan was thus thought to be rescuing the Arabs from the dead end of their culture and Islamic religion and bringing the Africans to “civilisation” for the first time.

Two colonial imperatives shaped Sudanese society under British occupation in the twentieth century. Britain’s strategic aims in occupying Sudan in order to protect the flow of Nile waters to Egypt and secure the Red Sea route to India required pacification of the upper Nile and removal of the threat represented by the Mahdist state. The development of commercial

export agriculture depended upon moulding a portion of the population of farmers and pastoralists into a large seasonal wage labour force—which by independence in 1956 would number several hundred thousand. The first imperative led to the establishment of direct military rule in Sudan from 1898 until the 1920s, when it was gradually replaced by native administration through indirect rule. The second imperative led to the implementation of an array of economic and extra-economic policies designed to widen the operation of markets and market incentives in the country. Together, the policies developed in response to these imperatives gave modern Sudan its ethnic structure. The fact that this structure was constituted in the colonial context and not pre-existent in some autochthonous chaos of tribalism raises fundamental questions about the relationship between imperialism and the basic conceptual apparatus evolved for understanding third world social relations.

Capitalist development during the colonial period was decisively shaped by British priorities in securing in Sudan cheap sources of long staple cotton. Production of cotton for export—concentrated in the massive irrigated Gezira Scheme and controlled by British capital—predominated, leaving little room for significant indigenous accumulation. The agricultural labour force developed in Sudan in this context was largely seasonal, migratory, and ethnically segmented (O'Brien 1983, 1986, 1988). The ethnic terms in which the labour force came to be structured were not primordial or traditional in any static sense but were fundamentally constituted in the context of capitalist incorporation. The mosaic of patterns of incorporation into the agricultural wage labour force mirrored differences between local and social groups that were generally conceived in terms of cultural differences among them. If one knew a person's ethnic identification, one could fairly reliably predict what form her or his incorporation would take, including types, patterns, and intensities of work. The result was a highly segmented labour force structured on a basis that was expressed in terms of ethnic identities. Groups whose internal division of labour involved women in agricultural production, or allowed it in principle, tended to migrate to the Gezira irrigated scheme in family groups and to put all family members to work in activities such as cotton picking. Other groups, particularly those that practiced a strict seclusion of women, often preferred to intensify village production and to meet their cash needs through production of a cash crop demanded by the British, a preference that sometimes required relocation to more favourable areas. When members of such groups did engage in seasonal wage labour, it tended to be only adult men.

The situation was, however, not a simple matter of one-way cultural determination of social forms of production. Indeed, once incorporation had become widespread, the process seems more generally to have moved in the other direction, from social form to ethnic identity. Employers who sought labour of a particular type wanted first of all to know which ethnic groups provided it and then tended to recruit in the villages where those ethnic groups were known to live. Hence, workers who sought work of any particular type found it necessary or convenient to be in the villages where potential employers could be expected to look for them. In ways such as this an ethnic template came to impose itself on Sudan's social geography.

There was not only a single ethnic process at work, but many. The dynamics of each derived from the specific intersection of pre-colonial local characteristics and capitalist encroachment. In rural areas the social composition of a particular ethnic identity tended to be more or less heterogeneous but to take its central character from a predominant form of market

participation. In urban areas and some rural trading centres, a more narrowly occupational definition of ethnic identity—or ethnic definition of occupational identity—occurred. In both sorts of conditions, access to certain locations in the labour force and markets tended to become regulated by ethnic identity, often involving substantial cultural change. Whether through coalescence and synthesis of a new identity, assimilation and accommodation of individuals and small groups to shifting established identities, or through other means, the social division of labour came to be patterned on the basis of ethnic distinctions and people came to participate in labour migration circuits and other markets as “ethnics” of a particular sort.

The ethnic segmentation of the Sudanese labour market and the ethnic processes that were associated with its development corresponded to a historically specific set of conditions of capitalist expansion, not some inert legacy of age-old ethnic identities. Not only did new ethnicities arise and old ones change or disappear, but the very principles of their organisation and differentiation underwent profound transformation from pre-colonial conditions.

West African immigrants as ethnics

Due to the relative sparseness of population in Sudan and the lack of developed wage labour markets, the colonial regime encouraged immigration into Sudan of West African Muslims, especially poor Hausa peasants from the former Fulani sultanates (see Duffield 1979, 1981, 1983). In the early 1930s the government and the Gezira Scheme management organised an active coordinated program of settlement of such refugees in the scheme (see O’Brien 1980, 1983, 1984; Rondinelli 1981). As a virtually landless population they served as a stable pool of cheap wage labour year round. Other groups of West African immigrants were encouraged to settle in under-populated areas outside the Scheme, particularly in the Rahad/Dinder region east of the Blue Nile from Gezira, where they cultivated their own rain land farms and could be drawn upon as seasonal wage labourers for Gezira.

The groups involved in this immigration showed considerable cultural diversity. The largest number of them were Hausa-speaking peasants who affirmed distinct, named ethnic identities. There were numerous other groups as well, including Fulani, Borgu, Bornu, and various Chadian peoples. All of them were Muslims and most of them spoke Hausa at least as a second language, but many different languages and cultural forms were represented among them.

Right from the beginning, resentments against these groups began to develop among the indigenous populations with whom their work brought them in contact. The Gezira authorities used them in two important ways to discipline tenants in the Scheme. If a tenant failed to carry out an agricultural operation on schedule, an inspector hired settled labour to do the job at double the going wage and charged the expense against the tenant’s account. Any tenant who failed to cultivate his plot to the satisfaction of the British inspectors or who absconded (as many did during early cotton blights and the depression) were replaced by immigrant settlers. More generally, the long experience that most of the immigrant groups had of disciplined agricultural work under conditions of exploitation predisposed them to adapt to the rigors of market relations efficiently and impersonally. They bargained hard, and collectively, over wage rates and then worked very hard to maximise returns to their labour time. In contrast, many of the local, mainly Arab, populations—many of whom

were only part-time or recently settled cultivators—held agricultural work in low esteem, avoiding it when possible and working at it desultorily when it became necessary. Despite the dramatically higher labour productivity of West African settlers, tenants often tended to prefer hiring less hard-working locals with whom they could establish family-style patron/client relations and create long-term obligations to work.

The settlers came to be known generally in Sudan as “Fallata” (from the Kanuri word for Fulani). This term was applied indiscriminately to all “Westerners” and quickly took on basically pejorative connotations linked to stereotypes of these people as hard working and slavish. In a context in which the contacts local populations had with these diverse people were socially homogeneous, the cultural differences among them were glossed over and ignored.

The settlers responded to these conditions of hostility, discrimination and confinement to the lowest rungs of the social ladder through a process of cultural realignment. Some material differences with the local populations were reinforced. Some of the settlers moved into previously vacant economic/ecological niches, such as riverbank vegetable cultivation and commercial fishing, which they had occupied in West Africa. In regions where cultivation had previously been mostly restricted to sandy ridges, they moved out on the heavy clay plain where their broad-bladed, short-handled hoe, destined to become known in central Sudan as a “Fallata” tool, was more suitable to weeding the muddy soil in the rainy season. In addition, they made some changes in their material culture in adjusting to Sudanese conditions. The small-bladed, long-handled hoe used in dry weeding on sandy ridges by their Sudanese neighbours was added to their tool kit. Generally, they also adopted local styles of dress and house-type.

Along with these changes, they began to elaborate a number of key symbols to differentiate themselves from the culturally dominant Arabs in ways that served to legitimate the differences and endow them with dignity. In particular, they tended to adopt fundamentalist, ascetic Islamic practices and beliefs that served as a counterpoint to the “paganism” of the surrounding Arabs, many of whom practiced spirit possession (*zar*), ecstatic trance, and veneration of saints, and drank alcoholic beverages. In rural areas at least, some practiced an increasingly strict seclusion of women within the household compound and confined participation in wage labour to adult men only. They articulated an ethic of hard work and moderate consumption. Gradually, the name “Takari” came into use among them as a term applied, regardless of ethnic origin, to all of the people otherwise called Fallata. The term derives from the respectful name applied in the Hejaz to any pilgrim from West Africa. As the adoption of this name indicates, there was a tendency toward the obliteration of the inter-group and sub-group differences under a specifically Sudanese identity of Takari.

Mark Duffield (1979, 1981) has argued that this process represents the formation of a new, specifically Sudanese ethnic identity corresponding to a definite location in the colonial social system. Partly in defensive adaptation to circumstances of discrimination and lumping together by others, these diverse cultural groups have drawn on commonalities of their past heritage and contemporary circumstances to forge a more or less coherent ethnic identity. It is of course uneven, with small groups living in more remote rural areas showing less integration than others. I have encountered some villages of people who steadfastly affirm

their separate identity, yet have met some of their relatives in more central areas who claim the Takari identity.

The dynamics of Joama ethnic identification in central Kordofan

The Joama people are another group that has played an important role in the agricultural wage labour force. From the beginning they have been prominent as regular suppliers of cotton-picking labour in family groups. They occupy the transitional zone of central Kordofan where the sandy ridges of northern Kordofan penetrate the heavy clay plain of the rich central agricultural region. Settled cultivators identified as Joama have been recorded as living in this area since at least the seventeenth century. They are Muslim Arabic-speakers and generally claim Arabian origins, claims which are much disputed by their neighbours and by some Western scholars (most notably MacMichael 1912). Evidence suggests that this zone has been a scene of cultural blending for at least a couple of centuries. The area straddles the great east-west “highway” of the pre-colonial trade routes linking Sudan and the Ottoman Empire with the western Sudanic states, a route that was followed by thousands of African pilgrims to the Hejaz and along which the British laid an important railway line soon after conquest. This has long been an area of movement and mingling of diverse peoples. The name of the Joama itself roughly translates as “gathered together,” further reinforcing the impression of mixing. In villages across this zone I encountered considerably varied stories of the origins of the Joama and how they came to occupy their present homes. The account current in a particular village or cluster of villages often sounded remarkably similar to the reputed origin of some nearby Arab group. For example, in some eastern Joama villages, the favoured account traced their origin to a little-known brother, Jumi (the “in-gatherer”), of Jimi, the Arabian founding ancestor of the Jima group that lived immediately to the east of the Joama and whose claims to Arabian ancestry were widely respected. Other groups of Joama claimed to be recently settled branches of the Baggara Arab tribes.

Whatever the cultural dynamics of the earlier history of these people, their contemporary identity came to be bound up with their modern position in the wage labour force. This position has been characterised by annual family group migration for cotton picking, initially in the Gezira Scheme, but later more often in the pump-irrigated schemes along the Niles. Women and children were centrally involved in both village agriculture and wage-earning labour but, unlike the case with many Arab pastoralists and recently settled former pastoralists, Joama men generally appeared to work as hard and as long (at least) as other members of their families.

The Joama soon became famous in central Sudan as good, reliable cotton pickers and were highly sought after. With the rapid expansion and differentiation of capitalist agriculture beginning in the 1950s, an elaborate recruitment system for seasonal labour evolved and the Joama belt became a prime recruiting ground. Representatives of tenants or management would travel to the region in advance of the picking season and negotiate with prominent men to supply stipulated numbers of pickers at agreed rates. Recruiters would supply transportation to the scheme, cash advances and food for each family while at work in addition to fixing piece rates for work performed. As this recruitment system became entrenched,

newcomers to the agricultural labour market—or people who sought to move into a different sphere of it—increasingly found it necessary to be in the places recruiters usually went to find such labour. It also helped to be identified to the recruiter as members of ethnic groups, such as the Joama, reputed to be good workers. In response to these conditions, some of the thousands of immigrants and seasonal migrants from further west who annually moved through the Joama area began to settle on the fringes of Joama villages and insert themselves into the Joama pattern of seasonal migration.

Joama villagers were quick to take advantage of the abundant labour floating through their neighbourhood. Many villagers cleared as much land as possible and used the earnings from their own wage labour to hire others to help them cultivate larger fields. In a very short space of time all available land was privately held by individuals and cultivated every year.⁴ There was thus no vacant land for latecomers to cultivate for subsistence purposes during the long part of the year when wage labour in capitalist agriculture was unavailable. Instead, Joama landowners began to offer migrant families small grants or loans of land, taking them on as sharecroppers, and in other ways to give them access to land for subsistence crops in exchange for their labour. Then, after the local harvest both would migrate for the cotton-picking season to Gezira. Eventually, the more successful larger landowners were able to withdraw from wage labour altogether.

In research in a Joama village in 1977, we found a number of families with known origins outside the village that appeared to be in different stages of assimilation to the group.⁵ Four families identified themselves to us as Joama and were referred to by other villagers as Joama, but after some weeks in the village we learned from one older man that these families “used to be Fallata” (that is, West African immigrants or their descendants). They had come to the village in their youth and been granted plots of land by the speaker’s father. In this man’s view, the “Fallata” families had proved their worth through hard work and cooperation and had become legitimate Joama.

Another group of three brothers and their families had settled in the village more recently and occupied a somewhat different status. They had established a separate small hamlet with a number of relatives (Ballala, from Chad) about two hundred meters from the village and had been given very little land. Most of these families had rented or sharecropped land from the Joama, until all but the three remaining families had moved a few kilometres away to a new Ballala village a few weeks before we arrived. The families who remained behind had moved their houses into the main village and continued to cultivate small plots that had been given them by a large landowner. Villagers referred to these people as “good Ballala” who were “just like the Joama.”

4. Neither the colonial nor postcolonial governments recognised private land ownership except along the Nile and in the larger towns, but individualised private ownership flourished in the Joama area even without the backing of the courts.

5. For details of this research and its sponsorship, see O’Brien (1980).

The comparison between the situations of these two groups of families is suggestive of a process of ethnic assimilation in which each represents a different stage on the way to becoming Joama. If so, it is a process of formation of an ethnic identity that corresponds to access to a specific location in the agricultural wage labour force. Not all those assimilated to the ethnic identity of Joama occupied the same position with respect to the labour force. Some were independent, landowning peasants, while others were virtually landless agricultural labourers both in the village and on the capitalist farms, and yet others were merchants or small capitalists. But the ethnic identity that each affirmed was conditioned by a local social structure related to a regional and national social structure primarily through the participation of most villagers in wage labour according to a definite and distinct pattern identified as the Joama pattern. There were also a few other individuals and families from different ethnic backgrounds who had settled in the village and become Joama, including one of the two richest merchant-moneylenders and an Islamic healer, each of whom received a grant of land and patronage from one of the village's leading families.

An indication that such a process of assimilation has been going on longer than the few decades reflected in the cases discussed is given by the division of the population of the village roughly in half between the two principal Sufi *tariqas* represented there. The Sammaniya *tariqa* was the brotherhood most popular in rural areas of pre-colonial central Sudan and to which the Mahdi originally belonged, as did the bulk of his Joama army. The Tijjaniya *tariqa* was brought to significance in Sudan in the twentieth century by West African immigrants, the poor among whom were almost uniformly Tijjaniya. It could be that the Tijjaniya adherents in el 'Igayla are people of West African descent who did not feel the same sorts of pressures on their religious identifications as they experienced with respect to their ethnic identity. If so, it also suggests that not all West African immigrants participated in the formation of the Takari identity.

Pseudohistorical reconstruction in cultural analysis

As these cases suggest, ethnicities are not natural objects, slightly modernised traditional identities, relics, or billiard balls. Accounts of the impact of capitalist encroachment on Third World peoples that have taken ethnicity as an artefact of pre-colonial structures have been little more than *pseudo*-histories, based implicitly on oppositional models of non-capitalist society. This is so because the method of reconstituting the pre-capitalist past of these societies has often consisted of subtracting features supposed to be the effects on them of capitalism and then analysing the abstract consequences of adding back in the subtracted elements. That is to say, the starting and ending points of analysis, regardless of theoretical stance, have tended to be identical; analysis itself is pseudohistorical, being based on imputed absences of capitalist characteristics in the past or in existing supposedly autonomous units. The results vary depending only on the oppositional models employed; e.g., market/non-market, industrial/pre-industrial, modern/ traditional, etc.

The limitations placed on analysis by pseudohistorical construction upon a basis of oppositional models are crippling. Capitalist penetration is reduced to market creation and/or replacement of one external dominating structure by another, with qualitatively unchanged

“traditional” local communities either quickly dissolving or persisting in stunted form. Such impoverishment of theory leaves us incapable of contending with the complex dynamics of modern ethnic processes, and of finally transcending the apologetic tribal atavism thesis, which ascribes contemporary political fragmentation in African countries to the effects of primordial ethnic loyalties. It also renders us unable to anticipate or adequately analyse fundamental transformations within the bounds of capitalist political economy such as Sudan experienced beginning in the mid-1970s—or any of the apparently ethnic conflicts erupting in many parts of the world since the 1990s.

Another aspect of the problem I alluded to earlier is formalism in social science discourse on ethnicity, in which ethnicity is treated as qualitatively the same kind of phenomenon regardless of historical period, social context, or level of operation (Worsley 1984, 246-249). This discourse tends to represent the ethnicities of the contemporary San, the classical Roman, and the Corsican nationalist as functional equivalents. Analytically, tribalism, regionalism, nationalism and class struggle come to appear as mutually indeterminate alternative forms of social conflict linked by an implicit evolutionist schema. Social forms such as the ethnic segmentation of the Sudanese labour force or the national, cultural and religious appearances given to Sudan’s civil wars tend to be seen as manifestations of stubborn tendencies of outmoded traditional ideologies and sentiments to persist and of conflicts based on them to draw blood without cease. Such a fundamentally ethnocentric view misses the most central determinants of such processes.

I turn here to the interrogation of the discrepant systems of ideas Europeans and Africans, respectively, brought to their encounter in nineteenth and twentieth century Sudan. Specifically, I seek to link dominative colonial European conceptions of race, culture and identity in Africa and indigenous Sudanese conceptions and realities to the ethnic dynamics of colonial and postcolonial Sudan, particularly as embodied in the ethnic structure taken on by the agricultural labour market. Within this framework, I explore changing structures of academic and policy-oriented thought regarding cultural issues in Sudan since independence.

British and Sudanese ideas of race and ethnicity

The conceptual framework that the British brought to understanding the peoples over whom they sought to rule in Sudan was essentialist and social Darwinist. They were inclined to sort Sudanese into a congeries of distinct, bounded, and unique peoples who could be classified according to broad subsistence types thought to belong to a series of social evolutionary stages (cf. Johnson and Anderson 1988). Thus “hunters” were viewed as the most “primitive,” followed by “pastoralists” and then “cultivators.”

The social realities the British actually encountered in Sudan were, of course, a good deal more complex, and thus much interpretation was required before they could be made to fit into this evolutionist schema. Groups were so fluid as to give administrators fits when they attempted to impose a grid of fixed boundaries around “tribes” for purposes of administration through “indirect rule.” The members of many communities engaged in varying mixes of the three subsistence types rather than sticking to the one corresponding to their

supposed level of sociocultural attainment. The mixes varied locally, depending on climate, available resources and other factors. In some communities all individuals might engage in cultivating, herding and foraging at different times, while elsewhere communities tended to specialise in one subsistence type as related communities specialised in complementary activities and goods and personnel moved back and forth among them.

Europeans tended to see such situations as the recent results of various “outside” influences and generally sought to determine the essential character of each group by working out which subsistence activity was properly theirs. Thus, Evans-Pritchard (1940) worked out that the Nuer were essentially pastoralists, even if many Nuer communities derived much of their diet from fishing and cultivating crops. He then sought to explain their basic cultural values and fundamental way of life in terms of this pastoral essence, and presented their activities in cultivation, fishing, hunting and collecting as temporarily necessitated by intrusions of Arabs or British, or ecological stresses such as floods, rinderpest, etc.

More generally, British colonial thinkers saw several processes operating on the Sudanese to cause such mixing of subsistence activities belonging to different evolutionary stages and resulting in the blurring of cultural boundaries. The most significant of these they identified as: *Arabisation*, *Islamisation*, *racial degradation*, *acculturation*, and *civilisation* (or *modernisation*). They saw all these processes as working by some sort of contagion. In general, social intercourse with “more advanced” cultures was thought more or less automatically to lead more backward groups to become more like the more advanced. Thus, pastoralists exposed to farmers on a regular basis would gradually become cultivators themselves, adopting the associated beliefs and behaviours and thereby achieving a higher level of advancement.

Implicit in this approach to understanding difference is a somewhat contradictory cluster of cultural conceptions. On the European side, “culture” corresponded to, was an aspect of, “civilization.” Accordingly, the concept embraced all those higher intellectual, moral and aesthetic processes still commonly referred to as “high culture.” Not all peoples had civilisations in this sense; Africans in particular were considered to lack civilisations (see Asad 1973).⁶ In the absence of the great intellectual advancements characteristic of “civilisations,” and consequently the technology and other means required to elevate themselves above the daily struggle for subsistence, African peoples were seen by Europeans to have a very different sort of culture, simpler sets of ideas and lifeways based in their distinctive modes of acquiring their subsistence. In a fairly thoroughgoing sort of way, such cultures were not considered to be the embodiments of or capable of any sort of creatively conscious process, but were simply the extrasomatic accoutrements of the modes of subsistence corresponding to “pre-civilisational” levels of sociocultural evolution.

With respect to Sudan, the twin processes of Arabisation and Islamisation were seen as the most dominant, widespread, and potentially troublesome of these sorts of processes going

6. Analogous attitudes seem to have applied to the issue of British unions with Sudanese, who were sometimes acknowledged by their sires, sometimes not, but generally left behind as irretrievably Sudanese, not British, when the fathers returned home at the end of their service in Sudan (see Deng and Daly 1989; Johnson 1993).

on in Sudan at the time of British conquest (Spaulding and Kapteijns 1991). While orthodox western thought viewed Arab/Islamic civilisation as stagnant and decadent, it nevertheless recognised it as a civilisation, and, as such, far advanced beyond the “backward” cultures of “subsistence-oriented” African communities. It thus regarded African groups as prone to become Arabised and Islamised more or less automatically by simple prolonged exposure to Arab Muslims.

However, another process was seen to be working in reverse. More “advanced” groups, Arabs in particular, were thought to become degraded through too intimate forms of intercourse with people from “lower” stock; i.e., through “miscegenation.” MacMichael’s books (1912, 1922) traced the Arabisation of Sudan through investigating the pedigrees of tribes claiming to be Arabs. He judged the genealogies of some to be impeccable but portrayed others as “degraded” from the original Arab stock through interbreeding with Africans, while he painted yet others as uppity Africans adopting a veneer of Arab culture in order to “pass” as their Arab “betters.” Thus, the “Arab element” of the Joama, according to MacMichael, came to central Kordofan in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, but, “The Gawa’ma’a [Joama] are a much debased race and are flattered to an even greater extent than usual in Sudan by the denomination of Arab” (1912, 76). The central idea here is that Arab “blood” became diluted through mixture with the “blood” of “lower” races, to the point that the supposed higher qualities of Arabness are lost. It was partly this thinking that led to the absurdity of British officials on the ground among Arab Sudanese tribes regarded as not fully degraded drawing on their Arabist training at Oxford or Cambridge to instruct the bemused locals on how to speak and behave as “proper Arabs.”

The British ideas about cultural and racial matters described here were central parts of the intellectual-ideological culture of Britain at the time it extended its empire over the Sudanese. As such, these ideas shaped the attitudes of most British individuals toward their experiences of the Sudanese and provided much of the rationale and intellectual framework for the administration of Sudan. But they also shaped academic discourse about Sudan and Africa in enduring ways. Johnson and Anderson (1988) have analysed the lasting impact of crude social Darwinism on academic understandings of African subsistence patterns and ethnicity, and Spaulding and Kapteijns (1991) have shown the dominant role orientalist notions of “Arabisation” and “Islamisation” have played in the academic construction of Sudanese history since the middle ages. While the most crudely racist notions of racial debasement found in early imperial apologists such as MacMichael have long since been shed by respectable scholars, the critical studies just mentioned show the pervasiveness of the lingering legacy of the larger intellectual heritage.

While these ideas were also applied to other regions of the world (for example, America north of Mexico—see Pearce [1953] 1988), it was arguably Africa that was the field of the greatest elaboration of the most crudely Darwinian of them. In Africa, as elsewhere, these ideas articulated with more general features of Western social thought, such as the pool hall model identified by Wolf mentioned above.

In the process of reworking our conceptual apparatus for studying cultural issues, popular Sudanese ideas about culture, race, etc., provide important clues about some of the ways in which sociocultural processes in Sudan may have differed, and may now differ, from the

Western models previously employed to study them. Scholars may have something to learn from the people they study.

Pre-colonial cultural processes and concepts

Pending historical research that may in any case be impossible to carry out, it is hazardous to characterise pre-colonial ethnic processes in Sudan. It seems likely that they were more diverse and not subjected to a single dominating social force such as capital later represented. It also seems most likely that group identities were more centripetal and hierarchical than boundary-oriented and horizontal (cf. Anderson 1991, 15), that is to say, derived more from fluid dependencies on kinship-legitimised power centres than on antique traditions of membership in a continuous named group and residence in a fixed territory associated with such a group (see Ahmed [1977] 2003). Some identities, including ethnic identifications as Arabs, were conceived genealogically rather than in the genetic or “blood” metaphor of the colonising British. Thus, it sufficed to count a bona fide male Arab at some point, however remotely in the past, in one’s ancestry to count oneself legitimately as an Arab—without submitting to calculations of relative percentages of Arab and non-Arab “blood” in the Western racist manner, or classifying skin colour or other phenotypic variables. Alternatively, many such presumptive ethnonyms were also (or instead) used to describe ways of life in a different sense, such as “Arab” to refer to nomadic pastoralists, and “Baggara” to refer to cattle keepers.⁷ This openness was not incompatible with according higher prestige to the descendants of the prophet (*ashraf*) or of the more illustrious Arabian tribes. On the other hand, it also meant that people potentially had several ethnic or tribal identities they could mobilise or genealogically defined social groups they could legitimately claim membership in, and in many cases had regional and occupational identities they could mobilise in similar ways as well. Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed has analysed some of these phenomena for central Sudan, and Evans-Pritchard described something similar for the Nuer under the heading of “children of the girls” (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 226-227).

In contrast to the genetic and rigidly fixed notions of identity with which the British approached Sudan’s human landscape, Sudanese ideas tended to emphasise genealogy and phenotype and to be very fluid. Skin colours were observable to all and descriptively unproblematic regardless of parentage; any claim that a person who appeared to be one colour was “really” another would have been ungrammatical.

Before the British imposed the system of Native Administration in rural Sudan, it was generally not difficult to change tribal or higher order cultural identities. Anthropologists have often been told—by Nuer, Joama, Baggara, etc.—of members of the community who “used to be” Dinka, Fallata, Fur, or what have you, before they became Nuer, Joama, Baggara. The speakers were not being poetic or speaking metaphorically; they meant quite literally that so and so, who was a Fur, is now a Baggari. It is only the essentialist, genotypic pre-conceptions of Europeans that regard such talk as prevarication or metaphor. In the early

7. It is not uncommon for rural people to deploy such terms in different senses in different contexts. Thus I have encountered farmers of Arab ethnic groups denouncing “those Arabs” whose herds had damaged their crops even when the pastoralists in question were non-Arabs ethnically.

days of the development of the critique of essentialist thinking we marvelled at the novelty of Gunnar Haaland's provocative analysis (1966) of Fur becoming Baggara and Newcomer's radical claim (1972) that the Nuer are Dinka. It was thus somewhat of a shock when I began field research in Sudan to find similar processes and relationships widespread in the countryside and hear rural, unschooled Sudanese routinely offering these and similar analyses of such phenomena.⁸

There is, however, more to the differences in conceptions than divergent European and Sudanese cultural models. Conceptions change over time as the social realities they are created to interpret change, and they interact and influence one another. At any moment in time contending social groups may embrace conflicting conceptions of the basis of identification. There can be no denying, for example, that some Sudanese elites who were educated by the British and worked in close association with them developed cultural and racial conceptions that came closer to British ideas than to rural Sudanese ones. Indeed, such conceptions have dominated much of Sudanese public discourse since well before independence in 1956.

This is clear in the first act that the Legislative Assembly was empowered by the British to formulate, in 1948—the Nationality Act (Sudan Government 1956). That act defined citizenship in the new nation in terms of membership (by way of descent) in ethnic groups determined to have been resident as of the date of conquest in 1898 within the territorial boundaries eventually established for the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. In contrast to the policies of many countries, being born in Sudanese territory, even to parents who were born in Sudan, did not entitle a person to citizenship in the absence of the proper ethnic qualification. In practice, it often became sufficient to be acknowledged as a member of an Arab tribe—whether or not the particular group had met the residency qualification—to be accorded the rights and privileges of citizenship. In contrast, admitting to (or sometimes even being suspected of) membership in an ethnic group thought to have originated in West Africa and generally regarded as not Sudanese was often sufficient to exclude any claim to Sudanese citizenship, even for people whose families and lineages had established themselves in what came to be Sudan well before British conquest.

The Zabarma people of Um Fila and other villages in the Rahad region where I worked in the late 1970s provide a case in point.⁹ When tenancies in the new Rahad irrigation scheme were allocated to farmers in the region in 1976, all Zabarma who had not already somehow secured nationality certificates were denied tenancies, despite the fact that their ancestors had settled in Sudan by the middle of the nineteenth century. Sympathetic officials

8. In my research in el 'Igayla, the village *shaykh* propounded a theory of power centres and affiliation remarkably similar to that outlined by Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed (2003). He also defended the Joama's claims to authentic Arab descent in spite of the insults of MacMichael and others that pointed to their generally dark skin colour as evidence of their "African" and "non-Arab" character. The *shaykh* attributed the Joama's dark skin colour to long residence in harsh conditions, suggesting that my urban Sudanese field assistants' coloration had darkened two shades in the Sudanese scheme, from red to green, that I had darkened from white to red, and that we would all grow darker yet if we remained long in the village (see O'Brien 1980).

9. Details of the research in Um Fila and its sponsorship may be found in O'Brien (1980).

encouraged Zabarma men to let themselves be listed as Arabs so that they might be granted tenancies, but they refused. However, all adult men in neighbouring villages and three in Um Fila who claimed membership in Arab tribes were granted tenancies without having to prove citizenship.¹⁰

Neither the abolition of Native Administration in 1964 nor the exclusion of questions about ethnicity from the national census beginning in 1973 altered the fact that ethnicity, defined in a rigid and essentialist way, functioned as a fundamental aspect of postcolonial government policy and practice toward citizens of Sudan. This fact defines a specific cultural aspect of neo-colonial domination: the hegemonic definition of Sudanese nationality and culture as “Afro-Arab” in the decades since independence has embraced the Orientalist conception of the twin processes of Arabisation and Islamisation and given it a positive reading. According to this definition, non-Arab Sudanese communities must be Arabised and non-Muslim ones must become Muslim in order to become true Sudanese.

It was under pressures such as the ones the people of Um Fila experienced that some peripheralised communities “discovered” their “Arabness” in the decades following independence. Their public declarations usually included reference to genealogical research showing that some wandering Arab holy man or merchant had at some point in the past settled in their community, marrying or otherwise fathering offspring from whom modern members are said to be descended. Observers sometimes scoff at such declarations in the manner of MacMichael, arguing that the people concerned have simply been tinkering with their genealogies in order to bring themselves more prestige. Without denying that such things happen, it should also be pointed out that knowledge of actual Arab ancestors could have existed within given communities for generations without leading members to assume or promote an Arab “identity.” Once being seen as non-Arabs came to be a social liability for them, they very well might reassess the significance of these features of their heritage.

Such reassessment is but one aspect of the dynamism of processes of identification, ethnic and other. The stuff that makes up identities in any given context may also be read differently by different actors. What may be to one person nothing more or less than family ties, market relations, or occupational facts of life may be read by others as marks—as indelible as tribal scars—of membership in a particular ethnic group. How many of the people in western Sudan who have identified themselves to others as “Baggara” meant simply to say that they herded cattle for a living, but were instead heard thereby to affirm an ethnic identity? Even when people on one or both sides are aware of the discrepancy in meanings, which meaning will prevail depends on the relationship of the discourse of ethnicity and identity to prevailing power relations and agendas of domination. People do not embrace ethnicities or other identities in a vacuum, but always within a definite context in relation to particular others.

Many factors, conscious as well as unconscious, affect our associations with others and our understandings of those associations. We may emphasise the voluntary character of these associations—that we share values, feelings, and so forth—without concerning ourselves

10. These three men of Um Fila (two brothers and their nephew) “really” were “Arabs”—Rizaygat Baggara, to be precise—who married women of the village and settled there.

with their origins. In contrast, it may be precisely these origins that are most salient to observers. A club for secondary school graduates might be taken by outsiders for an ethnic club by virtue of their perception that the members tend to come from a single ethnic group that enjoys privileged access to education. In a multilingual situation individuals might seek out fellow speakers of their native tongue to converse with from time to time simply for the pleasure of speaking the language they feel most comfortable in, and not because of any sense of ethnic connection.

Civil war and identity-based conflicts in Sudan

The postcolonial history of North-South relations in Sudan is one of enduring hostility and intermittent violence. In 1972, the Addis Ababa Agreement ended the first round of a civil war that had lasted seventeen years. The agreement granted the South regional autonomy with its own parliament and ministries within a federal Sudan, and a semblance of peace was restored. In 1983, however, civil war erupted again. The resumption of the civil war and the introduction of Islamic *sharia* laws by the Nimeiri regime (1969-1985) followed the division of the South into three regions—a violation of the Addis Ababa Agreement. Accumulated southern grievances included the absence of any serious attempt by a government dominated by the North to implement socio-economic development programs for the South, the decision to build the Jonglei Canal in the South, which would have diverted the White Nile waters away from grazing lands and permanent settlements to supply more irrigation water to the North and Egypt, and the refusal of the northern regime to consult with the South over the exploitation of oil found in that region. The civil war resumed in 1983, when a new movement in the South, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army,¹¹ was founded, under the leadership of Colonel John Garang. Unlike its predecessor, the Anya Nya, that had led southern resistance in the second half of the 1960s, the SPLM/SPLA presented itself as an all-Sudanese movement whose goal was to radically reform the political system of a unified Sudan.

The fall of the Nimeiri regime in 1985 was followed by a brief period (1986-1989) of parliamentary rule, which was ended in June 1989 by a military coup inspired by the National Islamic Front (NIF). The NIF is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, and had been active in Sudanese politics for years. The politically dispossessed political forces in the North coalesced in opposition abroad in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) a few months later. The NDA consisted of a dozen political parties, and many professional associations and trade unions. After several years of tortuous negotiations, it was joined in 1995 by SPLA and four regional movements representing the Beja, Nuba, Fur and Zaghawa ethnic/regional groups. By this time, the SPLA had suffered serious splits in its ranks, when some of its leading figures formed their own factions and broke away. Confusion reigned in the South subsequently. While the main body of the SPLA remained under the leadership of

11. The organisation bears the dual name Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement/Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army to reflect its political as well as military character. Most commonly this is abbreviated SPLM/SPLA, which usage I adopt here.

John Garang and entered into an alliance with the NDA, the breakaway factions called for southern secession and concluded a peace agreement (April 1997) with the Islamic regime in Khartoum on the promise of an eventual referendum on separation. Already for a year or more the anti-SPLA southern armies had been redeployed to fight the SPLA in cooperation with government troops. The SPLM/SPLA eventually recovered and the separate agreement fell apart, but government-backed militias based on various southern ethnic groups continued to operate against the SPLA.

As these developments make clear, the conflicts underlying Sudan's civil wars are a great deal more complex than the simple oppositions between North and South, Arab and African, though leaders on both sides often try, for different reasons, to paint the picture in such broad strokes. An archaeology of the terms is therefore needed, for which the starting point is the colonial construction of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Some Sudanese were involved in enslaving others before the British came along, but cultural boundaries were in any case fluid and the classification of people into those who were potential slaves and those who were not cannot be read off the categories of a later epoch. The roots of contemporary social struggles in Sudan extend deep into the past. Significant sections of the present dominant social groups are descended from the dominant classes of long-ago kingdoms. Large numbers among the northern population are descended from non-Arab peoples of the southern region and the hill masses that crop up here and there across the central plain who were enslaved in the name of Sudanese kings or the viceroys of Egypt (Davidson, 1961). The populations left behind have not forgotten the depredations among their people by the forefathers of the present dominant groups in the north, even if many of them have become Muslims and learned to speak Arabic.

Social crises and conflicts that focus on issues of identity and values complicate the dynamics of association and identification and alter the stakes and perceptions of such ambiguities. So too does the perceived social position of interlocutors and audiences for identity statements. For example, Mohamed Salih (1994, 1998) has argued that it was the perception by both supporters and opponents that many in the leadership of the SPLM/A were ethnic Dinka that determined how the leadership's policy statements and actions were read. Despite official statements that the SPLM/A sought a unified Sudan, many of its rural Dinka supporters rallied to the movement as an organisation promoting Dinka interests in opposition to competing interests of other ethnic groups. Also, opponents have from the beginning in the 1980s seen the SPLM/A as a southern Sudanese separatist movement.

In twenty-first century Sudan, religion has come to play a central role in the discussion of identity, but still in a way that anchors identity in essentialist notions of ethnicity and race. This is perhaps clearest in discussions of the rights of non-Muslim people under an Islamic government. Members of historically Muslim ethnic groups are effectively classed legally as Muslims regardless of beliefs (through the law against apostasy), and members of historically non-Muslim groups may be exempted from the rule of Islamic law in provinces that have been historically predominantly non-Muslim. Officially, these problems are located in the South and the people exempted are "Southerners" whose rights are regarded as protected as long as "their" province is exempt, even if they are not personally able to enjoy that protection due to the fact that they are among the many "Southerners" resident in the "Muslim" provinces—many of them born there. Racism has been most openly manifest in

the recent assault by “Arab” militias on “non-Arab” Muslim communities in Darfur. These militias (the *Janjaweed*) explicitly represent themselves as Arabs ridding the land of “Blacks.”

Even liberal voices promoting Sudanese national reconciliation in ethnic harmony and political unity have tended in the current era to conceive ethnicity and identity in essentialist and genetic terms. Francis Deng, for example, in fiction (1986) as well as in scholarly work (1995), portrays the identities embraced by dominant groups in Sudan and their repression of other identities as the products of a case of collective false consciousness. He maintains that the Sudanese people and their culture are hybrids of African and Arab parents, and that as soon as the warring parties realise this fact, forswear purist pretensions, and recognise their Afro-Arab brotherhood, conflicts of identities will cease. The vision Deng promotes veers between the rigidly genetic and the mystically messianic. This seems to be a case of a primordialist understanding that attributes ostensibly ethnic/racial conflict to a widespread forgetting of primordial ties.

Culture and nation

Cabral’s thinking about culture was decisively shaped by his political project of building the liberating culture of a nation that had been established as a geographical fact by Portuguese colonialism (Boxer 1969) but which was still to a large extent socially and culturally fragmented. He sought to build a specifically national culture to correspond to the geographical fact created by the Portuguese as a basis for ridding his country of oppression. His choice of the nation as the unit to mobilise (indeed, to create) culturally reflected his perception of the nature of the enemy—the Portuguese colonial state. But Cabral was an internationalist who saw the nation-state as a product of a specific mode of production and the class struggle to which it gave rise, and he saw the national struggle he led as but a phase of a larger global struggle to end oppression and exploitation. As victories were won at a national level, eventually oppressive states would disappear, followed by the disappearance of the nations formed as their basis.

What now of nations as the units of cultural dynamics in an era of crisis of the nation-state more than three decades after the declaration of Guinea-Bissau’s independence and Cabral’s assassination? I think this is the political question of the current era, and one that awaits adequate formulation before meaningful answers can even be attempted. It seems to me that the problem of the nation (any nation, and the phenomenon of the nation as such) and its future viability hinges very much on the fate of the community a nation must imagine itself to be in order to constitute a nation. As Anderson (1991, 6) has pointed out, all communities larger than small villages in which all know each other are necessarily, as communities, creations of imagination. A nation, according to Anderson, is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (Ibid., 7; emphasis in original)

It is this ultimate fraternity that could define the historical limits of the nation-state: how far can the fragmentation of community, the brutal chauvinism of some fragments against others, and the voracious demands of the nation on members’ willingness to die go before

imagination shrinks in horror and extinguishes this crucial willingness? Indeed, one aspect of the crisis that initiated the traumatic time-space compression from 1973 was the refusal of millions to die for their nations in controversial wars waged by the United States, Portugal, the Soviet Union and other states.

While the roots of nationalism as a phenomenon and the roots of many specific nations have been cultural, it seems to me that it is the rootedness of all nationalism in community (“conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship”) that is most crucial to understanding its nature. In a sense ethnicity and other cultural identifications provided a handy starting point (historically and rhetorically) for the creation of national communities—most crucially through the mystifying powers of the implied basis of the community in kinship—but there is otherwise no inescapable connection between nationality and ethnicity. The future of the nation state seems most likely to lie with its ability to provide people with imagined communities—whether recruited and defined on cultural or whatever terms—that they are willing to live for.

Imagining new communities

Four fundamental principles for national reconciliation were articulated at a meeting of some of Sudan’s leading progressive intellectuals in Ambo, Ethiopia in 1989 (Ambo Workshop 1989, 173):

1. The Sudan has never historically emerged as one nation. It is a multi-national and multi-cultural country. Thus no particular nationality, whatsoever its size, has the right to impose its own identity over the others.
2. National identity is not based on social, cultural or geographical locality but on the principle of citizenship.
3. The successive regimes failed to recognize the country’s diversity. This failure led to the one-dimensional nature of Sudanese nationalism reflected in the political, economic, cultural and social dominance of one nationality that denies other nationalities the right to develop.
4. Thus emerges the necessity for the promotion of a new cultural outlook that would create a conducive environment for mutual interaction between the cultures of the various nationalities.

Here in broad strokes they have sketched out a basis for a new Sudanese nation—which they call “The New Sudan”—setting parameters for imagining Sudan as a community “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991, 7) to replace the corrupted Sudanese nation that has been torn apart by decades of oppression and civil war. National identity is to be based on the inclusive principle of citizenship rather than on exclusivist ethnic identities.

Yet, as points three and four tacitly acknowledge, “citizenship” is a rather amorphous quality that doesn’t define any particular national identity. Why would anyone want to

be a citizen of Sudan, as opposed to being a citizen of a South Sudan or an Upper Nile Republic or a Darfur? Point four offers a “new cultural outlook” rather than a new Sudanese cultural formation, which remains ambiguous in its implications for national identity. Subsequent points set out key rights and freedoms demanded for Sudan’s citizens, such as freedom of religion guaranteed by a secular state, the emancipation of women, etc., and echo Cabral’s stress on the liberating social character of the core elements of the desired national culture.

The SPLM/A, in a paper prepared for the same workshop, emphasises many of the same rights and freedoms of democratic citizenship in its formulation of a new Sudanese national identity, but is not so ambiguous with regard to culture, which it sees as central to the identity it wishes to promote. The SPLM/A calls for a view of Sudanese culture that sees it as “essentially a product of historical development” (1989, 84), and goes on to argue:

Its African and Arab identity factors, their respective cultures in addition to Islam, Christianity and other traditional beliefs some of the citizens observe and practice, are influences that do not exist in isolation from each other. These are elements which over the ages have been inextricably interwoven into the fabric of our society. They are strands that have fused together to form an integral whole that cannot be represented or denoted by any one particular constituent element The diverse nationalities making up Sudan can and will have to coalesce into a Sudanese Nation (National Formation) with its own distinct civilization and with the capacity to contribute in its own right to the enrichment of Human Civilization rather than merely serve as an appendage of other nations. (Ibid., 84-85)

There are resonances here with Cabral’s ideas about national liberation and culture, in the emphasis in both documents on building a national formation free of relations of domination and oppression and contributing to some sort of supranational, global civilization. It is understandable that the wording of the first should emphasise citizenship and cultural “outlook” and tiptoe around the issue of cultural dimensions of national identity while the second more or less asserts fusion of the many cultures of Sudan into a single national culture as accomplished fact; these are documents produced as contributions to an effort to end a civil war between sides that were represented in contested cultural terms. Serious discussion of culture and identity can only begin when conditions for peaceful discussion have been created.

What contribution can social science make to this process?¹² It seems to me that helping to define a community of “Sudanese” that embodies a shared history in Cabral’s terms must be at the core of this effort. And it must be a critical effort that does not shirk the task of

12. Sudanese social scientists have already made courageous contributions in this struggle. For example, the participants in the Ambo Workshop in 1989, whose declaration I quoted above, were arrested upon their return to Sudan from the workshop and banned by the El Mahdi regime from leaving the country again. They had deliberately defied the regime’s ban on meeting with members of the SPLM/SPLA (which is the reason the workshop was held outside the country) because they felt strongly that all sectors of Sudanese society should be represented in the crucial discussion of Sudanese identity that was needed as a basis for reconciliation and formation of a unified nation. These individuals, as well as many other intellectuals,

identifying oppressive cultural practices for what they are while drawing inspiration from the liberating characteristics of Sudanese cultures.¹³ If the community imagined is to be a nation corresponding to the Sudanese state, it must be conceived, not in opposition to and in competition with other nation-states, but as a fraternal community that has a long history, shared with its neighbours, of the experience of imperialism and struggles against many forms of oppression. Imagined in this way, the Sudanese community would be poised to take its place in the universal civilization to which the leaders of its progressive movement aspire to contribute. The task is large and the stakes are high.

Globalisation, differentiation, and struggle

I began by criticising modernist thought and conventional wisdom about ethnicity, showing how the dominant ideas essentialised culture and identity. In doing so they failed to grasp how ethnicity is shaped by historically specific social forces, and that it is therefore a varied rather than unitary phenomenon. From this critique I derived the implication that the core structure and dynamics of cultural systems and identities based on them cannot be theorised at a general level but must be located within the particular relevant fields of social relations. I proceeded to do this for modern Sudan. Now I must conclude by showing that the Sudanese case, while particular, is not exceptional and can provide lessons as points of departure for carrying out similar analyses in other places.

As the comparison of British and Sudanese ideas about identities demonstrates, humans have various systems for classifying kinds of people. The arrogance of Western modernism has led the conventional wisdom to disregard or devalue other thought systems and to conflate all cultural classification schemes with its own ideas about ethnicity. In so doing it has tended to miss what Comaroff (1997) characterises as the difference between “totemism” and ethnicity: “totemism” classifies mutually autonomous and contrasting segments of a cultural universe while ethnicity “*has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy*” (Comaroff 1997, 74; emphasis in original). Comaroff’s terms point to a fundamental difference and his characterisation of ethnicity draws attention to the most important dynamic underlying the contemporary conflicts expressed in cultural terms: relations of domination and resistance to them.

have suffered even graver consequences of their continued commitment to building a democratic Sudan under the El Bashir regime since 1989.

13. Abdullahi An-Na’im (1992) has made a provocative beginning on a debate among Muslims over aspects of the religion as it is practiced that he considers oppressive and in need of change. He argues that *sharia* public law does not recognise full rights of citizenship for non-Muslims and thus cannot serve as the legal framework for a democratic plural society, and goes on to take non-Islamist Muslims to task for restricting their objections to *sharia* to the question of the rights of non-Muslims “instead of making their own original and credible challenge to the proponents of Sharia” (An-Na’im 1992, 26). He supplies specific suggestions for reform within Islam. It is to be hoped that others will seriously join him in critical discussion of anti-democratic practices within other religious and cultural formations.

A central obstacle to understanding ethnicity is its sheer experiential weight on the consciousness of its bearers and the tenacity with which some people cling to it. As Comaroff has observed, “*while ethnicity is the product of specific historical processes, it tends to take on the ‘natural’ appearance of an autonomous force, a ‘principle’ capable of determining the course of social life*” (1997, 79; emphasis in original). The failures of conventional wisdom stem in part from its inability to escape this “natural” appearance to do the real work of social science, which is to penetrate behind people’s experience to the underlying conditions that shape it, conditions which include at their core the exercise of power through manipulation of culture and feelings of belonging (see Neocosmos 1995).

Ethnicities conceived in this way are thus sites of struggle, whether expressed in overt inter- or intra-ethnic struggles or contested in small acts of resistance. In the Sudanese civil war the sides struggled to impose different definitions of the identities of the parties involved and the nature of their conflict at the same time that parallel struggles for dominance went on within them. Some contending groups find it in their interests to portray the combatants and the struggle between them as ethnic, while others deny such claims and advance others.

In contrast to the overt struggles represented in the civil war, the struggles involved in the ethnic processes I analysed in the context of the formation of Sudan’s agricultural labour force were sometimes less obvious. The British sought to use West African immigrant groups against indigenous communities and the immigrant groups were subjected to discrimination and treated as a single subordinate ethnic group. While the immigrant communities did not succeed in preventing either the imposition of ethnicity or their subordination, they did effectively resist aspects of the imposed definition of their identity and build a positive common identity they could affirm. When the colonial regime imposed taxation and other measures to force people into the market economy, some communities sought escape and others accommodation. For example, when British cotton cloth was introduced at artificially low prices not all communities bought it. When the authorities responded by banning cotton cultivation in the districts concerned, many farmers moved their cotton plantings inside their fenced compounds and continued to produce their own cloth—until police patrols sent to find out why they still were not buying the manufactured stuff entered their compounds and destroyed the plants (see O’Brien 1980). The fenced compounds, the extended families that lived within them, the seclusion of women, and the resistance to colonial impositions they represented all entered into the definition of these communities, by themselves and outsiders, as ethnic entities of a particular sort in contrast to other such entities.

The conditions imposed by the British in Sudan forced many people out of their villages and camps seasonally in search of wage labour, mostly in cotton picking, but people were able to determine significant aspects of the terms of their work, as I have shown above. Their different responses provoked in turn new strategies by the colonial authorities and their employers to manipulate them. And so on. The different patterns of response came to be identified—not always in the same way by all parties—in terms of ethnic identities that formed, blended, fashioned and re-formed as conditions fluctuated and changed. And often there was contention within and between groups over boundaries, membership, and basic principles of identity and association. In many cases the internal contention represented struggles between efforts to use one version of group identity to buttress power and democratic impulses reflected in a contrasting version (e.g., elder men’s patriarchal visions opposed to women’s and younger

men's demands for voice). As Mamdani (1996) has shown, colonial policy tended to foster "rural despotism" through enhancing the powers of chiefs vis-à-vis the community. However, results were not everywhere the same, as some communities succeeded to varying degrees in resisting the exactions of chiefs. Thus, for example, many native administration *shaykhs* in Sudan were unable to extract the labour service from their subjects granted by the British or else rejected the right as a violation of their trust. Some named groups were ancient, some new, but all shaped in such fundamental ways by their encounter in the colonial, and postcolonial, situation.¹⁴

In insisting on the historical and social specificity of ethnicity there is a danger of losing theoretical coherence in particularism. It is therefore important to remember Wolf's (1982) caution against viewing the world as a global pool hall and to remember that no social field in the third millennium exists in isolation. The globalising processes of the post-Fordist world affect ethnic processes everywhere. However, even if Coke is available in every town and the names of celebrities like David Beckham are household words on all continents, globalisation's homogenising tendencies are accompanied by new factors of differentiation as people in different places respond to common influences out of different experiences of local conditions, and their different responses can only be understood in relation to those heterogeneous experiences.

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14. A particularly interesting form of ethnic contention seems to be growing in Botswana, where political entities officially known as "tribes" are recognised by the constitution and represented by "chiefs" in a House of Chiefs. These tribes have long contained large sections of what Schapera called "alien" peoples, and in recent years some of these groups have begun to assert independent ethnic identities, claim status as oppressed minorities, and advance demands to have their own tribes with their own chiefs and their own territory (Schapera [1938] 1994; Davies 1999; Solway 1994). In response, tribal and government authorities have tended to dismiss or denounce such initiatives as disloyal and promoting "tribalism" and ethnic conflict. It seems that tribes have traditions and laws with chiefs and customary courts as custodians and enforcers, but ethnicity is something only dissident minorities have.

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Chapter 13

From Native Administration to Native System: the reproduction of a colonial model of governance in post-independence Sudan

Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

Introduction

The term “Native Administration” refers to a form of local governance based on tribes or ethnic groups as social units. Although its roots existed among local communities for a long time before the advent of colonialism, the specific formulation and integration of tribal leaders into the workings of a modern state apparatus was specifically promoted by European colonial authorities in Africa. In the Sudanese context, it was the British colonial authorities that were responsible for the implementation of this type of apparatus. Employed to differentiate it from administration by expatriates working for the colonial government, the term continued to be used even after the country achieved its political independence in 1956.

The proponents of the system thought that the ethnic pattern of decentralised governance was best suited for traditional societies where identity groups lived in spatial and intellectual isolation. Communities were physically isolated by natural barriers (rivers, mountains, deserts, etc.) that impaired communal interaction. They were also intellectually isolated and characterised by illiteracy, which was widespread and compromised inter-communal com-

munication. The traditional societies lived in a state of insecurity as modern government institutions responsible for the protection of people's lives and property either did not exist or were inefficient. Such communities developed their own systems of grassroots administration to cater to the provision of security and communal solidarity. In fact, tribal and ethnic leadership preceded the Anglo-Egyptian colonial era in Sudan (1899-1955), although it did not have a unified pattern of political institutions. Different local communities had different structures and functions for political leadership depending on their particular historical and cultural conditions. In a sense, the colonial administration provided the context for political unification of the country for the first time in its modern history.

Sudan is no exception in this regard. For the fact that European colonialism created new states in the continents of Africa, North America and South America as well as in Australia and New Zealand is common knowledge. Additionally, colonial powers also altered the indigenous political systems of the colonised; in particular they reinvented the "tribe" as the most viable political unit to which individuals belonged, even in cases where diversification took place (Mafeje 1971). This was in sharp contrast to the idea of "citizenship" that characterised the European perception of a modern state, which was supposed to be part of the civilising mission and an acceptable justification for colonialism in the first place.

The present chapter deals with the case of promoting tribal leadership as a component of political and security administration in Greater Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. Although the newly introduced system has been given the name of "Native System," it shares many similarities with the Native Administration that British colonial authorities had introduced in the first quarter of the twentieth century. An important question to ask therefore is: If the establishment of a native administration by British colonial authorities can be understood against this backdrop, how can we understand its re-adoption by the Sudanese government in the twenty-first century? This chapter attempts to answer this question. However, to do so, it follows the case of Native Administration from its early stages.

Native Administration and the Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule (1899–1955)

As a prerequisite for the imposition of the colonial type of economy in Sudan, the condominium rule was actively involved in the pacification of its opponents and consolidation of its powers. Because of the vastness of the rural areas of the country, these goals meant the reorganisation and management of the different tribes by defining their territories and retaining their tribal leaders (wherever that was possible), and avoiding weakening them so that the existing system should not be disturbed. In other words, a soft landing policy was adopted, with the old order gradually giving way to a new one.

The colonial government retained many of the institutions from the old regime under the newly re-configured "Native Administration" (*idara ahlia*). However, it also introduced major changes to the system. The primary function of the native administrator came to be one of maintaining law and order within one's identity group and between it and other identity groups. This also meant that any anti-government activity had to be promptly reported. The responsibility of protecting peoples' lives and property is of course the primary

responsibility of a modern government. However, it would have been extremely costly for the colonial rule to provide security institutions for every village and every nomadic camp. Besides providing a cheap type of administrative machinery, the native administrators were also responsible for animal tax assessment and collection, the protection of the environment and the settlement of disputes. In order to increase their efficiency, they were supported by a system of “Native Courts” that ruled according to customs and traditions rather than according to a modern statutory law.

In establishing the Native Administration, the colonial authorities adopted the philosophy of indirect rule developed by Frederick Lugard, the then British High Commissioner in Nigeria. The Lugardian model, as discussed by AbuShouk and Bjorkelo (2004), was a practical form of administration and control that would leave the local population free to manage their own affairs through their own rulers, under the guidance of the British staff, and subject to the laws and policies of the administration. It is based on the following fundamentals:

1. A political hierarchy of local chiefs that would derive its powers from the central government and be in charge of the maintenance of law and order, organisation of labour and collection of local taxes.
2. A parallel hierarchy of native courts which would deal with minor criminal, civil and personal cases in terms of customary law and general principals of justice.
3. A native treasury that would manage local revenues and pay out necessary expenses of local authorities and social services.
4. A team of local staff which would carry out its duties under the guidance of British field officers and subject to the laws and policies of administration.

The application of this model in Sudan meant that the British opted for the incorporation of traditional tribal and village leaders in the structure of local government. The native or tribal administration was based on an earlier system of regions divided into recognised *dars* or tribal homelands. Accordingly, local figures were entrusted with administrative, judicial and security matters in their territorial domains. The system was gradually developed and finally legalised after a series of ordinances in 1922, 1925, 1927 and 1928, and eventually consolidated in the Native Courts Ordinance of 1932, which regulated the administrative and judicial powers of tribal sheikhs and established a hierarchy of local courts in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Abdul-Jalil 1985). Such a system provided security with minimal staff and finance. The model was further modified when the local government framework was introduced in 1932, and municipalities, townships and rural councils were created in 1937. However, traditional tribal leaders with their executive, financial and legislative powers remained an integral part of the reformed system. A further development took place in 1951 with the establishment of a new Local Government Ordinance. According to this new arrangement tribal leaders assumed an honorary role in the newly established local councils, which took over the financial and executive powers previously held by tribal leaders.

The Native Administration provided a system of local governance, which managed the use of natural resources and allowed various groups to live in relative peace and stability. The

system consisted of three administrative tiers. At the top tier were the paramount chiefs (Nazirs, Sultans, Shartais or Meliks), with variations in the title depending on the different regions of the country. The paramount chief was to be in charge of an entire tribe assisted in most cases by “Omdas” (heads of tribal sub-sections). These comprised the middle tier of the administrative structure. At the bottom were the “sheikhs” (village or camp headmen). All these native administrators were granted powers to maintain law and order and collect taxes in their respective communities. The paramount chiefs and some Omdas were also given judicial powers to settle disputes among individuals.

A chain of command was maintained so that family heads would be responsible towards their respective sheikhs, who in turn were responsible towards the Omdas, the latter being accountable to the paramount chief. Mohamed (1998) argues that the system was particularly efficient in maintaining law and order because members of the lower tier were well connected and responsible towards members of the upper tier. When a crime was committed, the paramount chief would immediately know about it through the Omda, the sheikh, and heads of extended families who all acted as informants.

Native Administration after independence

Upon becoming independent, Sudan inherited the Native Administration system, which successfully maintained law and order among rural and nomadic communities according to the philosophy of indirect rule. Independence brought new demands for which the Native Administration was not prepared. The subjects now had legal rights towards their state as citizens and not as mere tribesmen. Because of the nationalistic trends that accompanied independence, the system became politicised and its functions slightly altered so that it no longer only served the purpose of maintaining law and order.

The public opinion was mostly unfavourable towards the Native Administration, especially in large urban centres. First, the system was not welcomed by the leaders of the nationalist movement, who were attempting to liberate Sudan from colonial rule. They perceived of native administrators as the stooges created by the colonial government to perpetuate its rule. Second, following the emergence of political parties in the Sudan, the radical political parties, especially the leftists, regarded native administrators (particularly the paramount chiefs) as the supporters of the reactionary political parties of the Umma and the National Unionists. They acted relentlessly to attack the native administrators and undermine their leadership position. This gave rise to local resistance to the Native Administration by the newly emerging educated and politically conscious segments of local communities.

The most serious blows to Native Administration came in 1964 and 1970. Following the 1964 October uprising, a resolution was reached by the leftist-dominated caretaker government to abolish the system. However, as the government was short-lived, the resolution was not implemented because national elections brought a conservative government that ignored the resolution altogether. But another radical government ascended to power in 1969 and it removed most paramount chiefs in northern Sudan from office. The military regime of Jaafar Nimeiri formally abolished Native Administration in 1970 and in 1971 passed the People’s Local Government Act, which divided the country into regional, district, and area councils. The new local administration replaced the Native Administration and abolished the

jurisdiction and administrative authority of the tribal leaders. Some say this re-organisation was the first factor that triggered tribal conflicts on a wider scale in regions like Darfur and Kordofan. The critical weakness in modernising the administration lay in the change of emphasis from its previous judicial role (maintaining law and order) to an administrative role, to which political mobilisation was later added.

Since 1964, the demoralised native administrators have become less effective in carrying out their traditional role of maintaining law and order and resolving disputes among their tribal folk. They were further weakened by the central government tampering with the native courts under the pretext of the need to separate legal and administrative tasks. By doing so, however, they introduced a new type of administration that is akin to modern society, in which specific institutions perform specific functions. In traditional administration, a single ruler performed all functions (i.e., administration, law, governance, and financial responsibilities). In practice, however, tribal leaders did not disappear from the political scene as they continued to be acknowledged heads of their groups. Moreover, the tribe became a political base to promote its members to senior positions in local councils, as well as to the membership of the regional and national assemblies. Ethnic allegiance and increasing polarisation have permeated every corner of government offices, as members of the group are considered to be representatives of their tribes and are supposed to work for the interests of their tribal folk. This was akin to a sort of vertical ethnic expansion, from the local level to the regional and even national levels.

Prior to abolishing Native Administration, the Nimeiri regime had already dissolved all political parties in the Sudan. The vacuum was filled with an emerging new social and political force, the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU), the only recognised party at that time. In the rural areas SSU chapters were led by the rural elite comprising of teachers, small traders, and local government employees, resulting in the emergence of new leadership in the regions. Nonetheless, when decentralisation was introduced and regional governments were formed in 1981, Native Administration was re-established in some regions (mainly in Darfur, Kordofan, and the eastern regions). The downfall of Nimeiri in 1984 brought additional hope for native administrators. In 1987, during the second democratic era, many native administrators found their way to the national assembly as representatives of their tribes. By 1989, the National Islamic Front seized power in Sudan through a military coup in the form of the National Salvation Revolution. Since then, the Native Administration has been subject to structural and mandatory changes to conform to the pronounced Islamic orientation of the state.

The Ingaz regime's policy of Native Administration and the introduction of the Native System in Khartoum State

The proponents of the new regime had earlier discredited Native Administration as a backward system and supported attempts to abolish it. But after ascending to power they started rethinking their position on a more realistic basis. They thought that embracing Native Administration would give the regime quick access to the rural populace, which remained

for a long time the domain of traditional parties. Moreover, native administrators could be used to promote the goals of the regime in the Islamisation of public life.

The revival of the Native Administration in the 1990s was associated with the intensions of the government to increase its popularity by gaining access to supporters at the grass-roots level through their traditional leadership, much like the original intent of the British to enhance the efficiency of control by using traditional political structures according to what came to be known as “indirect rule.” The regime had two goals to fulfil: (a) to draw the carpet from under the feet of traditional opposition parties who commanded large following amongst rural population; and (b) to be able to mobilise “mujahideen” (fighters) to win the war in the south.

In 1992, the ruling group held a private meeting in the village of Na’aima in White Nile State to develop a strategy for dealing with Native Administration. The group ended up reversing the Islamists’ position on the matter and decided to utilise Native Administration rather than abolish it. In this respect the Islamic title of “Amir” (Arabic for prince) replaced the previously used Sultan, Shartai and Nazir. The Amir is supposedly a “mujahid” (religious warrior) leading the tribe while protecting the Islamic religion and the country and upholding the Sharia values according to the first Muslims in Prophet Mohammed’s era. The move to reinstate the Native Administration came from the Ministry of Social Planning which was headed at the time by Ali Osman, one of the strong men of the regime who later became the first vice president. Native administrators were brought to special training camps and instructed on how to become “missionaries” to spread Islamic teachings and preach to improve the practice of Islam. It was a vision of social engineering that motivated the reinstatement of native administrators more than anything else. The collection of taxes, which used to be one of the most important duties of native administrators, was no longer practiced by them. However, the security (reporting on insurgency activities, etc.), political (mobilizing supporters for rallies and providing fighters for popular defence forces, or PDF), and judicial functions continued to exist. This is why many people today say that Native Administration has become too politicised, to the extent that it lost its credibility in many places. Native administrators themselves say that, as representatives of their communities, they have to adapt to any political condition in order to secure the interests of their people.

One of the outcomes of the so-called Na’aima conference was to introduce what came to be known as the “Native System” in Khartoum State. The idea was to encourage migrants from Darfur and Kordofan to organise in units with a structure similar to that of the Native Administration in rural areas. Thus, they established sheikhs (headmen) and Omdas (sectional chiefs) in different neighbourhoods and issued them ID cards so that they could have the privilege of dealing with urban municipal administrators and security personnel. The main tasks for the Native System personnel was to verify people’s identities and mobilise fellow “tribesmen” to attend public rallies staged by the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in Green Square in Khartoum. The NCP created a special secretariat for managing the affairs of the Native System. The Native System is different from the Native Administration mainly because the former was not connected to a given territory and therefore its power base was limited, unlike the latter which plays a crucial role in natural resource management in the rural areas.

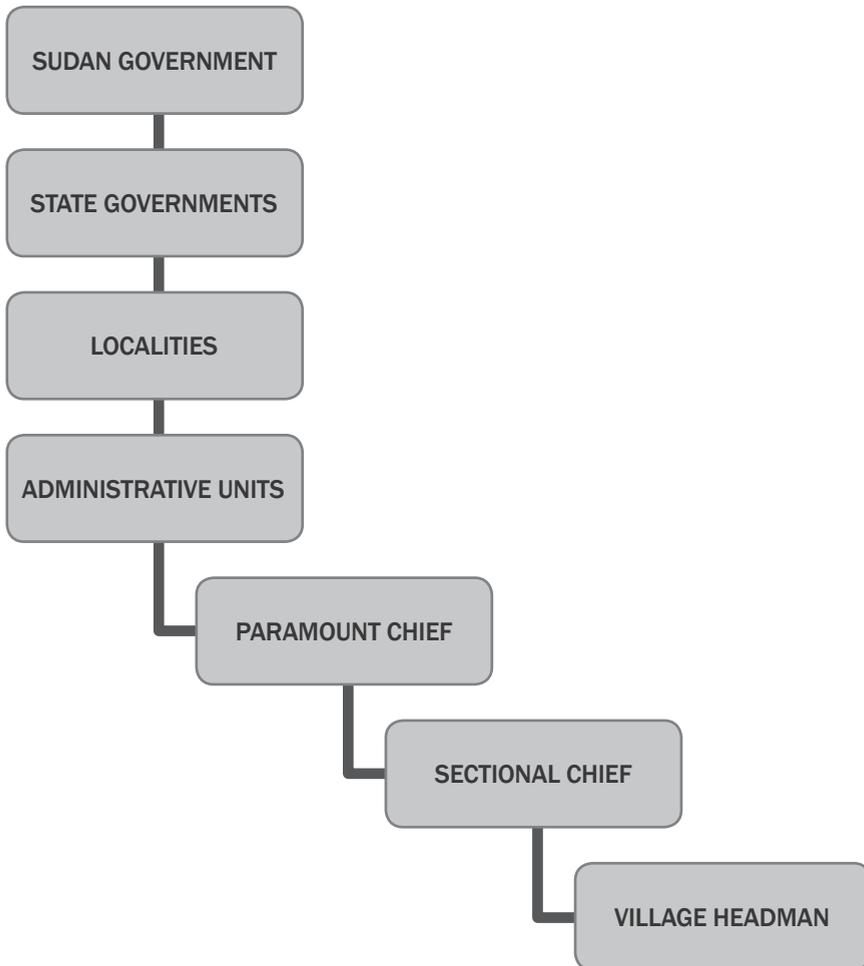


Figure 1: The structural relationship between local government and Native Administration (adapted from Abdul-Jalil et al. 2007)

The case of Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda: The Native System in a squatter settlement

The rapid expansion of urban settlements into surrounding rural areas is a widespread phenomenon in Africa and other developing regions. Nevertheless, each case has its particular factors influencing the rate, pattern, mode, and results of such a process. In most developing countries the capital city becomes the magnet to which the rural population is drawn in large numbers. The reasons for such trend relate to poverty, uneven development and exclusion (or marginalisation). However, in countries like Sudan where natural and man-made

disasters have become the norm, additional factors, such as drought and war, become prime movers for large-scale rural urban migration. As a result, the city expands more rapidly than planners perceive. Often city planners establish new residential areas on land belonging to the surrounding rural areas. This leads to the formation of squatter settlements, which is a regular feature of most large cities in developing countries. This process has some important consequences from a sociological point of view. In the case of the Sudan, a great number of rural migrants, who moved into the urban conurbation of Greater Khartoum during the past two decades and a half, actually come from areas where violent conflicts taint human and geographical landscapes.

From the mid-1980s onwards, Sudan has witnessed two major events that directly impacted the rate and direction of population movement across vast areas of the country: drought and the escalation of civil war. IDPs considered the urban conurbation of Greater Khartoum the best place to settle because of the physical security and the chances of livelihood the area offered. Newcomers to the city usually arrive at their destination with very little possessions and prefer to stay in the peripheries of the city where the cost of renting is insignificant or non-existent. Such a process usually ends in the formation of a new squatter settlement.

Occupying the westernmost outer reaches of Omdurman, Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda is sometimes considered an extension of the Dar Al-Salam neighbourhood, which was established as a low-income area in the beginning of the 1990s after people were evacuated from many illegal settlements around Greater Khartoum. By then, the newly established Ingaz regime vowed to eradicate illegal settlements from the three towns of Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North, which constitute the national capital of the Sudan. It managed to drain most of them successfully by giving each family a plot of 216 square meters in a planned residential area especially allotted for low-income segments of the population.

Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda started in the mid-1990s as a small squatter settlement west of Gabarona. It used to be called “ras al-shitan” (devil’s head) because it was famous for its high crime rate and local liquor brewing and consumption. Conditions there started to change in 1997 with the arrival of one Abdulla Kafi, an ambitious leader from the Nuba Mountains. Prior to his arrival in this area, he was a member of the Umma party opposition contingent in Eritrea. When the Ingaz regime began its policy of peace from inside, according to which it signed unmediated agreements with opposition elements from South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, Abdulla Kafi asked the government to allow him to stay in Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda with his people. He renamed the place “Al-Rahma” (mercy) neighbourhood to attract new followers. Some people named it “Hillat Al-Sultan Abdulla Kafi” after its new leader, but recently the name Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda has become more famous.

Acquiring a plot of land is a dream for most newcomers to the city in Sudan, where rents are relatively high and there is no security of tenure because all available houses are owned by individuals who can evict tenants at any time. There are also no laws that regulate rent rates in the country. Accordingly, when there is a chance to acquire a plot nearly for free, people join in large numbers. As a result, squatters keep springing every now and then in the surrounding peri-urban land. Newcomers are admitted through their representatives who are later raised to the status of sheikhs. Specifically, a tribal representative approaches Adalla Kafi asking for the allotment of a piece of land for him and his fellow tribesmen.

Driven by people's desire to own a plot of land, squatters soon organised into smaller pseudo-native administration units with Adalla Kafi, now called sultan, at the top. His title does not come from the Nuba ethnic group to which he belongs. It seems he got the title from southerners who lived in the nearby Gabarona IDP camp. Traditional leaders from the south were given this title and were recognised by the government as representatives of their people. They were empowered to act as Native Administration authorities in IDP camps; a cheap substitute for a modern administrative setup in an urban context. It is much similar to the logic by which British colonial authorities promoted Native Administration in the Sudan as a form of indirect rule.

Per every two hundred people an Omda is chosen, and sultan Kafi confirms him. Each Omda operates through sheikhs who represent families belonging to his tribe. Through this system, Omdas benefit from the sale of land to new followers. In 2008, the price of a plot reached 499 SDG (excluding sponsorship fees). To consolidate his authority sultan Kafi formed a council for his Omdas and a pseudo native court where they sit to settle disputes, primarily over land, between residents. Noticeably, security services are to this day almost absent from the area (apart from two ill-equipped police stations).

After the Na'aima meeting, another conference was convened in Khartoum in 1995. Following the conference, the decision was made to allow the formation of a quasi-Native Administration that would operate in Khartoum State under the name of "Native System," to differentiate it from the British administration, which is still operative in some parts of the country (mainly Darfur and Kordofan). A coordinating office and state headquarters responsible of promoting the system were established. The office issued ID cards for Omdas showing their tribal affiliation. The Native System came about because "migrants from rural areas in Khartoum State can be best controlled through a system similar to what they were used to in their original homelands," as indicated during the 1995 conference. So, they are treated as tribesmen who happen to be in town for a limited period of time. Their dealings with government bodies have to be sanctioned by their sponsoring Omdas. All Omdas are incidentally members of the NCP party; hence, when big rallies are organised in Khartoum, they are entrusted with the task of rounding up buses full of supporters to take part in the rally. They are also provided with some cash to fulfil their tasks. In short, the Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda squatter settlement has thus far been maintained because it provides the ruling party with supporters for rallies and elections.

The Native System operating in Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda is therefore a part of a package or a mechanism for the social control of migrants coming from rural areas to Khartoum. It is also evident that the places they come from are also the same parts of the country that are currently suffering from the ongoing civil war. While government authorities consider them as economic migrants, many of them can in fact qualify as IDPs. In addition to the security and political functions of the Native System, the Omdas operating the system also carry judicial functions through what they call "rakooba" (the name refers to a windscreen under which elders sit to deliberate). From a practical point of view the rakooba can be considered a tribunal or court that performs the function of promoting order by resorting to customary principles of adjudication and mediation.

Conclusion

Independence for most societies is a chance to get rid of some of the most characteristic features of the preceding political system, which they have struggled to change. The survival of the Native Administration system in Sudan after more than half a century of independent rule was unexpected. This is especially so because the educated elite that had led the struggle for independence was particularly aware of the importance of replacing Native Administration with a new democratically oriented system of local administration that better characterised a modern state. However, public administration experts thought that Native Administration could not be abolished immediately in the rural areas because of the lack of proper infrastructure to run an alternative modern local government system (Salih 1974; Mohamed 1998). Nevertheless, the system was gradually replaced in urban areas without many problems. The abolishment of Native Administration in the rural areas had some serious repercussions, so it had to be reinstalled. The real surprise was the reinstallation of a quasi-Native Administration system in the capital city of Sudan, which is considered the vanguard of modernisation in the country. Moreover, the government that supervised these initiatives is run by a political group that had spearheaded the call for the abolishment of Native Administration in all of the country. The reason for this change of policy is directly connected with the need of the regime to control the immigrant population, which has increased sharply since the mid-1980s as a result of drought and the upsurge of war in the peripheral areas of the country. Immigrants from these areas constitute both political and security threats that the regime has to take seriously if it intends to continue outwitting its opponents. The introduction of the "Native System" in Al-Hilla Al-Gadeeda and other similar squatter neighbourhoods in Khartoum State can only be explained as a tool the regime uses to secure its survival even if that means reinventing a colonial system of governance.

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Anthropological studies on religion in Sudan

Osman Mohamed Osman Ali

Introduction

This chapter brings together a number of pieces of work which anthropologists have written over the years, in the context of Sudanese society. The accounts of religion in anthropological writings on Sudanese communities are generally meagre. The chapter deals with the historical development of anthropological studies on religion in Sudan and the concomitant changes in their areas of concentration, basic questions, theoretical underpinnings, and writers' identities. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, these anthropological pieces of work are divided into two main periods in the history of Sudan, before and after independence in 1956.

The Anglo-Egyptian period

The period from 1909 up to 1950 shows very few applied anthropological studies undertaken by three British scholars on the religious dimension of local cultures of the tribal groups in Southern Sudan: Charles Gabriel Seligman, Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, and Godfrey Lienhardt. These studies were on behalf of, with funding from, and determined by the interests of the colonial government of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Their most important feature is their emphasis on the questions of rain-making ceremonies, witchcraft, magic, and divinity. They were guided by British functional anthropology with its common descriptive characteristic feature. Later on, they moved more towards structural functionalism, phenomenology, and interpretive approaches.

As they were able to attain the status of anthropological classics, studies on local African religions in Southern Sudan during the colonial period have endured as some of the most influential and exemplary works in anthropology globally. They can now be seen as precursors of contemporary theory and practice in anthropology in general. They were not systematic inquiries into religious matters. They were by-products of inquiry into other societal concerns.

The change in the theoretical orientation took place despite the fact that the three concerned anthropologists were forming what could be called “a circle of discipleship”; that is, they were teachers and students of each other. Evans-Pritchard studied anthropology as a postgraduate student at the London School of Economics (LSE), where he came under the influence of Bronislaw Malinowski and Charles Gabriel Seligman. After initially conducting ethnological surveys on behalf of Seligman in Sudan, he made, from 1926 until the outbreak of the Second World War, a series of anthropological expeditions to Kenya and Sudan (Morris 1987b, 188). Lienhardt writes in one of his books: “My final acknowledgements are to the Dinka themselves, and to Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who between them really made this study possible ... I am indebted to Professor Evans-Pritchard’s Nilotic studies, and particularly to his work on Nuer religion. But personally my debt to him is greater, and I dedicate this book to him in gratitude for his teaching and friendship” (Lienhardt 1961, viii).

The renowned ethnologist C. G. Seligman, the founding ethnographer of Sudan, undertook three expeditions to Sudan between 1909 and 1921—the results being published as *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932) and “The Religion of the Pagan Tribes of the White Nile” (1931). The investigations in the *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, which seem to be intended as ethnographic surveys rather than exhaustive studies, were limited to the social and religious aspects of culture. The facts are arranged in a large number of tribal monographs. The bulk of the information relates to the Nilotes (Shilluk, Dinka, Nuer, and Anuak) and the Nilo-Hamites (Bari, Lotuko, Lango, etc.). The Nuba Funj peoples and the numerous small tribes of the Barh El-Ghazal region and the populous Azande receive more than a sketchy treatment. The investigations covered a wide range of social aspects: the historical origin of the specific tribal group, the social and political organisation, the age class organisation and initiation ceremonies, kinship structure, marriage, and magico-religious practices. In the magico-religious sphere the most impressive feature is the rain-making ceremony, with the hereditary office of a rain maker and rain stones, rain spears, animal sacrifices and other methods of invoking the ancestral spirits as the principal but not universal ritual elements. The core of the religious practices is an ancestral spirit. The chief magico-religious practices, however, are everywhere directed towards spirits of lesser range and more and more departmental importance (Seligman 1932, vi, xi-xiii and xvii-xx).

“The Religion of the Pagan Tribes of the White Nile” gives an outline of the religious ideas of the more important tribes of the White Nile between Khartoum and the southern boundary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The tribes under consideration fall into two great groups: (1) the Nilotes, and (2) the Bari-speaking tribes, to which the Madi in the extreme south ought to be added. The article deals, in short, with the chief religio-cultural characters of the tribes under consideration, mainly ideas related to rain makers, god, totemism, and the cult of the dead (or ancestral spirits) (Seligman 1931, 1-3).

The social anthropologist Sir E. E. Evans-Pritchard conducted extensive fieldwork on the Azande and the Nuer of the Southern Sudan, including the religious dimensions of their respective cultures. His first fieldwork began in 1926 with the Azande people of the upper Nile and resulted in a PhD dissertation, “The Asande of the Bahr-el-Ghazal Province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” (1927), and in his classic *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937). Evans-Pritchard continued to lecture at the LSE and conducted research in the Azande and Bongo land until 1930, when he began a new research project among the

Nuer on behalf of the government of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This work coincided with his appointment to the University of Cairo in 1932, where he gave a series of lectures on religion that bore Seligman's influence. After his return to Oxford, he continued his research on the Nuer. It was during this period that he first met Meyer Fortes and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. Evans-Pritchard began developing Radcliffe-Brown's program of structural-functionalism.¹ Lucidly written, rich in detail, Evans-Pritchard's fieldwork (ethnographic) studies among the Azande and the Nuer have deservedly attained the status of anthropological classics.

Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande is based on material collected during twenty months of intensive study. It was one of the earliest attempts to describe the beliefs and rites relating to magic and witchcraft among a non-European people. His approach is stated clearly in the introduction to the book. It is to show how mystical beliefs and rites form an "ideational system" and how this system is expressed in social action. He does not think it necessary to describe other aspects of Azande social life; the whole emphasis of the book is therefore intellectual, focusing on how witchcraft is related to misfortune as a stereotyped form of explanation. Evans-Pritchard has not, however, introduced current psychological and sociological explanations of mystical notions and ritual behaviour, nor has he attempted to show the bearing of Azande belief and custom on anthropological theory. He considers this duty better performed elsewhere. Much of what he has recorded needs explanation, provided through the statements of the Azande themselves and by bringing into the orbit of a fact all other facts that are closely related to it in thought and action. Explanations, therefore, are embodied in his descriptive account and are not set forth independently. His interpretations are contained in the facts themselves, for he has described the facts in such a way that the interpretations emerge as part of the description (Evans-Pritchard 1937, xv, 2, 4-5).

First published in 1956, *Nuer Religion* was among the first anthropological accounts of an African religion and theology that made direct comparisons with so-called world religions. It fully represents the interpretive approach that Evans-Pritchard's work took in the latter part of his academic career. Evans-Pritchard maintains that religious ideas are *sui generis* and that the essence of Nuer religion cannot be understood by reference to the functions it performs in relation to larger society. He takes a social-structural approach, relating the configuration of Nuer religious thought to the structural order of society. In many ways, *Nuer Religion* constituted a study of religious symbolism that anticipated the development of symbolic anthropology.² Although Nuer religious ideas and practices were a part of their way of life, which greatly interested Evans-Pritchard, it was that to which he was also able to give least attention during his short residence of one year in the Nuerland. It was necessary to learn their language and to study their manner of livelihood and their family, kinship and political activities before giving close attention to the more difficult problems of their religious thought. These talks, all the heavier in the arduous conditions in which they had to be carried out, left Evans-Pritchard little time to pursue anything which could be called a systematic inquiry into religious matters. What he recorded he witnessed himself or is

1. <http://bit.ly/1wEXAa1>.

2. <http://bit.ly/1Gqxn3a>.

information given spontaneously during talks about other more practical affairs or related to some event or experience (Evans-Pritchard 1956, v).

Although Evans-Pritchard initially wrote in the functionalist tradition of Bronislaw Malinowski, his mentor, he eventually adopted an approach that Morris characterises as “at once hermeneutic (interpretive), structural, comparative, and historical” (Morris 1987a, 189).

In Godfrey Lienhardt’s book, *Divinity and Experience, the Religion of the Dinka* (1961), which was based upon two years’ work among the Dinka, spread over the period of 1947-50, the various divinities of the Dinka of the Southern Sudan are described with their complex ranges of meaning and imagery, and are related to the Dinka’s own experience of the conditions of life and death. They may be interpreted as images arising out of that experience. The book also discusses the role of the priests, the “masters of the fishing spears.” Sacrifices are described and their meaning analysed, and finally the rites at death of priests, some of whom may enter the grave alive, are examined (Lienhardt 1961, vii and cover).

Lienhardt rejected the crude “functionalism,” which previously was predominant in anthropological studies of religion, but successfully avoided reverting to an intellectualist position, which supposes that religious ideas are pre-scientific explanatory concepts. He approached Dinka religious utterances as interpretations by the Dinka of certain experiences of theirs. For him, Dinka religion was not a theology, but a phenomenology.³ This approach led Lienhardt to question presumptions about mind, self, memory, and experience, in reaching an understanding of Dinka interpretations and imaging of their experiences (Jedrej 1996, 12).

The post-independence period

Since the beginning of the post-independence period, the concentration of the anthropological studies on religion has altogether been transferred to Northern Sudan, extending over different areas in North Kordofan, Blue Nile, Gezira, Khartoum North, Shaygiyya region, North Darfur and Shendi. One dozen practitioners from two groups equal in number, Sudanese and foreigners, were involved in these studies. The Sudanese group included Taj Al-Anbia Ali Al-Dawi, Abdullahi Mohamed Osman, Idris Salim El Hassan, Abdullahi Osman Eltom, El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed Salih, and Osman Mohamed Osman Ali. The foreigners, who have different nationalities (American, British, Canadian, and Czech), are Ahmed Al-Shahi, Ladislav Holy, Janice Patricia Boddy, Susan M. Kenyon, Wendy James, and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban.

Observably, Wendy James and Ahmed Al-Shahi, through the influence of Evans-Pritchard and Lienhardt respectively, extended the former circle of discipleship. Al-Shahi admits that he was one of the students of Lienhardt. In her article “The Politics of Rain Control,” James

3. The phenomenologist’s concerns centre on the nature of the religious experience and the possibility of defining religion universally and as a very distinctive set of phenomena. Some phenomenologists separate the moral and ethical contents of what we know as religion, arguing that the idea of the holy is something that cannot be fully comprehended; others define what religion is and is not juxtaposing two Durkheimian categories—sacred and profane.

writes: "It was my privilege to carry out fieldwork recently in the Southern Funj region, particularly among the Uduk-speaking people, and to take up some of the ethnographic problems first posed by Professor Evans-Pritchard. My debt to him is even greater in that he has been my teacher for many years, and it was partly through him that I was drawn in contact with the peoples of Sudan" (1972, 32). Another circle of discipleship has been formed by Ladislav Holy and his two students, Abdullahi Osman Eltom and El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed Salih in their research project on the local interpretations and versions of Islam in North Darfur. Salih acknowledges Holy's supervision of his PhD dissertation. Holy repeatedly states in his monographs: "Abdullahi Osman Eltom, a Berti whom I supervised as a doctoral student in social anthropology, was with me in the field in 1978 and 1980, living as a member of our household while pursuing his own research into the role of Berti religious leaders. My discussions with him helped me to understand many aspects of Berti religiosity" (Holy 1991, ix-x). This is also acknowledged by Eltom in his PhD dissertation: "I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Holy ... [His] contribution to the completion of this thesis is incalculable. He has not only inspired my work in a profound way, but has initiated me into anthropology as a career" (Eltom 1983, xi).

In defiance of the dominating interpretive approach of analysis, the theoretical and methodological leads of studies on religion during this period varied considerably. Some anthropologists abandoned the old time anthropological paradigms and instead used a humane approach; others chose from the many classical and contemporary options: the Weberian concepts, the symbolic models, the concept of ideology as defined in historical materialistic literature, J. Goody's theory of literacy, or a number of models of analysis of Muslim diversity.

The issues that were being tackled cover four main concerns: the Muslim Sufi orders and ideology, the local interpretations and versions of Islam, the Zār spirit possession, and divinity.

a) Studies on Muslim Sufi orders and ideology

In 1967, Taj Al-Anbia Ali Al-Dawi collected some data on the Sufi Ismailiyya *tariqa* when he was studying the Danagla (or Quba) quarter in the town of El-Obeid of Northern Kurdofan. In his article Al-Dawi examines the origin and the historical development of the *tariqa*, showing the role that its founder, Sidi Ismail, and his successors played in spreading it to the other parts of the country. Al-Dawi also writes about the Ismailiyya *tariqa* as a social religious organisation having specific targets. He deals with the followers of the *tariqa*, asking who they are, and with the things that the *tariqa* achieves for them. At the end of the article, Al-Dawi shows the link between the Ismailiyya and the other Sufi orders and organisations within the context of the El-Obeid community, aiming at showing its importance and the role that it plays in the community of the town (Al-Dawi 1969, 118, 132).

In the mid-1970s, Abdullahi Mohamed Osman undertook a study among the Mikashfiyya as one of those *tariqas* which claims allegiance to the widespread Qadiriyya (Osman 1978). The most important aim of the study was to explain some of the factors, which make for the development and spread of such a *tariqa* and to examine how it is made to persist despite its division into sections. In this respect, the focus of analysis is mostly turned towards the

organisation of the *tariqa* and the relationships between the leading *sheikhs* of the religious family and the mass of their adherents. The introduction gives the notion of how a *tariqa* emerges on the basis of the charismatic qualities of its founder. The first chapter describes the Mikashfiyya *tariqa*, concentrating on the division of his descendents into groups in terms of their matrilineal descent, and how the inheritance of *Baraka* (spiritual power) and the rotation of the *khalifa* (successor) position enhance the distinctiveness of these groups. The second chapter relates the charismatic qualities of the founder *sheikh* and the roles performed by him, as well as explaining how a descendent of his, attaining similar qualities and performing similar roles, is able to build on closely attached followers and become leader of an independent section within the *tariqa*. The third chapter explains the role of ritual performing in creating a master–disciple relationship. The last chapter magnifies the economic activities of the section leader and the adherents, and the relationships involved in that sphere, as a factor making for attachment of followers and enhancing the independence of a section. The conclusion establishes that similar qualities possessed and similar roles fulfilled in comparison to those of the founder *sheikh*, enable his descendents to become independent, each leading a section. The unity and the persistence of the whole *tariqa* is explained through the solidarity of the leading men within the religious family being mainly reinforced by the unity of their ideology or belief. More importantly, the power of the *tariqa* to endure rests on the leaders' success to manifest criteria appropriate to the possession of *baraka* and their competence to save the *tariqa's* authenticity by making for the wider social relevance of their sections (ibid., i-iv). This study uses the Weberian concept of charismatic personality and the institutionalisation of leadership in movements; i.e., the charisma as an intellectual and moral legitimisation for political authority leading to religio-political movements.

A British social anthropologist of Iraqi origin, Ahmed Al-Shahi, published an article on religion and related issues in Northern Sudan in the early 1980s. The purpose of this article is to make some propositions as to the factors underlying the continuity of the Khatmiyya, both as a religious organisation and as a political force speaking for its followers. In this context a number of factors are significant: the role played by certain members of the Mīrghani family, the religious background and doctrine of the order, and, finally, its politics. It seems that flexibility and moderation, in religion and in politics, have manifested themselves throughout the history of the order. In the course of discussing the above issues, Al-Shahi has relied on historical sources as well as on his fieldwork observations (Al-Shahi 1981, 13).

A fieldwork study carried out by Idris Salim El Hassan in the late 1970s among the Badrab of Um Dubban explains the processes involved in the current revival of popular Islamic religious organisations, *turuq sufyyia*, in northern Sudan. It explains how a popular form of social organisation based on Islamic religious ideas was becoming ideologised; that is, how the religiously appropriated surplus product and labour are kept and invested for the benefit of the appropriating religious groups. The study used the concept ideology as defined in the historical materialistic literature: as a dislocated form of consciousness (i.e., values, beliefs, knowledge, general representations, etc.) whereby one class is able to acquire and use for its own benefit the appropriated surplus labour and product. Here, the process of dislocation is only possible with the development of class structure, and its consequence, here labelled exploitation (El Hassan 1980, 1, 195).

b) Studies on local interpretations and versions of Islam

Extracted from a fieldwork carried out from June 1980 to June 1981 among the Berti in Northern Darfur (Western Sudan), Abdullahi Osman Eltom's PhD dissertation (Eltom 1983) discusses the role of the Berti religious specialists (*fakis*) in Berti religious life, aiming at exposing a wider range of aspects of the Berti religion. The analysis of Berti religious notions on which the thesis centres is inseparable from the role of literacy in their society, and some of the themes of the thesis relate directly to J. Goody's theory of literacy. The main theme of this theory pertains to literacy or writing as the variable which accentuates the difference between the so-called modern and traditional societies. In modern societies, literacy has provided a qualitative change in the mode of thought resulting in a great cultural leap. At the other pole, the non-literate societies have remained encapsulated in their oral and, hence, more or less static cultures. The thesis examines the use of traditional literacy promulgated by the Qur'anic schools among the Berti. This literacy is restricted both in the scope of its use as well as in its social distribution, which remains limited to the *fakis*. Instead of leading to a change in the traditional mode of thought, Berti literacy contributes considerably to maintaining the homeostatic tendency supposedly characteristic of oral societies (ibid., xi, 296-97).

Ladislav Holy is a Czech social anthropologist. In 1961 and 1965, he undertook two lengthy field expeditions to Sudan to study the Berti people of Northern Darfur, whom he eventually visited on no fewer than six separate occasions (Holy 1991, ix). He used the material, which was collected during those expeditions and visits, for publishing monographs on Berti social structure and their conceptions of Islam, as well as a variety of articles concerned with gender, age and Berti ecology under duress. Notably, detailed ethnography and careful analysis are features of Holy's writings on the various institutions of the Berti. His monograph, *Religion and Custom in a Muslim Society: The Berti of Sudan*, was informed and inspired by his extensive fieldwork. It is in the same style of his other monographs and it fills a gap in the analysis of the form and the content of the Berti's religious beliefs and practices. In it, Holy adopts an interpretive approach. He argues that among the Berti, as among many Muslim societies, the formal religious practices are predominantly the concern of men, while local, unorthodox customary rituals are performed mainly by women. It is usual to dismiss such local, popular practices as pre-Islamic survivals, but Holy shows that the customary rituals constitute an integral part of the religious system of the Berti. Carefully analysing the symbolic statements made in Berti rituals, Holy demonstrates that the distinction between the two classes of rituals is an expression of the gender relationships characteristic of the society. He also examines the social distribution of knowledge about Islam, and explains the role of the religious schools in sustaining religious ideas. The work is not only an ethnographic study of ritual, belief and gender. It also makes a significant contribution to current anthropological discussion of the interpretation and meaning of rituals and symbols. In analysing the particular version of Islamic beliefs and practices among the Berti, Holy relies on the structuralists' analytical concepts of "binary opposites" and symbolic classifications. Thus, many of the chapters deal with the properties and symbolic importance of men and women, milk and water, village and wilderness, blood and rain, east and west, left and right, etc. (ibid., i, 11).

A doctoral research on Islam, traditional beliefs and ritual practices among the Zaghawa in the Darfur region was undertaken by El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed Salih. This research explains how the socio-economic crises and political upheavals in Dar Zaghawa in the 1960s, and the complicity of the national political parties with the Zaghawa chiefs anguished the commoners and led many of them to join the Muslim Brothers and the Ansar el-Sunna and demand the return to the pristine Islam and the application of Islamic Shari'a law (Salih 1991, xiv).

A recent study based on fieldwork was undertaken by Osman Mohamed Osman Ali. This study was confined to the urban and rural communities of the "Shendi Province," which represent the southern part of the present-day River Nile State, on the eastern bank of the Nile. It is primarily concerned with how Muslim groups (the Sufis, the Ansar el-Mahdi, the Ansar el-Sunna, the Republican Brothers and the Islamic Movement) in these communities interpret the Islamic texts, and with the factors that influence their interpretations. It sheds light on the relations of convergence and divergence of Islam from textual Islam as practiced in the communities under study; the mechanisms by which Islam loses or attains its textual character when diffused into a new setting; the conditions for coexistence or amalgamation of the constituents of Islam and other traditions; and the differences between the many Islamic doctrines, as well as how these differences emerged. Using the "Cross-cultural Comparative Method," the research compares variations between subcultures of adjacent communities, manipulating the collected material on many empirical levels. Ten models of the anthropological study of Muslim diversity are utilised in the research. These models are also assessed in the conclusion of the thesis (Ali 2004, v-viii).

c) Studies on Zār spirit possession

Janice Patricia Boddy, a Canadian anthropologist, undertook fieldwork in some rural areas in Northern Sudan as part of her doctorate studies at the University of British Columbia. The immediate outcome of that fieldwork was her PhD dissertation, "Parallel Worlds: Humans, Spirits, and Zār Possession in Rural Northern Sudan" (1982). Boddy concentrated her fieldwork research on the cultural therapeutics of spirit possession and trance in some rural areas of Northern Sudan. Her research is located on the border of religion and healing. She shows how practices like spirit possession are not merely reactions to problems—symptoms, indices, calculated strategies, etc.—but culturally shaped, meaningful acts and idioms (Boddy 2001, 298-400). Ahmed Al-Shahi published an article on the Zār spirit possession and healing among the Shaygiyya of the Northern Sudan (Al-Shahi 1984, 28). It is of the same appearance of Boddy's as to its main questions and way of analysis.

From 1979 to 1985, the American Anthropologist Susan M. Kenyon and her family lived in Sudan, where she was investigating the changing roles of Sudanese women in the town of Sennar, Blue Nile State. She was particularly interested in issues of health and healing, including the activities of Zār. She also studied women's economic activities, ranging from midwifery to market work to spiritual activities. In her book, *Five Women of Sennar: Culture and Change in Central Sudan*, five middle-aged Muslim women from Sennar talk about their families and homes, their hopes and aspirations, their work and their social lives. The women's own voices provide insight into how ordinary individuals deal with the challenges of making a living, raising a family, and leading a good life in twentieth-century Sudan while Susan situates the narratives in the larger historical and ethnographic context.

Through their careers, as hairdresser (Halima), market woman (Fatima), midwife (Zahara), faith healer (Bitt al-Jamil) and leader of *tombura* Zār spirit possession (Naiema), Susan looks at developments in Sudanese society in general (Kenyon 1991, vii).

d) Studies on divinity

The British social anthropologist Wendy James did fieldwork among the Uduk-speaking people of the Sudan-Ethiopia border. The main outcome were two impressive pieces of scholarship, entitled *The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion and Power among the Uduk of Sudan* and *The Politics of Rain Control among the Uduk*.

The Listening Ebony is distilled largely out of a fieldwork carried out between 1965 and 1969. It is a ground-breaking study that aims at exploring the notions of person, and the foundations of bodily and moral experience among the Uduk. In this study, James discusses the enduring elements of personal knowledge in the context of a hunter's world-view, and then gives accounts of how alien religious discourse has affected the Uduk in the course of the region's political history, and of the rise of a new diviners' movement based upon the oracular consultation of the burning ebony wood. This study provides an excellent account of the complex ideological structures and dynamics of the middle Sudan-Ethiopia border area. It examines the Uduk mental life, mainly in the form of mythological and religious experience and practice. James abandons a number of older anthropological paradigms and their relativist assumptions (like the timeless, integrated tribal structure), offering a humane analysis of a Sudanese people's experience with important implications for the cross-cultural study of religion. As such, she presents a rich compassionate ethnography, full of passages where the Uduk speak for themselves, moving gracefully and confidently between description and analysis (James 1988, vii-ix and cover).

The Politics of Rain Control deals with some aspects of the significance of attempts to control the weather in Uduk society. It tries to explain how the symbolism of weather control is used in the southern Funj, particularly within Uduk society, and is divided into three parts. In the first part, James considers ecological conditions in relation to the Uduk conception of the nature of rainfall; in the second one, she shows in general terms how the symbolism of rain control enters into social and political relations; and in the third, some case-situations are examined (James 1972, 34).

e) Studies on the Islamic Shari'a Law

The American anthropologist Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban came to Sudan in 1979 for research that became a book, *Islamic Law and Society in the Sudan*. Published in 1989, the book remains unique because it goes beyond textual analysis of the law to include observations of the court system in action. The book's findings remain relevant today. It was released in Arabic in 2004. This work studies not only the philosophical and religious underpinnings of the Shari'a law, but case material and legal statistics to analyse its application in personal status law in Sudan. It stresses marriage, divorce, child custody, women's status and social movements for change (Fluehr-Lobban 1989, iv, 1-2).

Conclusion

The anthropological studies on religion in Sudan have always been dictations of the local political situations and interests. They reflected the influence of certain Western theorists and global theoretical and methodological changes as well, as could particularly be inferred from the circles of discipleship among practitioners. Meanwhile, these studies endured as influential and exemplary in anthropology globally. Being affected by the global theoretical and methodological changes, the different studies in Sudan have continuously been bending back on the lack of consensus within anthropology concerning theory and methodological practices. The concentration of studies, which were carried out mostly by non-Muslim foreigners on indigenous tribal religions and other local beliefs and ritual practices (such as the Zār spirit possession) in Southern Sudan in particular and then on Islam by Muslim Sudanese in the North, with the total negligence of the Christian communities existing here and there within the Sudanese borders, indicates some strong impact of the practitioners' religious affiliations on the basic questions raised.

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Chapter 15

Gendering the politics of memory: Women, identity, and conflict in Sudan¹

Sondra Hale

“To remember is to know that you can forget.”²

Introduction

Few themes are more relevant to analysing and resolving conflict or to generating theories and policies than the **politics of memory**. Although memory, and its place in politics, had not engaged anthropologists until recent years (at least not under the rubric of “the politics of knowledge” nor with postcolonial approaches), it is very much an epistemological,

1. “Anthropology in the Sudan: Past, Present and Future,” edited by Munzoul Assal, is based on the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Khartoum, 1958-2008, Khartoum, Sudan, October 25-26, 2008. Notes from an earlier version of this paper were published in Arabic in four parts in *Ajeras Alhurriyya* [Freedom Bells] (June 30-July 3, 2008). Also, see Hale 2012a and 2012b.

2. Valentine Daniel, from a narrative draft of his poem, “The Coolie”—Lecture/Reading at the University of California, Los Angeles, February 12, 2008.

theoretical, and political force for the future of the field. It is in the heart of ethnography, embedded in the politics of memory, that people confront each other with the past, tell stories of the past, and refute each other's telling of the past. In conflicts people not only kill each other, but they also try to kill memory; i.e., their perceived enemy's idea of his or her past. People and governments likewise try to colonise each other's pasts, or try to create a past that never existed. People and governments try to remember and reconstruct their past in light of their present, and their present in light of their past.

Forging into a conflict with the past tucked under a group's collective memory, remembering the past while the group is engaged in a conflict in the present, and reconstructing the group's present post-conflict while remembering the past are all processes of the politics of memory and all salient in viewing Sudan's many conflicts over the last century and into the current one. That these processes, if taken into account at all, are gendered is rarely dealt with as central to the various theoretical approaches.

As Sudan nears its own brand of "truth and reconciliation," whether formal (as in a series of hearings and testimonies), individual, conscious or unconscious/subconscious, the past will have to be reckoned with and, as in South Africa, Bosnia, and Rwanda, women will have their say.

Postcolonial framework

The politics of memory is integrally related to time and space. The various strategies for killing memory, or colonizing that memory, are: rupturing time and space; annihilating culture—e.g., forcing name changes of people and places, removing historical landmarks, desecrating cemeteries, withholding education or teaching the "history" of the vanquisher, forbidding local/vernacular languages, forcing religious conversion, etc.—forcing upon a marginalised group a custom of the dominant group, one historically rejected by the marginalised group, such as female circumcision; exterminating intellectuals; relocating people away from the homeland or forcing them to live among different ethnic groups; and alienating land. These are some of the strategies of violent conflicts that are designed to coerce forgetting and are hard to forget.

People who have survived these strategies tell stories about them. It is the telling that reinforces the memory of the events. Oral histories (storytelling) are often transformed into ethnographic data (Slyomovics 1998, xxi). And we act on that ethnographic data as if it were real, not as if it were imagined. These stories become a contested history, as we see so vividly in studies of Arabs and Jews in Palestine, Israel and other locations where even the name of the state is contested. In *The Object of Memory*, Susan Slyomovics (1998) explores the visions and memories of the homes of the Arab inhabitants of Ein Houd (Palestinian village displaced/replaced by Jewish Israelis after 1948) and Ein Houd (the Jewish village). In this process, historical narratives are formed and nationalist discourses developed. In her work, Slyomovics addresses the larger questions of how we memorise and memorialise space and develop a kind of environmental memory and how this, in turn, shapes our sense of identity and belonging.

In the ethnographic film “In Search of Palestine,” narrated by Edward Said,³ the viewer is invited to experience a historical event: the return of the most internationally known Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, to Palestine after 47 years. Memory and space, two concepts crucial to the politics of recent years, intersect in the film. “In Search of Palestine” proves that merely seeing is not sufficient. The film carries the viewer on a journey of remembering, expressing, feeling, and experiencing. The subject matter is tangible and abstract, material and metaphorical (Hale 2000, 9).

This film explores the politics of memory. The challenges to conventional epistemology have for some time included the recognition that individual and collective memory are forms of knowledge. Therefore, what is significant may not be what is written and codified by the accepted knowers (official Israeli state history, for example, or official Sudanese state history); instead truth can be known in other ways, including the memory of a society or group as a whole. In this film Edward Said, by remembering his childhood in Palestine, is both part of a collective memory and a contributor to it.

Both space and what fills space are significant. Said narrates that so much of what had been there before is still there; however, the entire context is changed. Of course, so much is also gone, contributing to the changed context. What is absent becomes even more significant than what is present. What is not spoken lingers in the air. These are important factors in our analyses of South Sudan or the Nuba Mountains and should guide a great deal of our thinking about Darfur.

Space, as we know, is a fluid, dynamic reflection of culture and politics. The geographies and histories that we have all invented, constructed from our individual and collective memories, may be outside the mould. Nowadays, we map ideologies that shape the way we think of Africa or the Middle East.

The film raises viewers’ consciousness about the cultural and political importance of personal and place names, labels and place-markers, of people who appear in yearbooks but are no longer there, of a school history that abruptly ends. Viewers grow conscious of the insidious “weapons” of covering up, building over, changing names, and demolishing. Theodor Herzl said in *The Jewish State* that “if I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct.”⁴ We have become aware of “house” as both material and metaphor and of the power of stones (as in “my house was built of stone,” and “I lived a stone’s throw from there”).

Time can be so specific and yet is easily altered by distortion, conflation, telescoping. It can be shaped by the removal of history. Was this the Palestine of yesterday, with the dislocated PLO? Or, is this the Palestine of today under Palestinian authority? Some developments

3. The 60-minute documentary, “In Search of Palestine,” is directed and produced by Charles Bruce for the BBC (1998). <http://bit.ly/1zAiMjs>.

4. I am indebted to Susan Slyomovics (1998, 29) for this 1896 quote from Herzl’s *The Jewish State* (New York: Dover, 1988 [1946]), 84.

of great political and cultural significance may not be measured within a conventional timeframe. Was Said removed from this timeframe, or was he inserted into it? When one thinks about Palestine it is not possible to ignore the concept of return, but we seldom think of return as a nonlinear process.

One aspect of the conflict for Palestine and Israel is culture—culture in the form of memory and representation of the past. Jews and Arabs remember their past differently—their separate pasts and their common past. Both of these groups stress the past as a political and cultural weapon. Each group has constructed radically different pasts, one overlaying the other, a profoundly ramifying story told over and over again for political effect and personal solace.

The act of forgetting is also a significant cultural act. Edward Said himself has written a powerful essay on “Methods of Forgetting” (Said 1998). Forgetting can be a crisis of national significance, as is the obscuring of one memory by another. It is imperative that a society not only remember, but keep the history alive. Retrieving the past may be a moral duty, leading to a compulsion to bear vicarious witness. Said returned to Palestine not solely for his own sentiment and nostalgia, or even political effect; he returned to bear witness.

During his visit to Palestine, Said engages in what Susan Slyomovics refers to in *The Object of Memory*, as the “repeated gesture,”⁵ which specifically involves pointing to a remembered site, pointing at history, as it were. Many times in “In Search of Palestine” the viewer sees Said pointing over and over again at a site. His hand, magnified close to the lens, is in the way of the camera. Obviously, the gesture is more important than the aesthetics of photography; the repeated gesture reminds us, reminds him, and marks the landscape. His individual memory contradicts the official memory and creates a history.

“In Search of Palestine” is Said’s “Memorial Book,” a topic so well developed in Slyomovics (1998, 1-28). He begins the film, in fact, looking at a family photo album and showing us a very old home movie of him and his sister playing on the front steps of their large stone house. The film cuts to Said in contemporary Jerusalem, in front of that same house, and no one can deny he lived there, right there. He stresses the themes we might expect: the land, landscape, place, house, and most importantly the possibility—or impossibility—of return. Throughout the film, land, like house, is both material and metaphor. More than once in the film, Said admits that the Palestine of his childhood cannot be retrieved, that no Palestinian truly hopes to retrieve the lost landscape, at least not as it was. Therefore, even though Said has returned, he is, in a sense, out of place. He is an awkward presence on a landscape that has moved beyond his memories. Before our eyes he lives the story of displacement, of confinement, of keys to a house that is occupied by someone else, and of that someone else locking the door with a different version of history. He tells the story of bulldozers doing

5. Susan Slyomovics, in *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*, discusses “Photographing Loss” (Slyomovics 1998, 10-14). She says that, “What is most important about the pointing finger of the Palestinian peasant within the photographic frame is that the figure need not be physically present and observable in any specific image placed before the reader’s eyes” (ibid., 13). “Thus this image is there when it is not there” (ibid., 14).

their dirty work in the name of the state. He has spent much of his life trying to produce a discourse to counter the bulldozer.

Said and other Palestinians do not have a passive memory. They engage in active remembrance attempting to stave off the inevitable, to ensure cultural and political survival. Pointing a finger at history is a form of resistance. These collective memories have produced poetry in exile, while inside both Israel and Palestine one finds the reality of over sixty-five years of apartheid.

As early as 1959, the renowned Sudan ethnographer, Ian Cunnison, in his earlier Northern Rhodesia [Zambia] research, *The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, argued that most histories in the Luapula Valley were “personal” renditions except for the “impersonal” and general history of the Kazembe Kingdom (Cunnison 1959). He describes a situation in which two groups have entirely opposite views of the history of the Valley and act on those different versions as if their truth is *the* truth, causing years of conflict (see also Gordon 2006, 21-42).

Ethnography, for example, is the imagined description of a people and their history and cultural life, but these are creations by anthropologists, and their descriptions and renderings of the past become imprinted into the memory of the people themselves, or into the memory and epistemology of the intended readership. One of the arguments of this paper is to demonstrate that, to resolve conflicts, we need to recognise that there may be entirely different cognitive views of what has happened, acknowledge those conflicting stories, validate them as authentic to the storyteller and his or her followers, and try to move on. But not move on with amnesia.

People remember their “homelands” differently and in the course of conflicts attempt to alter those homelands and the objects of memory, as in removing guideposts, markers, place names, and entire villages. The strategy is to erase another person’s land, and if one marks it with one’s own objects and memories, the land will be one’s own. The process is both abstract (memory) and material (real objects that symbolise a culture). Another strategy is to remove one’s adversary’s language and replace it with one’s own. Another is to create myths of origin; e.g., make claims to who was on the land first (for example, the Afrikaners in South Africa who claim to have arrived on the land before the Bantu speakers). Or, try to demonstrate that the land was always farmland or always pastoral land. Pronounce that river or well a marker, a boundary, and say it has always been that way. As we know all too well, colonialists were experts at creating and inventing boundaries.

When one considers attempts to alter memory and history, one thinks of theoretical works by Eric Hobsbawm and Terry Ranger who refer to the reinvention of tradition, of history (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). People create their own pasts and they do it by leaving out things, adding things, reconstructing our memories. People reconstruct these pasts differently. As mentioned above, Slyomovics demonstrates the ways that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs remember places differently. Israelis have altered the history of the area in very material ways; e.g., building their own villages on top of vacated Arab villages, changing the names, making claims to who was on the land first.

Islamists in Sudan have also attempted to alter areas in very material ways; e.g., through processes of “relocation,” by building many mosques that alter the landscape and capture viewers’ eyes, guiding them away from other structures and aspects of the environment. Furthermore, the “look” of Sudan (especially northern Sudan) has been altered through clothing, particularly the dress of women. The Sudanese state has also attempted to reinvent a kind of Islam that never existed in Sudan, calling it “tradition,” or referring to returning to the roots, but actually inventing those roots. This process has gone hand in hand with the reinvention of “Arab” identity and the attempts to build hegemony through that identity. This has involved a series of strategies that have resulted in many of Sudan’s conflicts or in prolonging or exacerbating those conflicts. That women and women’s bodies figure prominently in these various attempts to alter memory is one of the themes of this paper.

Likewise, those who use the expression “real Sudanese” are making an authenticity claim that is created for a particular purpose. In the hierarchy of Sudan’s racial colour codes, I was always told that it is best for a person to be “brown” (as opposed to “blue,” “orange,” “green,” etc.) because brown people are the “real Sudanese.” This is an invention that has created many divisions among people in Sudan and is used as rationale for many conflicts. Furthermore, the colour of women and the colour of men become a factor in these Sudanese conflicts where men conquer partially through women and light skin triumphs over dark skin, even if these differences are barely discernible to the eye of the observer. It is the memory of those colours that counts.

Consider other famous attempts at developing a collective memory: (1) The observance of the Palestinian *nakba* (the 1948 catastrophe, disaster), which was celebrated by Israelis in 2008 as the sixtieth anniversary of the formation of their land, their nation. While Palestinians commemorated the disaster as a disaster, Israelis celebrated the event as glorious. Each side tried to convince the world of the righteousness of their cause by translating the occasion in particular ways; (2) The Armenian-Turkish dispute over what the Armenians refer to as “genocide” which the Turks claim to be pogroms carried out by both sides, amounting to two entirely different versions of history; (3) The Nazi holocaust denied by some, but turned into an intellectual and media industry by others; (4) Many others of our more recent calamities—Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, the Beja, and Darfur—perhaps including the Nubian relocations with the building of the High Dam at Aswan and other projects that are slowly removing Nubian history and culture as Nubians would like to remember it.

Perhaps one of the most famous attempts to alter collective memory has been by The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina who persisted in putting a face on the disappeared, forcing people to remember, but attempting far more than that. Margaret Burchianti explores the group as a site through which social memories are transmitted and connected to the realities of Argentina’s present.

The conjuncture or disjuncture between people’s direct and individual memories of the past, their memory of the society’s collective past, and the “official” history can be used as a prism for seeing how power and resistance work through and reinforce a complex political economy. By giving testimony and re-contextualizing the events of the dictatorship, the Mothers have been able to challenge the historical narratives of

the state and construct competing ones. Furthermore, the present-day activism and goals of the Mothers, as individuals and as a collective, are based on political commitments that have arisen in great part out of maternal relationships and maternal memories.⁶ (Burchianti 2004)

Consider also the attempts by the state or dominant groups to force people to forget, or attempts that the subjects themselves make to try to forget—from individual “retrieved memory” that was repressed to the suppression of public events; e.g., in post-WWII Germany; in the Lebanese civil war of the 1970s and 1980s (which no one talks about); in the Japanese American internment (which the Japanese were too ashamed to talk about until the last two decades); in the Turks’ suppression of free discussions about the Armenian genocide or negation or neutralisation of Armenian grievances. Memories of black-on-black slavery in Sudan are suppressed in “official” history, either not taught or de-emphasised in the schools.

We might also want to consider where (space) and by what groups these events get remembered; e.g., do Jews in diaspora remember the holocaust more than Jews in Israel or Germany? Do Palestinians in diaspora remember the nakba more than Palestinians in Palestine? What about Armenians in diaspora? And Eritreans in exile? Space, then, is an important factor in the politics of memory. How will the Darfur refugees remember the Darfur homeland from the refugee camps of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)? Will their memories of space be different from those who stayed in their villages or quickly returned after an attack?

What are some of the mechanisms for remembering? Memorials are one mechanism. A recent work by Paul Williams refers to the “global rush to commemorate atrocities,” which is the subtitle of his book (Williams 2007). If one looks at museum practices throughout the world, we get significant insights into how objects, images and exhibition spaces contribute to the politically charged field of commemoration and remembrance. The last thirty years have seen a flourishing of this new cultural phenomenon—the memorial museum. Williams claims his is the first work of its kind to map these new institutions and cultural spaces. Is it too soon to see memorials in Sudan—memorials to the war—or will we ever see them? Do Sudanese try to forget and encourage or force others to forget more than they try to remember?

We also do our remembering through nostalgia, or what Renato Rosaldo calls “Imperialist Nostalgia” (Rosaldo 1985, 68). Memories of colonialism are discussed in a number of sources such as Ann Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler’s “Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in ‘New Order’ Java” (Stoler and Strassler 2000). Also citing Rosaldo’s work, they point out that there is very high fascination recently with “the contrast that memories of colonialism afford between the ‘elegance’ of domination and the brutality of its effects” (ibid., 4). In their words:

While images of empire resurface in the public domain, colonial studies has materialized over the last decade as a force of cultural critique, political commentary, and not least as a domain of new expert knowledge. One could argue that the entire field has positioned itself as a counterweight to the waves of colonial nostalgia that have emerged in the post-World War II period in personal memoirs, coffee table books,

6. This quote is from Burchianti’s internet abstract. <http://bit.ly/1yCkbHp>.

tropical chic couture, and a film industry that encourages...audiences to enjoy “the elegance of manners governing relations of dominance and subordination between the races.” (Ibid.)

Stoler and Strassler also mention Nietzsche’s warning against “idle cultivation of the garden of history” (ibid.) and say that it resonates today. They argue that it is not always easy today to detect if statements about colonialism are critical or if the speakers/writers are “vicariously luxuriating in it.”⁷

The social construction of subjective experiences

How much is memory about identity? Individuals manipulate, change their minds, reinterpret, lie, engage in self-delusion, distort, repress, and forget their experiences of the everyday world. People construct/invent their lives in such a way that they can live in a more or less non-contradictory way. And when they cannot do it in “fact,” they do so in their minds or memories.

However, in terms of gender politics, when women attempt to align their memories to mitigate contradictions, they are often maligned. For example, there has been a great deal of focus in the United States on “false memory,” and women have more often been the object of these particular kinds of memory debates. The politics of gender has influenced and shaped the contemporary debates over sexual abuse and memory (see Gaarder 2000). Why are women’s memories questioned when they claim they have been sexually abused as children?

To follow up on that point, we can see a difference in the level of scrutiny applied to women accusers when they testify in court, especially when it is a sexual crime such as rape. One needs to look at the different language used to refer to women’s testimonies. In *sharia* [Islamic law] it takes two women to equal one male witness in court. In my research from 1988 on the Islamist movement I heard that the rationale is that “women are too sympathetic,” “emotional,” and are, therefore, less reliable witnesses. Their experience is, thus, denied. What prevails is the notion of “hysterical women,” who cannot remember the “truth” because their emotions get in the way.

Who is validated as bearing witness to the past is very political. The past is always contested, and there are always gatekeepers. The politics of memory is about **what the past means to the present**. The focus of contestation is not so much about what happened in the past. It is about who or what is entitled to speak for that past in the present—which is often a conflict over representation—i.e., whose views should be sought. There could be agreement over events, but not over how the truth of these events may be most fully represented. What enters

7. I would make mention of a number of films and television series such as “Gandhi,” “Passage to India,” “Sheltering Sky,” “The English Patient,” “Jewel in the Crown,” “Ashes and Dust,” “Out of Africa,” and a group of films about South Africa that foreground a white hero against a South African backdrop; e.g., films about Ruth First, Donald Woods, etc.

is the role of memory. But both memory and truth are unstable categories, using Katharine Hodgekin's and Susannah Radstone's ideas from *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (Hodgekin and Radstone 2003).

With regard to gatekeepers and power and memory, anthropologist Mariko Tamanoi's hypothesis is that "The more powerful an individual or a group is, the more effectively such an individual or group member can exercise the politics of memory" (Tamanoi 1998, 4-5). Or, with regard to the politics of forgetting/suppressing. Using Rubie Watson's words, Tamanoi remarks that "[People 'remember'] ... because they share with others sets of images that have been passed down to them through the media of memory—through paintings, architecture, monuments, ritual, storytelling, poetry, music, photos, and film." (Tamanoi 1998, 8, emphasis mine).

Memory can also be forced. Post-traumatic stress syndrome, a related phenomenon is an example of "involuntary remembering" Quoting Susan Slyomovics, one of the significant questions I am also asking is: "Why is there an imaginative link between memories and homeland through women?" (Slyomovics 1998, xxii, emphasis mine). Theoretical parallels can be drawn between the feminisation of the colonised landscape and a spatial history of Palestine conceived as the indigenous woman penetrated, raped, conquered, mapped, and under surveillance by the coloniser. The Palestinian woman is made to stand for the destroyed villages and the dispossessed land. She represents the "national allegory" of the lost Palestine homeland in much literary and visual imagery as the feminine sphere reproducing, literally, and figuratively, the nation (ibid., 208).⁸

This brings up the issue of identity and representation. For scholars such as Jonathan Boyarin memory and identity are nearly the same, a point he makes in "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory" (Boyarin 1994). To Boyarin there is a "continuing contest to determine how much of what has happened on a nation's territory is contained in its self-image" (ibid., 22). And what is to be hidden? And how much of the nation's self-image is integrally connected?

It is not a leap to move to a discussion of the body when one is discussing self-identity or even the identity of the national. The link between memory and the body can be through coded markings. Non-state collectives or groups mark individual bodies to include; e.g., scarification, circumcision, etc. But states often mark to exclude; e.g., marks of torture that distinguish between torturer and tortured (ibid.). However, when the torture victim, upon his or her return home, displays his or her marks, it becomes inclusive/collective. It is part of the collective memory. Your scars become mine.

What are the methods of remembering?

People engage in memory maps: they map loss; they photograph loss; they engage in auto-cartography; they tell stories, write histories, give testimonies, recite, and point, among many other methods. With the Internet now such a prominent feature in many people's lives, it is difficult to fathom the endless mechanisms that may be upon us in the future.

8. Slyomovics is using ideas from Fredric Jameson and Partha Chatterjee.

Gendering memory

Following is my discussion of a number of “case studies” or examples of the different ways groups of people—and I will emphasise gender differences from here on—remember significant events such as war, revolution, or the “heroic life.” These ideas are experimental for me and I urge forbearance.

The gendered memory of the Eritrean/ Ethiopian war from the 1960s-1990s or notes on Eritrean women fighters

The Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) worked on creating collective memory. Many of the stories told by both men and women were basically the same. Everyday life in the bunkers was described as nearly the same for men and women. They often told the same battle or casualty story even if they were in different areas of the war zone and had entered the field at different times. One example of a war story much repeated was of a family in which a husband and wife were called to rush into battle at the front. The man went ahead while the woman dealt with their child before joining him and their comrades at the front. He was killed in front of her as she watched; she ran to join him and was killed herself.

However, there were also collective memories women held that were spatialised and temporised differently than men’s. Men talked about the pre-Strategic Retreat period, the beginning of the movement, not just because they were in the movement before women, but because they saw themselves as more significant pioneers (when it was really the women who were pioneers in terms of breaking traditions about the appropriate roles of women).

While most of the Eritreans I interviewed were willing to talk about how violent combat was, in all my interviews only two people mentioned interpersonal violence and conflict, or sexual harassment. No one talked about rape, except to say that it was punishable by death. Few talked about domestic violence.

Uses of space-time and political labour—Eritrean women and men

When I asked EPLF ex-fighters—men and women—to tell me their memories of the war, their responses were highly gendered; i.e., different.

Women talked about the bunkers (collective consciousness)	Men talked about roads (i.e., linear, directive, instrumental)
Women talked about being “in the field”	Men stressed international issues and Ethiopia
Women talked about division of labour	Men talked about combat
Women told family stories	Men told platoon stories
Women were proud of their military training	Men boasted of political education
Women said they had not thought they would return alive	Men talked about civilian politics and civil society
Women did not talk about being wounded	Men did
Women showed me photo albums— photos of life in the bunkers	Men showed me their writings, especially political writings

**Notes on Nuba women and women
of Darfur**

It is clearly too early and too difficult to collect memories of conflict from those still engaged in conflict, such as the Darfurians, or those still trying to hold onto a cease-fire in a tinder-box situation (such as the Nuba or even women of South Sudan). However, as part of my experimental thinking on these issues I can speculate. Because women of these areas had or have been raped, held as slaves and concubines, forced to marry outside the group, forcibly moved away from their families to “peace camps” or relocation centres, may be more likely than men to end up in IDP camps or any refugee camp across borders, etc., they tend to be more broadly focused on extra-national, ethnic issues; men are more attached to the land and group and hold women responsible for representing the land and the group. Men and women, therefore, are bound to have very different notions about the personal and group nature and significance of the conflicts. It is my guess that women will remember events more “close to home,” more personal; men will remember events further from home, the camp, or the village, and less personal. How these will translate in terms of the politics of memory is yet to be seen.

The Everyday life of the revolution—the “heroic life” of the Naxalbari

In an article on “The Everyday Life of the Revolution,” Srila Roy discusses the radical left Naxalbari movement of Bengal (Roy 2007). She says that the “heroic life” or the life of the revolutionary is one that transcends the everyday and the ordinary. The “banal” vulnerabilities of everyday life, however, continue to constitute the unseen, often unspoken background of such a heroic life.

As her examples, Roy uses women’s memories of everyday life spent “underground” in the late 1960s. Using interviews with middle-class women activists, she outlines the ways in which revolutionary femininity was imagined and lived in the everyday (we can compare this to the radical chic Eritrean women fighters with their distinctive Afros, leather jackets, and disdain for femininity). Roy discusses the nature of political labour and also the gendering of revolutionary space. However, unlike Eritrean women, women of the Naxalbari movement found life underground a site of vulnerability and powerlessness (below I compare the Naxalbari case to a Sudanese case). In the same article Roy also mentions that memories of everyday interpersonal violence remain buried under a collective mythologizing of the “heroic life.”

Sudanese communists and the “heroic life”

In my own work on Sudanese women communists, I saw many parallels and contrasts to Roy’s Bengali subjects and some parallels to other episodes of “heroic life.” Women and men of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP or the Party) and its affiliate, the Sudanese Women’s Union (SWU), remember the “heroic life” very differently and experienced it very differently.

However, much like the Bengali “heroic life,” Sudanese men and women communists remembered the comradeship of active Party life—when they were above ground and out in the open. Women got the vote in 1965; men and a few women ran for parliament. From my interviews over the years I was able to observe that men saw themselves as liberating their women, whereas women saw themselves as liberating themselves.

Men remembered their male heroes—the union organisers, their executed SCP secretary-general, their life in prison, often saying these were the best years of their lives—being among men, telling stories, sharing everything, organizing for their return to freedom. Prison space and time were the same.

Women tell of the sacrifices of raising their families and keeping the family afloat financially when the men got arrested. Some silently resented that their husbands (in their view) did not try to avoid being arrested at moments of heightened political activity. Being arrested was, after all, a badge of honour. I also heard resentful complaints that the SCP had so often interfered in their personal lives, especially while the men were in prison; whereas men remember this as the Party taking care of wives of imprisoned martyrs.

For many communist women married to communists, domestic life during particular political crises was another form of confinement. Of course, some women were also arrested. When the SCP was banned and driven underground, the men and the party sometimes thrived. Above ground they got into internal conflicts. Underground there was solidarity, and in prison they still had mobility to do political labour.

While the Party was underground the women lost the freedom of movement. They were not allowed to attend late night meetings in “dubious neighbourhoods.” Their middle-classness would cause them to stand out and would expose everyone else; i.e., the men. Therefore, when the SCP was underground, what resulted was another form of confinement for women.

Women kept quiet about sexual harassment and physical abuse, often remembering it as an inevitable sacrifice for the revolution, something to be endured as part of their role. Nothing should be remembered that would discredit the SCP in private space, which was seen by men as outside the domain of the Party. Furthermore, domestic violence was often seen as “something in the past” that “should be forgotten” so the Party could move on. Temporally, women remembered that sexual violence and physical abuse were on a continuum; men saw these as “episodes.”

The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the “heroic life”

In a number of his writings and public lectures Jok Madut Jok, a Dinka [South Sudanese] medical anthropologist, reveals the abuse of both civilian and warrior women of South Sudan. He writes of the sexual and health abuses of returning SPLA fighters, impregnating their wives and partners too frequently, especially under conditions of poor nutrition and stress, and often when they were still lactating from the previous child. Men had expectations of sexual service, nurturing, and psychological sustenance. Women had to see themselves as contributing to the war effort in whichever way that might be interpreted. Based on these pieces of evidence alone we can speculate that South Sudan women and men will remember these war years differently. It is too soon for us to have full interpretations from the women of South Sudan, but they will come.

Conclusion

In the conflict zones of various regions of Sudan, and especially in the contemporary conflict in Darfur, different ethnic groups and people with differing modes of economy remember their pasts differently, as do women and men. So much of the “homeland’s” past is written on women’s bodies. Men may claim to remember the homeland through the bodies of women. In fact, in most instances of gender-based violence memory is linked to women’s bodies and the “homeland.” The representation of that homeland is therefore embodied. In Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and South Sudan women have been subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence; murder, often by dismemberment of genitalia; torture; incarceration (e.g., occupation and confinement in “camps”); terrorism; slavery; forced marriage and concubinage; sexual slavery; forced circumcision; forced sterilisation; and bodily humiliation (e.g., forced nudity).

These violations are remembered differently by perpetrator and victim, but the relationship of the perpetrator and victim may be one of ambivalence, unsettling notions of who did what to whom, where, and under what circumstances.

Some of the same processes that we can observe in Darfur in which women are mythologised as standing in for the nation or for the struggle are similar to what we see in the “heroic life” of the guerrilla fighters of South Sudan, the communist activists, and the Islamist activists. The “homeland,” the struggle, and the past are carved on women’s bodies. The politics of memory is, indeed, a gendered politics.

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From “harmful traditions” to “pathologies of power”: Re-vamping the anthropology of health in Sudan

Ellen Gruenbaum

Introduction

In the work of physician-anthropologist Paul Farmer (2003, 2006), the root causes of several international health disasters—such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Haiti, drug-resistant tuberculosis in Russia, and the many ill effects of poverty on health—are found in what he calls “pathologies of power.” The global crises of health and human rights are a “war on the poor,” and band-aid strategies of small improvements in treatments cannot begin to address the responsible underlying disparities of wealth and power that create the biological vulnerabilities. Yet, in looking at Sudan’s health conditions in the international arena, economic inequalities in the colonial and post-independence periods have received less attention than topics such as traditional healing, zar, and “harmful traditional practices.” In this chapter, I utilize ethnographic research from the 1970s (with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the University of Khartoum), 1989 and 1992 (with the Development Studies Centre and the University of Khartoum), and 2004 (with Ahfad University, UNICEF Sudan, and CARE Sudan) as the basis for revamping the approaches to the anthropology of health, illness, and healing, taking into consideration Spivak’s post-colonial critique of the ways culture and traditions have been singled out ([1988] 1994). My analysis includes the effects of conflict, economic

disparities, and international funding preferences on patterns of illness and health and on programmatic agendas, and I place particular emphasis on the role of Sudanese activism in addressing health and human rights concerns.

The anthropology of health, illness, and healing has been a growing area of specialization—“medical anthropology”—during the past fifty years. In my own country, for example, the Society for Medical Anthropology has about one thousand members, and similar organizations exist or have been recently established in several other countries. There are a number of professional journals devoted to studies of medical anthropology and medical sociology (for example, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*; *Social Sciences and Medicine*; *Culture, Health and Sexuality*), and universities in many countries have offered courses on anthropological or sociological aspects of the study of health. Often, medical anthropologists have focused on cultural behaviours impacting health (such as “harmful traditions”), but I argue that significant improvements in health conditions require the broader political and economic approach.

In this chapter, I use the experiences I have had with the study of health issues and the health care system in Sudan to trace major theoretical trends in the anthropology of health and how that can influence—and perhaps “revamp”—the anthropological study of health in contemporary Sudan.

Health services, health, and development in Sudan

When I first began my anthropological studies of health in Sudan in the 1970s (during the period when my husband Jay O’Brien and I taught at the University of Khartoum) I was already strongly influenced by powerful critiques of colonialism and imperialism as they impinged on human well being and health and calls to action for a more humane future, drawing on *Medicine Under Capitalism* by Vicente Navarro (1976), Ivan Illich (1975), Andre Gunder Frank’s dependency theory (later world systems theory) (Gunder Frank 1966), Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1968] 2007), and Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), among others. Though not necessarily addressing anthropology, these writers offered Marxist critiques that were vital to medical anthropology’s understanding of the social situations of the so-called “underdeveloped” countries like Sudan. These writings helped me understand clearly how ill-health and uneven medical services were tied to the colonial/imperialist relations serving capitalism. With this analysis, the problems of poverty and economic and political oppression characteristic of colonial/imperial capitalism, could be understood as creating a more fundamental impediment to health than even the biological factors contributing to malaria—the Plasmodium parasites and their mosquito vectors—or the schistosomes and their snail hosts for bilharzia (schistosomiasis).

The political economy approach was therefore what I started with in my dissertation research in Sudan. Under the guidance of my committee—Bernard Magubane, James Faris (who had previously worked in Sudan), and Ray Elling—I set out to understand the health patterns and health care system of Sudan utilizing Magubane’s trenchant critiques of colonialism, race, and class, Faris’s deep love of Sudan’s many cultures and sympathy for the aspirations of the

Sudanese people, and Elling's fascination with the ways health services can be moulded to political and economic purposes while emphasizing their humanitarian goals and sometimes masquerading them as progressive even as they may be providing a smokescreen for other forms of exploitation (see Elling 1980).

Using an approach that later came to be called critical medical anthropology, I started from the assumption that disease and illness were not merely the result of pathogens that needed cures, but rather that people's health needed to be produced by healthy living conditions, good diets, and knowledge of hygienic practices that would enable them to achieve and maintain their health. These could not be achieved under conditions of slave labour, feudal-like peasant market conditions, or aggressive proletarianization and suppression of earning abilities (through taxation, market disadvantages, or other adverse conditions) of the people of African countries. Why? Because health is not merely the absence of disease but the creation of conditions for health as well as access to well-structured health care systems that can use the advances of public health and medicine for prevention and treatment when needed.

Health and healing, particularly as they are embedded in beliefs and rituals of spiritual healing, have long had a part in ethnographic studies, including the early works of Sudan ethnography. The anthropological analysis of health and health care systems in Sudan was only just beginning in the 1970s, but those questions of how the health of the Sudanese people could be systematically improved through the efforts of government policies and the health professions, had been pursued for decades. Early twentieth century work by British doctors and health reformers, many of whom were personally motivated by humanitarian visions of helping those they considered in need of European versions of "enlightenment" and "civilization," proved to be inadequate to promote public health on a large scale. There were no doubt many humane and generous practitioners among them, and by the 1920s they were training Sudanese medical personnel and midwives to practice Western biomedicine, offering the prospect of improving health care for more people through Sudanese leaders in health care.

But as I studied the reports of the Ministry of Health available to me at the Sudan Collection of the University of Khartoum Library, the colonial correspondence in archives of the Gezira Scheme at Barakat, and previous accounts of the history of Sudanese medical care, epidemics studied by David Patterson and Gerald Hartwig, and memoirs of colonial doctors (see Gruenbaum 1982a for a more complete discussion of these sources and findings), what became apparent to me was that the primary goals of the British medical service in the first half of the twentieth century—whether explicit or not—were to employ medical care to achieve three principal purposes. One goal was to attract the Sudanese population groups to the advantages offered by curative medicine—to win the hearts of the people through saving lives—for the purpose of pacification of areas that were resistant to conquest and Christian missionary activities in the South. The second goal was to protect the health of the British officials governing Sudan by treating them and doing research on tropical diseases that were not well understood and could fell the colonial administrators and their families. Finally, the third goal was to prevent epidemics and debilitating health conditions for the people needed for work, particularly as the economically important export-oriented enterprises took growing significance in regions such as the Nile Valley and the Gezira (Gruenbaum 1982a). In addition, as Janice Boddy argues in her recent book, the British efforts to train

midwives had the additional target of the colonial “civilizing mission” common in Africa, in this case an effort at “civilizing” Sudanese women (Boddy 2007).

International scholarly interest in Sudanese health care issues?

Despite the fact that international organizations (with the leadership of WHO and UNICEF) came together in 1978 to create the Alma Ata Declaration (World Health Organization 1978)—which declared that health care for all by the year 2000 was being embraced by the international community as a social justice goal for the well-being of humanity—it remained difficult within the social sciences to find strong support for the political economy of health analysis. There was still a tendency to look to biomedical systems and curative medicine for leadership in health issues. While there was certainly support for the Alma Ata goals in some international organizations, it was, after all, the period of the Cold War between the United States/Western Europe and the Soviet Bloc, and China was a terra incognita from the Western scholars’ viewpoint. However, it was Mao’s China and Castro’s Cuba that seemed to be making the greatest gains in finding ways to provide health care to rural people and the poor—remember the “barefoot doctors” strategy, where rural farmers, many of them women, were trained to provide basic medical care in their communities as an honoured public service, without attending medical school or demanding high technology facilities, high salaries, or urban lifestyles? During the 1970s and 1980s, such innovative ideas were often subject to dismissal as “socialist” or “communist,” and although American anthropologists could talk about such models with a degree of admiration at anthropology conferences, these models were not taken very seriously by the medical establishments of the developed countries, and it was the doctors, not the anthropologists, who were looked to for leadership in development of health care systems. Eventually the movement to provide primary health care through community health care workers was embraced by international organizations that tried to replicate the model in other countries. However, a system based on community health care workers was unlikely to work as well without the sorts of sweeping social and economic changes that China and Cuba pursued under socialist leadership.

For my research, this meant that my analysis of the Sudanese medical system’s development fell into that marginalized area of critical medical anthropology—we were considered too idealistic and unrealistic, maybe even revolutionary—while anthropologists whose work did not call for major restructuring of the biomedical model or the capitalist economic system found niches in “applied anthropology.” While there is nothing wrong with being the “handmaiden of medicine” and helping doctors and other health care providers to better understand their patients’ cultural perspectives and design better approaches for research and treatment, medical anthropology was in danger of slipping into the handmaiden role as its major role. Each year at the American Anthropological Associations Annual Meeting or the Society for Applied Anthropology, researchers participated in panels where they described traditional healers or folk medicine and tried to find ways to help Western biomedicine make use of this knowledge—through incorporation of traditional healers as ancillary primary health care providers (drawing on the barefoot doctors model to a certain extent), for example, or by advocating pharmacological exploration of traditional herbs or techniques like acupuncture. Another role was to expose dangerous traditional remedies like

pay-loo-ah or *azircon*, powders with high levels of arsenic or lead dispensed by traditional healers of Asian or Latin American cultures, for example, and suggesting ways to publicize their harm. Other medical anthropologists became “culture brokers,” helping to explain relatively harmless practices like cupping or coining that might be mistaken for child abuse, fostering better communication between health care providers and clients from cultural minorities or immigrant groups.

In my dissertation, *Health Services, Health and Development in Sudan: The Impact of the Gezira Irrigated Scheme* (Gruenbaum 1982a), I argued that the highly uneven development of health services in Sudan and even the distribution of the prevalence of several of the key tropical diseases could be clearly related to colonial policies for health care services, most of which continued in the post-independence period due to the economic dependence on the Gezira Scheme and the export-oriented economy. The patterns of malaria and schistosomiasis were related to inadequate attention to the work needed to maintain canals for the prevention of reproduction of the host organisms for the parasites causing these widespread debilitating diseases. I also argued that policy decisions about quarantines, methods of cleaning canals, and where to locate new clinic facilities were frequently related to the overriding importance of maintaining the flow of labour to the Gezira Scheme, not derailing labour for weeding canals, neglecting to provide proper sanitation facilities and clean water supply, and quelling real and potential labour unrest in the most economically productive sector on which the British and their successor Khartoum elites depended for the export revenues. While there was no doubt the Gezira population, like those residing in other schemes that were developed later, deserved, needed, and had indirectly paid for the schools and other social and health services they received, I found the neglect of the peripheral areas of Sudan—the nomadic groups, the South, Darfur, etc.—needed explanation, and the primacy of the export sector seemed to be driving the health services decisions of the country.

But did this trenchant critique find a publisher? My initial inquiries with publishers were met with disinterest. Not only was this not a particularly sexy topic, but from US publishers’ point of view, Sudan was an unknown, minor country in a distant part of the world, and they did not think a book about it would find readers. I published a couple of articles out of the dissertation that focused on public health policy, malaria, and schistosomiasis, but real interest in my work came for a relatively minor aspect of it: the work I did with a midwife in Gezira who took me to see her attending childbirth and performing female circumcisions.

Harmful traditional practices

It was not a new direction for medical anthropology to be interested in traditional practices or folk remedies that might be deleterious in some way. But this was something different. In the case of the practices collectively known as “female circumcision,” a massive international movement was mobilizing around them. Feminist concerns and health concerns converged to create impassioned, urgent calls for ending the practices. Though widely variant in form, meaning, and consequences, they seemed to have in common that they were medically unnecessary, carried health risks, and exposed girls’ and women’s private parts to potential harm to their future sexual enjoyment.

Let me hasten to add that this was not the first time the issue had come up, neither among leaders in the affected cultures nor in international circles. Rogaiya Abusharaf (2006), Janice Boddy (1989, 2007) and others have provided many examples of early opposition to female circumcision and reform efforts, both from within and from outside. There are important stories yet to be told about the courageous families that took the risks to make changes with their own daughters.

But as outsiders became increasingly aware of the practices in various countries from the 1940s onward, and especially during the 1980s, Western medical practitioners, educators, and women's rights leaders demanded that anthropologists explain this situation to them. Indeed it was confusing for the horrified Western feminists, since women's rights leaders from affected countries had a variety of responses. Some defended the practices against outside interference, in a backlash against the "cultural imperialism" of those who called the practices "barbaric." Some reformers called for safer methods and lesser damage to be done—a modernization and medicalization of the practices. Other reformers called for education about the health consequences and refuting of the "misbeliefs" of many people about the harmful consequences that came from not doing it; this education approach would allow people to begin to voluntarily choose to give up the practices. And an additional position taken by some of the Middle Eastern scholars living in North America and Europe was to decline to engage in the discussion of the topic at all with outsiders, or to criticize those who did; resenting the intense negative scrutiny often shown to Arabs and Muslims by Western audiences, these scholars saw the issue of female circumcision adding to Western prejudices without promoting understanding of the life struggles of Middle Eastern women. But many took an absolute position: abolish all forms immediately by whatever measures available.

Returning from Sudan to the United States in 1979, I was asked to present a paper on the topic of female circumcision at an annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. With some trepidation—since I did not want to engage in "othering" Sudanese women or focus only on the "exotic" when there were so many serious health, economic, and political problems that Sudan was facing—I presented my paper, based on my research in Gezira. I was instantly famous among feminist medical anthropologists, and I soon won a paper prize for the work and had it published (Gruenbaum 1982b). The many questions that were addressed to me in the coming years led me to focus even more closely on the topic when I returned to Sudan for short visits in 1989 and 1992, and what I learned was reported in my book *The Female Circumcision Controversy: An Anthropological Perspective* (Gruenbaum 2001). I had resisted the idea of writing a book on the topic for many years, but eventually, as journalists, novelists, and filmmakers (such as Walker 1992, Walker and Parmar 1993) popularized the topic based on their sketchy understandings, I decided to contribute my own, more informed perspective. My goal was to embed the lessons about the change Sudanese women and men were seeking in my analysis, so as to avoid exploiting the subject, but by using its intrinsic interest to outsiders, I hoped to draw my readers into a more nuanced understanding of life in villages, Sudanese gender relations, and even the political economy of health. I hope my work has contributed positively to that international dialogue.

Janice Boddy considers it "hardly surprising that feminists 'rediscovered' excision in Africa just as the women's movement gained salience in the West" (2007, 311). Although some anticipated this topic would quickly be exhausted, an incredible thirst for information and

understanding of female circumcision was unleashed during the 1980s and 1990s especially, stimulating several important research and writing projects and a continuing research trajectory on broader gender questions for Sudan, female circumcision, and feminist movements (examples, Gruenbaum 1982b, 2001; Torsvik 1983; Rushwan et al. 1983; Boddy 1989, 2007; Hale 1996; Rahman and Toubia 2000; Malik 2004; Kenyon 2004; Almroth 2005; Abusharaf 2006; Fadlalla 2007). Also, other anthropologists felt compelled to contribute to the public debates and to “take a stand,” lest they be perceived as complicit in the “harmful practice” by their anthropological cultural relativism (e.g., Fluehr-Lobban 1995; Hale 1994). Nearly every female anthropologist of Sudan has written something on this topic. I believe it is because the questions out there demand it of us, but it is also a measure of the intensity of the contemporary “clash of civilizations” sentiments that infuse what Janice Boddy has called “the highly visible international crusade to end female genital cutting” (Boddy 2007, 2). Because such a large percentage of the practitioners of some form of FGC/FGM (female genital cutting or mutilation) are Muslims, the issue can dangerously be drawn into the discourse of presumed conflict between “the West” and “Dar al Islam.”

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995, for example, there were dozens of workshops on “FGM.” Activists from several countries were present, endorsing change and debating the language of the “Platform For Action” document—which became the Beijing Declaration (United Nations 1995)—so as to foster change without being ethnocentric, and the Declaration finally called on all signatory countries to end FGM. Participants discussed the best means for achieving rapid change: educational campaigns, human rights arguments, health education, feminism, and a focus on the well-being of “the girl child” for promoting health and development.

Many Sudanese women attended that conference, having prepared a platform document of their own, and although some participated in the FGM dialogues, the issues that energized most of them were the politics of war and peace. When I returned to Sudan in 2004 for my sabbatical, I focused on the process of change, interviewing numerous activists and investigating organizations working to abolish what by then I was calling Female Genital Cutting—although many activists preferred the term FGM.

That was the year I had the opportunity to work closely with Samira Amin Ahmed and the unit at UNICEF Sudan devoted to promoting abandonment of “FGM/C.” I also had the opportunity to undertake a project arranged by Samia El-Nagar who was then at CARE Sudan. Since then, I have participated with people working with UNICEF in several countries, including a five-week research consultancy in Sierra Leone in a context that is about half Christian and half Muslim, where FGC is practiced as an initiation rite when girls are inducted into the secret society most commonly known as the Bundu (Bondo) or Sande. These experiences have made clear to me how deep and serious the international commitment of UNICEF and other organizations is to trying to end FGM/C, seeing it as central to the human-rights determined mission of “child protection.”

But it is not just an international movement. There are dedicated activists in Sudan who are thoroughly convinced that these practices must change and must change quickly if Sudanese women and girls are to participate fully in society. The work of Ahfad University and the Babikr Bedri Scientific Association for Women Studies in promoting educational

and organizational efforts is noteworthy, as are the efforts of several other organizations that were working to develop a cooperative network to promote change. And there were anthropologists involved in this “applied anthropology,” including Balghis Badri at Ahfad and Samira Amin Ahmed, who headed a special unit working on the issue of female genital cutting in the Child Protection section of UNICEF Sudan.

The leadership of African women’s organizations has offered opportunities for external partners to legitimately engage in assisting with change, giving external interest groups partners to ally with. To get real traction on problems, though, partnerships have needed to involve institutional arrangements such as with ministries of government or those who can influence governments through their invoking of treaties and declarations to which the government is signatory. These arrangements carry their own risks and limitations. For small organizations like private universities, humanitarian cooperative organizations, and other NGOs or non-profit organizations (like the Sudan National Committee affiliated with the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices) it is a challenge to attract funds. Whether they seek funds from the big external donors or sponsors—like UNICEF or GTZ or USAID—or the small ones—like Lemon-Ade or religious organizations and charities—this competition leaves them vulnerable to outsiders defining their goals, methods, and matrices of success. The resultant competition of local organizations for scarce external funds has at times led to counterproductive divisions among activists and organizations that are otherwise working toward the same goals (Gruenbaum 2005). The compromises organizations and individuals alike must make to try to do their work without running afoul of the structures of power weaken their efforts. Farmer and Gastineau cite a popular culture expression of disdain for the hypocrisy that can result. Specifically, a hit recording in Haiti, from the album “International Organizations,” has a line saying, “International organizations are not on our side. They’re there to help the thieves rob and devour . . . International health stays on the side-lines of our struggle” (Farmer and Gastineau 2009, 154). What would lead people to develop such a cynical attitude? Perhaps it is such galling situations as this: During the atrocities and suffering of the Duvalier dictatorship, when the government’s chief source of funds was the United States government, the local director of USAID “often expressed the view that if Haiti was underdeveloped, the causes were to be sought in Haitian culture” (ibid., 155). Haitians saw the IMF, the World Bank, and US foreign policy as a “giant blur of international aid organizations” (ibid.) that were certainly not helping their desperate situation.

Blaming the victim

What about Sudan? Are the health and development problems often blamed on cultural traits and history? And are some of the country’s problems defined as more interesting to humanitarian outsiders than others, perhaps precisely because of the “cultural” aspect? Female circumcision springs to mind, a “health problem” and “human rights violation” that has garnered growing interest for the international organizations.

For the poor people of Sudan, the externally defined health problems—like female genital cutting—are not usually at the top of the agenda. Many rural Sudanese, the urban poor—especially those displaced by war, droughts, and economic hardship—are more likely to say they need safety from political and military conflicts, clean water, health care, schools for their children, quality housing, and good food. By focusing on externally defined health

and human rights problems, even the most humanitarian of motivations can end up short-changing those who are in need of help. Not only does the international community blame the “culture” of the poor for their underdevelopment and ill-health, but through this misdiagnosis of the social ills ends up putting the band-aid on the lesser injury while leaving the gaping, festering wound of injustice and social and economic inequality exposed.

Anthropologists must not join the critics who blame culture for Sudanese problems, nor should we consider that health is not the province of medicine alone; health is produced when there is biological vitality, good food, and beneficial conditions of life. The beneficial conditions of life require modest economic prosperity in conditions of sufficient political stability and liberty for people to live in peace. As anthropologists, we are in a position to observe, document, and expose the disease—and injustice—producing societal structures.

From harmful traditional practices to pathologies of power

If the anthropology of health in Sudan is to be revamped, we need to return to our earlier insights into social injustice and analyse the ways that the powerful have neglected and exploited the ordinary citizens, the hard-working farmers and nomads, the urban poor, and those displaced by violence and drawn into conflicts. Harmful traditions are worth challenging, but let us not mistake them for the chief cause of underdevelopment or ill health in Sudan. The mosquito that injects the *Plasmodium* into a child’s bloodstream is not “the cause” of malaria—rather, the failure to protect a child from mosquitoes can be attributed to the social distortion that neglects canal cleaning and sanitation, provides inadequate housing for the farmers of the irrigated areas, and concentrates health services in the cities by choosing the IMF’s structural adjustment policies over the well-being of the citizens. Building palaces to wealth instead of gardens of well-being in the communities leaves misery in its wake. It’s an ancient story, but the contemporary global concentration of wealth and abuse of power is unprecedented, and it has its echoes in the local level social structures of the world: the inequality in every poor country and community.

These trends are “pathologies of power,” to use anthropologist-physician Paul Farmer’s passionate assessment (2003). Anthropologists have too often been co-opted by our interest in culture to play into the hands of those who blame the poor for their poverty, or blame the suffering of refugees on “ethnic” conflict, or blame one gender for the human rights violations experienced by the other. It is incumbent on us to look deeper, point out when the “blame game” is obscuring the dynamics of power, and call for the important changes the world needs.

The President of the Society for Medical Anthropology organized a symposium at the Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting in 2007 that presented the case that war and political violence are one of the most egregious causes of risk to human health and well-being and a major cause of human suffering and untimely deaths of ordinary people in the contemporary era. In her presidential address that year, Marcia Inhorn argued that medical anthropology should bring the world’s attention to this atrocious situation by increasing

anthropological research assessment of the harm of war and political violence and engaging in activism against war (Inhorn 2008).

Activist and applied anthropology has a long history, but it is very difficult to figure out how to do it. Anthropologists cannot open clinics and offer health care to directly help the poor—unless, like Paul Farmer, they are doctors, too. But we can be the ones to draw attention to the disparities and suffering and develop analyses that contribute to movements for urgent change. And if we are fortunate to have dedicated, bold, and inspired leaders with access to resources who are not afraid to negotiate with powerful organizations or wealthy benefactors there are times when change does happen.

“Whatever it takes!” This is the slogan of Paul Farmer and colleagues’ organization, Partners in Health. They are committed to not compromising on access to quality of health care under principles of social justice.

For the future of the study of health in Sudan, anthropologists need to take a fresh look at the major health problems of the country, asking themselves where people are suffering and how they can be helped. We must not, as anthropologists, limit ourselves by looking only for that which can be regarded as “anthropological.” Studying cultural variation and different forms of social organization is our expertise. But we must put it in the service of urgent change that is needed, and not let our need to define our discipline drive how we define reality.

One of the women in Garia Wahid, last time I was there, was pleased to see me, pleased I had written a book, and pleased that my life was going well. But she took me aside and asked quietly, what the benefit of my study would be. “Better understanding of your situation” would have sounded pointless. But in truth, unless I could deliver some benefit to the community—better services, investment in something they needed, or just plain cash for whatever they wanted to accomplish—these kind and generous people were receiving little in return for the information they provided to researchers.

But there is more than one major stumbling block here in trying to address health and human rights, particularly from the “ivory tower” perspective that some of us are writing from. If we don’t want to be reduced to “seminar-room warriors,” in Farmer’s apt phrase (2010, 445), we need to engage in delivery of some benefit. Yet many of those struggling to work here in Sudan as teachers and researchers have been unable to count on support for their work or even the security of their jobs. The ivory tower is no protection!

Partners in anthropology

Perhaps we need a new alliance among the anthropologists who study Sudan. Will some of us be seminar room warriors, speaking truth to power? Or will it be impossible ever to get visas to return? Will some of us take jobs with international organizations, to be able to steer resources toward social needs that we, as anthropologists, have come to be keenly aware of? Will some of us retire and tell good stories to our grandchildren, hoping some future generation will find the wisdom and opportunity that has eluded our own? Will some of us develop partnerships across universities, stronger than the ones we’ve had before? Sudanese anthropologist Idris Salim once eloquently chastised us outsider anthropologists

who stayed away during the worst decade of the civil war in Sudan. Why hadn't we done more, from the relative safety and academic freedom of North America, to maintain our intellectual ties to help our Sudanese colleagues weather that difficult period? The 2008 conference celebrating the 50-year jubilee of anthropology at the University of Khartoum offered us an opportunity to have that dialogue, focusing on how we can help each other from our different vantage points, and on how we can, together, create the world we want that is better than the world we have.

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Historical thinking in political discourses: The case of land issues in South Kordofan

Enrico Ille

In the following chapter, I will present some theoretical considerations on the relationship of historical thinking and political discourses in present-day Sudan, citing the case of the (Tira) Mandi village in the east of South Kordofan.¹ The chapter shows some of the layers of argumentation and the underlying socio-political structures that dominate processes to legitimise claims of leadership in a certain area, and thus primary rights on its resources. It also discusses the contradiction between the clear and unquestionable character historical narratives often have in the eyes of the ones telling them, and the actual blurring of social categories and historical processes. In its conclusion, the chapter suggests understanding historical thinking in political discourses as embedded production of knowledge, bound to social frames as well as group and individual interests.

1. The article is based on fieldwork (unstructured and semi-structured interviews) conducted in January and February 2007 in (Tira) Mandi in reference to the project “Contested autochthony: land and water rights, and the relation of nomadic and sedentary people of South Kordofan / Nuba Mountains, Sudan” at the Institute for Social Anthropology, University of Halle (Germany). The project was headed by Prof. Richard Rottenburg and part of a research programme on difference and integration between nomadic and sedentary populations, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation). The article summarises some aspects covered in detail in Ille (2011).

Historical thinking creates a connection between the present time and the past. It results in a specific understanding of the past, which is represented according to the present it is embedded in. In the last decades, a specific methodological frame has been established for the collection and analysis of historical thinking based on oral communication. Oral history, in the wider sense, attempts to combine the standards of classic historiography with oral historical narratives. Jan Vansina, one of its most eminent representatives, wrote in 1985 about its sources:

Among the various kinds of historical sources traditions occupy a special place. They are messages, but unwritten; their preservation entrusted to the memories of successive generations of people. Yet, until a generation ago, little had been done towards the study of what this means in terms of historical methodology. This is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that traditions were constantly used as source material Yes, oral traditions are documents *of the present*, because they are told in the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past, so they are expressions *of the past* at the same time. They are the representation of the past in the present. (Vansina 1985, xi-xii)

Both the question about “history” posed by researchers and the subsequent selection of important points by an informant reflect and create the scope of historical conscience. Thus, the existence of an eyewitness alone, for instance, answers neither the question of credibility and its criteria, nor the question of what specific perspective is represented. Furthermore, it must be noted that a clear division between written and oral narratives cannot be made, since they often interact in a complex way. Even researcher and informant may not be clearly differentiated, as happens when history is “verified” independently of academic researchers, who enter a continuous process of historical discourses and may or may not have some influence on it.

While oral tradition often appears to be weaker and a victim of historiography and written accounts, the successful claim on being the bearer of “true memory,” *id est* the oral tradition of the ancestors, can be utilised for empowerment by instrumentalisation of the written word for its own point. Regarding the negotiation of agreements, the postponement of writing down, or the prolongment of its process, can be a powerful tool of “oralisation,” which breaks resistance and opens space and time to act while negotiations are still ongoing.

To capture these interlocked processes, the elitist claim of a “true” writing of history should be abandoned in favour of a focus on representations of history. The aim should not be the quest for the one proper way of thinking about history, but the question of whose history one is talking about. Nevertheless, this question has not to be answered free of judgments. There are still presumptions one can disagree with, and there are forms of style and argumentation one can refuse as inappropriate or inconsistent in a specific case.

But the study of representations of history and representations in general gives a clearer picture of which kind of historical thinking is significant for which specific situation. In consequence, it prevents, or at least softens, a misjudgement of the impact of scientific research. Let me clarify this thought by looking at a present-day conflict. The fourth chapter of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), called “The Resolution of the Abyei Con-

flict,” stated that an Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) should be formed to determine the geographic boundaries of the Abyei area. In an additional agreement of December 2004, the detailed composition of the ABC was determined. The agreement also specified the sources the commission should use to come to its conclusions: statements from local representatives, information from the Government of Sudan (GoS) and Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), as well as sources from British archives and “other related sources on Sudan wherever they may be available with a view to arriving at a decision that shall be based on scientific analysis and research.”² The final decision over contested points had to remain with the scientific experts.

However, following the report, fierce confrontations arose about its results, and, as we know, these confrontations continue today. Even more, the contentions about the Abyei area grew into one of the central discourses in contemporary Sudan, representing a substitute fight about the peace agreement and the political future. One of the ABC members, Douglas H. Johnson, stated in an interview that great pressure was put on the experts during the work of the commission, both by GoS and SPLM/A, to be uncompromising in their positions. After presentation of the report representatives of GoS and SPLM/A immediately went to the Missiriyya and Dinka groups, respectively, with propaganda in support of their different opinions. While SPLM/A demanded unconditional implementation of its results, GoS fuelled discontentment among the Missiriyya.³

Whatever the explicit arguments brought forward by the different sides, and admitting that what happened, and still happens, is of course much more complex than this rough sketch, it appears necessary to ask how far the scientific line of thought was, and is, relevant for the decision-making process. What happens to a decision “that shall be based on scientific analysis and research”?

With these considerations in mind, I want to turn to the case study. One of the most difficult issues in the Nuba Mountains/South Kordofan after the CPA had been signed was the question of land property and land use. Many conflicts were born out of unresolved disputes about land rights in which many different legal systems overlapped. Processes of individual land registration contradicted the understanding of customary rights. Tribally understood boundaries, which were subject to flexible inter-group negotiations in the past, were to be determined through the work of land commissions.

Likewise, historical narratives and territorial claims became closely connected. This connection existed, in the first place, as discourse on first-comer or autochthonous claims on primary, communal land rights. Since “original people” was a significant category in negotiations of land property, settlements and territories were claimed to be “original land” of this or that

2. *Annex to the Resolution on the Abyei conflict: Understanding on Abyei Boundaries Commission, 17th December 2004.*

3. “Interview with Douglas Johnson, expert on the Abyei Boundary Commission.” *IRINNEWS*. May 29, 2006. <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=53574> (09-08-2006). Reprinted in: *Sudan Tribune*. May 29, 2006. <http://bit.ly/1wHD1pK> (09-08-2006).

group. This understanding contradicted both governing law in North Sudan, which held all unregistered land as property of the state, and centralised land allocation practices, through which large pieces of land were given to commercial investors or governmental projects for large-scale mechanised farming. Heavily affected by these dynamics, contentions among local communities in rural areas were dominated by discourses on communal land rights as a “tribal” privilege. This situation was intensified by the establishment of land commissions, following the policy of communal land registration favoured by SPLM.

The ideological basis of these communal claims had been formulated in the recent, heavily discussed regional and tribal conferences, which were often dominated by SPLM/A supporters. Most discussions on land rights were based on suggestions resulting from a workshop on questions of land rights that was held on November 4-5, 2004, in Lwere, near Kauda in the Nuba Mountains. The workshop was initiated by the SPLM governor, and headed by a specialist for land issues from USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). A central sentence from the unpublished final report reads as follows:

Success in securing the land rights of the Nuba population in fair and just ways during the Interim Period will be one of the most significant tests and demonstrations of good faith on the part of the Government of Sudan and an important indicator to Sudanese of the viability of union. Success in Nuba will also provide a helpful precedent and model for other people in the same position.

In 2005, a regional All Tribes Conference was organised; its final communiqué proposed to resolve “the land disputes by legal means and after enacting a new land law, which will reduce the causes of friction between the tribes.” A comparable point was made in the comprehensive report of the “First Traditional Leaders Conference in Nuba Mountains,” but with a specific twist:

It was recognised by all the participants that land laws and land distributions undertaken since the 1970s, and especially in 1983, were intended to disown and displace the people of the Nuba Mountains. It was felt that new laws would be required to redress the injustices of the past and that wronged parties would have to be compensated. It was also agreed that the traditional leaders should be involved in the new laws and that there should be both the national and local land commissions to oversee the management and use of the land.⁴

In the 2nd All Nuba Conference, the aspect of participation of “traditional leaders” in legal decisions changed into an absolute claim of land rights:

20. The conferees decided that the Nuba lands and the areas where they have been living throughout the long history of Sudan, which can be traced back to the Christian Kingdoms, are theirs; according to this understanding, the Nuba are the indigenous population of the area;

4. *Final Communiqué All Tribes Conference. Kauda, April 9-11, 2005.* <http://bit.ly/1zeYbjC> (09-08-2006).

21. The conferees agreed that the tribe or the community is the sole owner of the land of fathers and grandfathers according to custom and tradition, as it was the case with the Nuba tribes throughout the years; ...⁵

At this point, I want to consider for a moment the issue of land and belonging. As quoted, the members of the 2nd All Nuba Conference demanded absolute land rights for the Nuba on the basis of indigenoussness. In recent years, this connection between land, origin, and belonging has increasingly been called “autochthony” in academic discussions, especially in African studies. One of the most distinctive contributions to these discussions came from Peter Geschiere. In a text from 2000, he and his colleague Francis Nyamnjoh write:

In principle, ethnicity evokes the existence of a more or less clearly defined ethnic group with its own substance and a specific name and history. Precisely because of this specificity, ethnicity is open to debate and even to efforts towards deconstruction by alternative interpretations of history. Notions of autochthony have a similar effect of creating an us-them opposition, but they are less specific. They are equally capable of arousing strong emotions regarding the defence of home and of ancestral lands, but since their substance is not named they are both more elusive and more easily subject to political manipulation. These notions can be applied at any level, from village to region to country. Autochthony seems to go together very well with globalization. It creates a feeling of belonging, yet goes beyond ethnicity’s specificity. Precisely because of its lack of substance it appears to be a tempting and therefore all the more dangerous reaction to seemingly opened global flows. (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000)

But still, there is an argumentative basis to the claim on autochthony. Therefore, the field opens to some questions: How are claims of being autochthonous formed in detail? How are they related to other forms of group-building? How do individuals and groups prove or reject first-comer status or autochthony? What are the historical arguments and underlying presumptions? And, subsequently, how are these claims institutionalised through political administration, law, and economy?

In most cases, discussing claims of autochthony as the only central feature of power struggles will prove insufficient. In the same way criteria of legitimisation, power structures, and group boundaries are overlapping, so are directions of inclusion and exclusion. The challenge for case studies is therefore to analyse the local complexity on the basis of the possibilities which framing macro-structures provide and the constraints they enforce.

In the following, I want to sketch the case of the (Tira) Mandi village in the southeast of the Nuba Mountains, in order to reflect on some features of the local discursive construction of first-comer status, and its consequences for local politics. The basis of the case study is fieldwork I conducted in the beginning of 2007. Although there have been some rapid changes

5. *Final Communiqué – The 2nd All Nuba Conference. Kauda, April 6-8, 2005.* http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=9487 (09-08-2006).

in South Kordofan, both for better and for worse, the prevailing inner frictions in the Nuba Mountains are not completely new, and thus not incomparable with other historical settings.

(Tira) Mandi lies near the long valley of Khūr Kauda, beyond the confluence of its two arms from Kauda and Indarāfi Turra. It is today a village of about four thousand inhabitants. Placed near a small hill, remains of hillside farming and still visible fragments of house walls indicate the former usage of the hill as a dwelling place. While the eastern side of the hill, where (Tira) Mandi lies today, is still black from regular burning of grass, the western side is mostly overgrown. Paths around the two parts of the hill lead to the western forests, from which wood is occasionally collected, while the agricultural lands and the main orientation points are north of the village.

(Tira) Mandi is placed in an area rich with trees, predominantly mango, doum and doleib palm. Although underground water is diminishing, eight functioning water pumps provide easy access to water inside the settlement compared to other places in neighbouring rural areas. But while in earlier times the riverbeds were filled until March, water now disappears after a few hours. Waterholes, which were easily dug by hand, must now, with much work, be replaced by wells two or three meters deep. For now, however, ecological strains are not the most tenuous of problems. (Tira) Mandi is simply structured around a main road, which leads westwards to Kadugli and Kauda, and eastwards to Aṅgartu and Talodi. At the centre of the settlement, there are a large football field and a large school area, which has partly been used as a military base since the war. A permanent market place does not exist, but a small health centre provides basic medical services.

According to local observation, the village is divided into three sections where the groups Nuba Tira, Nuba Atoro, and Shawābna, a group of mixed origin, are said to dwell separately. Apart from this spatial division, (Tira) Mandi has been further split by a recent ethno-political conflict, which can neither be described as simple opposition of SPLM and National Congress Party (NCP) supporters, nor as an Arab-Nuba confrontation, but more as ambiguous intersection, intensified by the circumstance that the village lies on the border between Sudan Armed Forces- (SAF) and SPLA-dominated areas.

This political split was reflected in two community-based associations, called *rabiṭa abnā' mandī* and *dār khairiyya tirā mandī*, and in the formation of two clubs. The use of one name versus the other for the village is symptomatic of the underlying claims on first-comer status. Specifically, the Shawābna, who maintain that their families were the first to settle in the area, favour the name “Mandi” and have different versions to explain the origin of the name. The version of the supporters of the Tira as first-comers is that the village has to be called, and has always been called, “Tira Mandi.”

Allow me to explore this issue briefly in order to outline the picture that written accounts give of the history of the place. The first mention to the name of the village was made by German traveller and naturalist Eduard Rüppell, who reproduced the route Mehemet Beg al-Daftardar took at the beginning of the 1820s south of contemporary Kordofan (Rüppell 1829). The second to write about the place as “Tira Mande” was another German-speaking traveller, the Austrian geologist Joseph Russegger, who was recruited by Muḥammad ‘Ali to find minerals and gold. He came across the Kauda valley and some of its villages and

temporary settlements in 1837, when he found out that not Shaybūn, but the neighbouring areas near the Tira Mountains were the source of the traded gold for which Shaybūn was famous. He found the slopes of these mountains crowded with, as he says, thousands of people. Throughout the nineteenth century, all maps showed “Tira Mandé” as the village’s name, probably in accordance with Russegger (Russegger 1844).

During the Mahdiyya, the whole area experienced a continuation of the slave raids of the Turkiyya, but with Talodi a relatively secure gathering point was established by runaway slaves and those fearing enslavement. Therefore, much of the population, most probably also from the area of today’s Tira Mandi, migrated there. The administrative centre, which the British colonial administrators founded near this settlement at the beginning of the twentieth century, was disrupted and temporarily replaced after an uprising of local nomadic groups against the local commissioner. To avoid further tensions, the mixed population was subsequently moved to the places from where they, according to the ideas of the colonial administrators, originally came (Bell n.d.). In the course of these events, Tira Mandi experienced another major change. The map of the British Sudan Survey Department in the 1930s showed Tira Mandi again near Kulkulaya and the “Unnerto” hill.

Eliminating the Tira component from the name was a newer practice. Although there was a British map showing the village as only “Mendi,” an entomological survey of 1956 still used the name Tira Mandi (Lewis 1956, 704). The historical map Janet J. Ewald worked out for her book on Tagali, published in 1990, also showed the location as Tira Mandi (Ewald 1990, 20). But the 1990s brought major transformations. The Kauda Valley was given the name Khūr Salām with the establishment of the governmental Foundation for Peace and Development (*mu’assasat al-salām wa al-tanmiyya*) in 1994 with its seat in Abu Gebeiha. The foundation provided the village with a plough and a milling machine. However, its establishment was connected with the re-organisation of (Tira) Mandi into a military zone, a so-called “peace village,” in the course of which the population of (Tira) Mandi and the surrounding villages were concentrated near the hill and surrounded by government army forces. When the African Rights Organization was in Kauda in the middle of the 1990s, the new “peace village” had already become notorious as a basis for government attacks and the work of security forces (African Rights 1995, 86, 229-233, 286-287 passim).

The transformation showed its effect after the CPA. The operational map of the Joint Military Commission (JMC), which began its work in the Nuba Mountains in 2002, showed the village as Mandi in 2005. Later, the operational map of WFO from February 2006 showed Tira Mandi and Mandi at a distance of about 15 km, the former belonging to Rashad County and the latter to Talodi. This last depiction was a result of two operational offices, one in the SPLM area, and one in the NCP area, who reproduced a politicised perception of settlements on a map of an international organisation designed as a tool for supply planning.

The impact this last transformation had on memory and the issue of naming is immense. There are many indications that before the 1990s there were indeed several smaller settlements, for which Mandi was a summarizing term. The forced simplification of settlement structure complicated social co-existence intensely by bringing separate settlements together. Over the years, the establishment of the consolidated village as “Mandi” supported the assumption that nothing else had ever existed. However, the end of the war brought a change in the power

structures established during the war, and from the point of view of the SPLM-oriented Tira the time had come to end what was perceived as domination by the NCP-oriented Shawābna and their claim of being Arab. Since 2005, following a tribal conference, two signs at both ends of the main road welcome people to “Tira Mandi.”

The inner split of the village along the Tira-SPLM/Shawābna-NCP lines can be observed for instance in the one-sided support for the two clubs. Equipment, such as a generator and satellite television, was provided only once by the NCP-led government and was installed in the Shawābna club. Collections in the Tira community for chairs, books, and a generator were used only for the Tira club and therefore produced one-sided solidarity. But while the youth play football on two different fields, daily life is often said to be unaffected by the political positions. Indeed, when two houses burned down completely during my stay, the reaction was supportive from all “sides.” To be seen is whether social duties of cooperation can survive socio-political clashes in the future.

In the following I want to focus on one of the main political conflicts in (Tira) Mandi today, and how it is connected to conflicts and issues of larger scale. This conflict revolves around the appointment of a *‘umda* by the *amīr* of Shawābna in al-Samma, near Kadugli, the administrative centre of the *qabīla*. There are two contrasting opinions about what happened.

One side refers to the events with the expression “by night” (*bi-l-layl*). In this version, a group of migrants from Tira Mandi, now living in Khartoum and other towns, entered the village, and appointed a *‘umda* in the name of the *amīr* and without any communication with the locals. There are several reasons given for why this appointment was not legitimate, among them lack of approval by the Tira *amīr* of the region, who represents a part of the geographical-administrative area which includes Shawābna in Tira Mandi. The other side instead considered the appointment of a *‘umda* the responsibility of the *amīr* of the same *qabīla*, thus the Shawābna *amīr* was the one allowed to appoint *‘umad*. Because Mandi had long been the place of residence for Shawābna, and the Shawābna living there were connected with al-Samma through customary law and traditions, there could be no doubt about the legitimacy of the appointment, or so this version claims. Furthermore, according to this second version of events, the *‘umda* appointed in the name of the *amīr* possessed an identity card as a registered *‘umda* in the government system, while the “anti-*‘umda*” appointed by the Tira *amīr* failed to receive one.

Two different conceptions of Native Administration confronted each other in this conflict, one territorial and one tribal. The former was based on agreements on more or less fixed territories made by the Council of Native Administration Leaders (*majlis al-mukūk*) established under the British administration. Administrative policies under Numayri changed the structure of this “patchwork” authority, but maintained the territorial principle. He removed the system of *mukūk* and established areas of *mashāyikh* from which five representatives worked together as a court (for a detailed discussion see Abdul-Jalil 1985; Teraifi 1987).

In 1996, the latest change of system was introduced, headed by an *amīr* in the north and by the *sulṭān* in the south. The Native Administration was now connected with the national administrative system, but not in a territorial way. The administrative system of the Government of Sudan, at that time, defined a national territory divided into states, divided into

districts, divided into urban and rural localities. But the Native Administration system of the NCP was based on “tribal” differentiation: an *amīr* needed five *‘umad* to achieve this status and a *shaykh* needed thirty men; an *amīr* would try to find as many places possible to install a *‘umda*.

The SPLM administrative system, instead, divided a region into counties. The Rashad county, for instance, contained five *payām*, with each *payam* containing a number of *būmas*, which means villages and towns. In the Nuba Mountains, the established system apparently excluded non-Nuba from structural significance. The Shawābna who saw themselves as non-Nuba would thus try to reject this system and their orientation would inevitably be towards the NCP system.

However, in all of these systems, the mentioned *amīr* of Tira held the highest position: from 1957 onwards, chairman of the Council of Native Administration Leaders; under Numayri chairman of the court of *mashāyikh*; and again *amīr* in the NCP system. Although his violent opposition to the SPLA discredited him in the eyes of many Tira, he was still treated as a potential *mak* (the term for Native Administration leader favoured among SPLM supporters, also in direct opposition to *‘umdāt* appointed by the NCP-dominated government) under SPLM leadership when he died in 2007, though holding an unclear position in the political landscape.

In a discursive environment, where the tribal community becomes the effective unit for administrative posts and thus for the formation of an interest group with a structural connection to the dominant political system, the central issue at stake was the recognition of Shawābna as a legitimate tribal unit, strongly connected to the question of whether they could claim a distinctive identity or not.

From the point of view of many politically active Nuba, this was linked with the assumption that some Shawābna claimed superiority on the basis of their alleged Arab origin. While this touched one of the hot spots in Sudan’s contentions about identification and power structures, it was obvious that “Arab” meant very different things to different people. The reference to an Arab origin, for instance, connected Shawābna to the Arab-Muslim ideology as mediated by the NCP policy, but the local perception of “Arab” was often limited to a part of the nomadic groups, namely the Baqqāra. Even Missiriyya and Shanābla were sometimes labelled as categories of their own. From their own perspective, the Shawābna were put under pressure during and after the war to “decide” to which side they belonged, Nuba or Arab. The consequence of an ideologically drawn line between SPLM-Nuba and NCP-Arabs was especially difficult for some Shawābna, who were ready to follow Tira rule but did not want to give up loyalty to the NCP. At the same time, their conflict was an indication that NCP support of Arab-Muslim ideology was not in every case the reason for an individual supporting the NCP.

A consequence of the Shawābna elite’s search for Arab roots was a specific selection process of historical references. In an interview I conducted with him, the *amīr* of the Shawābna referred to the links between his lineage in Shawābna, called Musallamiyya, and the different groups in Sudan with that same name. When we reviewed some of the older publications about the Nuba Mountains together, he showed little interest in the German travel accounts

that mentioned a Nuba population on Shaybūn, but a section in the Kordofan Handbook of 1912 by the British administration aroused his attention. It stated that the Shawābna's ancestors were said to have migrated from Musallamiyya in Gezira to Shaybūn. The mention of Musallamiyya interested him so much that he demanded I write everything down for him and his own research, and he listened only half-heartedly to my remarks about the account only basing its claims on circumstantial evidence.

One cultural feature often cited to falsify the claim of Arab identity was language. It is significant that one of the main aims of the Tira tribal conference in 2007 was to develop one vision concerning the language. The existence of at least three factions of Tira speakers, which differ in vocabulary, writing conventions, and sometimes even grammar, as well as a huge percentage of non-Tira speakers, depicted the situation of group members who lived in very different settings. But these differences never led to doubt about the existence of a Nuba tribe called Tira.

For the Shawābna language, instead, local expressions, such as *niam* for food, are seen as Nuba influences on the Shawābna usage of Arabic language. Intensive surveys are needed to identify the details of the process of including words from other languages and of developing local expressions. The complexity of interactions in this field reaches, locally, a very simple conclusion: mixed Arabic is a sign of non-Arab identity.

These considerations reveal a specific notion of "Arab." To be an Arab is connected with the notion of purity. This means that the ideological rhetoric of a superior Arab race is not accepted itself, but the notion of "Arab" it uses is taken for granted. Thus, groups claiming to be originally Arab while they are obviously mixed provokes laughter. Based on the notion of purity, claiming Arab identity as a mixed group is seen as an apparent lie, which can easily be exposed. According to this concept, the members of the group making the claim become self-denying and must hide to avoid direct confrontation with those who know "the truth."

But the groups making the claim maintain a completely different point of view. To be an Arab is understood as participation in a noble bloodline; and, as this line is considered purely patrilineal, once acquired, this participation cannot be lost as long as Arab fathers have sons. From these groups' perspective, to label a mixing of groups a loss of Arab identity is completely out of place, as this mixing only extends the realm of Arab blood. Thus, the ideological rhetoric of a superior Arab race is accepted, but the notion of "Arab" is changed.

Perceived ethnicity and ethnic boundaries point also to the orientation towards different authorities and reference systems of power. Thus, several cases of self-determined change of affiliation ended up in court because a father could not accept his children's decision, most often when a son from intermarriage decided to follow the ethnic affiliation of his Shawābna mother. One explanation given for the "conversion" of Tira is the Shawābna's presence in the higher education system early on, so that the few Tira who went to university from the 1960s onwards studied together with Shawābna and likely became closer to them. In the 1980s and 1990s, larger parts of the Tira group also started attending university. Graduates now feel they have to change the power balance and challenge the Shawābna claim of superiority. This claim is viewed as part of a marginalisation strategy of alleged Arabs, which includes identifying gifted individuals in non-Arab communities and luring them into an education

based on Arab identity or binding them through marriage. Today, the partly aggressive presentation of Nuba superiority is a common feature of SPLM-oriented youth and one of the reasons for violent tensions arising after the war, as many return from East Africa, South Sudan, and Kharṭūm with high ambitions to get themselves into the political landscape.

But what is the role of historical discourses in these processes? The most common concept of time in the local discourses is the distinction between “early” (*badrī / zamān*) and “recent” (*qarīb*), for which the actual distance from “now” (*hassa*) can differ greatly and even overlap. With the word “history” (*tarīkh*), however, the main association is what would be called “old history” (*al-tarīkh al-qadīm, al-’assās al-qadīm*), which is regarded as special knowledge. Hence, even when I expressed my interest in daily life and recent events, the program of my research was translated as a search for “the old things” (*al-kalām al-qadīm*). Consequently, there are often only main lines of a distant past, main narratives that express a general idea about origin and first-comers. In the issue of land rights, these narratives become crucial to manifest territorial claims. In the issue of social identification, these narratives divide a pagan past from a Muslim present and at the same time deny and claim the existence of distinctive groups. Thus, a basic idea of history pervades social life by providing a way to identify “us” and “them.”

I want to summarise some of the features I found in local representations of history. The Tira in Tira Mandi claimed that they inhabited the land as first-comers rather than as “children of the earth,” or autochthons. A perceptual twist made migration into the Nuba Mountains a major topic of historical narratives, because connections to great kingdoms, the Nubian kingdoms of Northern Sudan in the first place, were explicitly appreciated. A connection between a general and a specific history can read as follows: originally, all groups were Nubian from Egypt; then they came to Tira Mandi, were brought to Umm Durmān by Khalifa al-Mahdi and freed in the time of liberation, meaning the British invasion. Then they returned to Tira Mandi, but still lived in the hills. About eighty to ninety years ago, they began to come down from the hills, estimated by remembering the lives of the present forty to fifty year olds’ grandfathers, who were born in the hills, but saw their children grow up in the plains. In any case, this means that Tira were in Mandi before the Mahdiyya.

Sometimes the arrival in Tira Mandi was differentiated by clans or other groupings. In Tira Mandi and the areas south of it, a very specific form of oath groups developed, regulating the payment of blood money; namely, Matanīn and Khalayfa. For instance, the Tira Khalayfa were said to have arrived during the Mahdiyya when the original groups had started descending from the highest mountains. Their name relates to the fact that they were taken from the mountain of Tira al-Akhḍar as slaves at the time of the Khalifa of the Mahdi. When they arrived, they had their own *shaykh* and they settled near the present village. Other references predominantly used for the purpose of structuring history are connected to leaders, especially their interaction with the British. Some interpretations feel that all change came with the British; others tell history without mentioning the British presence whatsoever.

Finally, this departure from the mountains for the plains is another basic topic, as thinking in up/down (*fōq/tihit*) terms is a prevailing feature of discourses on social status. The distinction between an old, original mountain and the hill near today’s village is frequent; the places between them are specifically named, thus creating a detailed geographical microcosm of up

and down. Again, the estimation of years since the migration from the mountains is framed by the value of *badri* to denote an early existence as low land community in contrast to Atoro and Tira in other areas. In any case, the move from up to down is linked to an improvement of living standards and to the achievement of a higher, more civilised stage.

Most Shawābna are treating the question of origin in a very different way. While origin is not a fundamentally contested point for narratives on Tira, it is the focal point in the case of Shawābna. Shawābna are often denied their own history when the existence of the group “Shawābna” is denied. History gives a group a specific face, which means a specific identity and a specific legitimacy. Shaybūn as their place or origin is generally agreed upon, but there are several migration patterns used to explain how the Shawābna arrived to Shaybūn, each reaching a different conclusion in terms of social identity of the Shawābna.

One pattern led from the kingdom of Qarri, inhabited by ʿAbdallāb, to Shaybūn, presenting the Shawābna as heirs in a royal environment. Another took gold workers of Ḥassaniyya and ʿAbdallāb from the mines of Beni Shangul to Shaybūn after the mines were exhausted according to Turkish, Egyptian, and Jordanian engineers, making the Shawābna descendants of slaves. For some, Shawābna came directly from the Nuba Mountains; for others intermarriage was used to achieve protection; still others saw them trading Nuba on the market in Shaybūn.

But one narrative can contain several elements in order to cover certain principal ideas. In a single conversation, the Shawābna *ʿumda* appointed by the Tira *amīr* combined the general statement that there is originally no difference between Tira and Shawābna, and that immigration of Shawābna into the Nuba Mountains was “about 1600.” He continued with the claim of 150 years of Shawābna presence in Tira Mandi, and with the recognition of an autochthonous population on Shaybūn with later immigration of Jaʿāli traders from Shendi. He named al-Samma as an early centre given by the *mak* of Kadugli prior to a migration to Shaybūn, and finished with the identification of all these groups as Muslims. In an unsettled story line, group boundaries was denied, customary land rights secured, an Arab influence introduced, and the main opponent, the present *amīr* with seat in al-Samma, was both recognised and brought under Nuba rule in parallel to his own subordination to the rule of the *amīr* of Tira.

To claim first-comer status, some Shawābna state that when they arrived from Shaybūn, Tira were still living in the Tira Mountains. An important feature of this version is the introduction of civilizing achievements by the Shawābna, for example the use of a specific type of cotton (*dāmūr*) and the production of clothes from it (*dāmūriyya*). This introduction, so to speak, ended the era of nakedness. Whatever the details, migrations from Shaybūn to other places and their connection to a specific time are the narrative features used in discourses of first-comer claims. As a result, two poles of historical “truth” can be detected: Shawābna as first-comers and Shawābna as a pseudo-group with no distinctive identity.

But a look at and outside the borders of the village shows a significant circumstance: conflicts over land and water resources were less serious between these social groups with ideologically loaded differences than with outsiders seeing the village as an entity. Clashes with nomads, with

the neighbouring Atoro, and even with Tira of the neighbouring village Angartu were much more dominant in daily life and issues of economic survival than processes of identification.

In these conflicts, historical discourses have a slightly different role. For instance, to end the high tensions between Atoro and Tira communities, numerous meetings were organised. A land committee held a meeting in October 2005 with the presence of numerous *shiyūkh*, local judges, a member of the land office in Kauda, and even members of the land office of the state from Kadugli. But the arguments about borders remained unresolved.

At the peak of the conflict in April 2006, several SPLA officers of Tira and Atoro met with Moro officers as mediators. They worked out a general declaration of goodwill, which was distributed in the Nuba Mountains and among migrants living in Kharṭūm. It was agreed that three officials from Tira, Atoro, and Moro would direct the work of local committees, formed by opposing villages, to clarify border disputes. The work on each disputed kilometre of the border started immediately, but stopped at the beginning of the rainy season and was not continued during the following dry season.

Thus, not a reconstruction of history, but an evaluation of current settlement structures was institutionalised, at least initially. However, historical arguments still govern the discussions. The basis of this contradiction is an understanding of history as common knowledge of truth and not as negotiable work on memory. Likewise, the borders, id est the land and its owners, are said to be known and are consequently treated a-historically. Although migration and change are part of the narratives, this general understanding of history and land has not changed. So every “untruthful” claim on land leads to aggression, as it is portrayed as a lie and a crime. Whether part of this aggression and its basis are intentional is something to wonder about. However, contentions over land prevail and are revived by attempts to draw borders. The defence of access to resources, which is perceived to be threatened by fixed territories, is the heart of the matter and not a “historical truth.”

Finally, an important aspect must be stressed. Conflicts with outsiders refer to a strong sense of “our village,” even if the extent of this village is not uncontested itself. But apart from showing the range of tensions that exists on the local level, these examples and considerations lead to a crucial point: the concepts of tribal and village territory exist simultaneously. Rejection of outsiders from the mountains, namely the Atoro, is shared regardless of positions about Shawābna identity. At the same time, the same conflict is part of a definition of tribally understood territories which potentially tends to exclude from land ownership any group which is not part of the constructed tribal unit or tries to develop a distinctive profile. Historical narratives are herein merely a tool to strengthen one’s position, and will most probably fail if used to reconcile contradictory presumptions and their consequences.

In both the examples I outlined above, Abyei and the Nuba Mountains, similar categories of legitimisation and proof can be perceived: the proper authority for decision-making; the proper procedure and its norms; the proper sources of information; and also the proper historical point of reference. I would suggest that only a certain consensus on these categories can ensure stable balance in negotiations and conflict management, especially as interest-based, and not merely formalised, consensus. In consequence, a historical discussion can only be expected to be fruitful when the will for flexible perspective and compromise is already there.

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Rethinking livelihoods in the Gezira Scheme: A study of the Al-Takala village

Abdalla Mohamed Gasimelseed

Motivation of the study

The motivation to pursue this study stems from observations of the northern Gezira village where I was born and where I lived and worked for twenty-three years in the agricultural sector and within the Gezira Scheme, as well as on the farms along the banks of the Blue Nile. After twelve years spent outside Sudan, I realized that the majority of the tenants and farmers in my village are not keen on cultivating their tenancies and their farms. They purchase almost all their vegetables and grain from the market, including the sorghum that they previously produced. I also realized that, among other social problems, almost all the households in the village have at least one person suffering from malaria, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure or renal failure, and at least one person who has migrated to one of the oil-producing countries in the Gulf. Non-farm-related and tenancy labour has become the most important source of income for the households in the village. This has significant implications not only for the village but also for the assumption that agriculture is the main source of income for the majority of people in Gezira and Sudan. I developed an interest in assessing how diseases and migration have affected the social network and livelihoods of the village. Social networks and community groups are usually used as entry points for many development initiatives. People in such social networks constantly interact and mutually influence each other.

Research hypothesis, objectives, and questions

Historically, development policies in the Sudan have not been based on an understanding of rural livelihoods, and have not transformed rural livelihoods for the better or reduced rural poverty. Particularly under the present regime, development policies have been directed to urban areas rather than rural areas. Consequently, the main source of income for households in rural areas, including the Gezira Scheme, now comes from non-tenancy jobs that allow households to purchase food and other necessities from the market instead of producing them.

This study attempts to explore how the interplay between access and control of resources, livelihood activities, strategies and institutional arrangements affect livelihoods and food security in a village in northern Gezira. The study tries to answer two broad questions related to livelihood intervention: What kind of institutional arrangements and policies make it possible for poor people to achieve sustainable and secure livelihoods? And, how does the interplay between access and control of resources, as well as between livelihood activities and strategies and institutional arrangements, affect livelihoods and food security on the household level?

Government policies and programmes are not only the key drivers of change affecting people's lives. Key sources of risk that exist and have effects on households are commodity and labour markets, power structures, and informal institutions. An analysis of the impact of these factors shows that villages like Al-Takala in the Gezira Scheme and in rural Sudan are not development islands but very much affected by both national and international forces.

Methodology

A historical approach was used in this study to assess the present situation in the Gezira Scheme. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were utilized, as well as official sources, documents, and books. The following stages were adopted:

1 - An interview format was designed to gather information on human financial, physical, natural, and social assets in order to obtain a better understanding of how different people in the village are building their livelihoods. Likewise, a questionnaire was used to gather information on household composition, household members' skills, education, activities, household history, household assets, land assets, livestock, debts, grain budget, income and expenditures. The content of the questionnaire aimed to capture the relational aspects within or between households to understand their transformation patterns.

2 - Two villages were selected: the first village located along the banks of the Blue Nile, the second inside the Gezira Scheme. Both villages are 80 km south of Khartoum. The first one originally had a diversified economy, while the second village was established as a camp for agricultural labourers.

3 - The household was defined as the smallest unit inside a compound and usually consisted of husband, wife, and children. The aim was to identify the characteristics of poor and better-off households and to classify them. A household was randomly selected from each category for individual interviews. This chapter reports on the findings for the Al-Takala village.

Households, livelihoods, and social capital: A theoretical and analytical framework

In this study, the household is taken as the unit of analysis where resources are generated, organized, managed and used for economic activities. Such economic activities aim at fulfilling primary daily needs of the members of the households, such as the need for food, shelter, health, security, and clothing. A household may comprise several houses that belong to one extended family.

A livelihood strategy refers to the capabilities, assets, and strategies that people use to make a living; i.e., to secure food and income through a variety of economic activities. It is the way people shape their lives by using material and non-material assets (Kaag 2004). It includes activities that people undertake to provide for their basic needs. In other words, a sustainable livelihood is one that enables a person to

- cope with and recover from stress and shocks;
- maintain or enhance his/her capabilities and assets;
- provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and
- contribute net benefits to the community in which he/she lives (Longley and Maxwell 2003).

The livelihood framework is a tool to understand the livelihoods of the poor (Elis 2002; Longley and Maxwell 2003; De Haan and Zoomers 2005). It is generally people-centred, holistic and focuses on the multi-dimensionality of daily life. Therefore, a livelihood analysis goes beyond individuals and households into the political economy of the power relations within the society and addresses issues at the local level, including the connections with the national and international level. The core of the livelihood approach thus lies in its analysis of the different assets or capital endowments on which individuals or households draw to produce livelihood outcomes. The five groups of assets that are combined to generate livelihood outcomes include natural, human, social, physical, and financial capital.

Vulnerability is another key concept. It is related to the capabilities of individuals and livelihoods to cope with and recover from effects of different shocks and risks. Vulnerability is dynamic and inversely related to the defining characteristics of the socio-economic differentiation of households and their potential for collective action. The socio-economic characteristics include ownership of means of production, such as land, health status, education, gender relations, and access to positions of power and influence. How a household

acts during a time of risk depends on its position in terms of the mentioned characteristics. Undoubtedly, during a shortage of water that leads to widespread crop failure, for example, a poor tenancy household would be more vulnerable to livelihood failure than a rich one. Likewise, vulnerability will be high for a landless household when a wage-earning member suffers from health problems.

The conventional approaches to poverty evaluation are constricted to measures of contemporary household income, expenditure, and consumption. These approaches fail to take into consideration other complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic realities of never-ending poverty in rural areas, such as asset erosion and livelihood vulnerability. Thus, an alternative measure of poverty, which accommodates subsistence needs and livelihood resources, is suggested by this study. The household crisis in Al-Takala, as elsewhere in the Gezira Scheme, is linked to the free trade policies that have placed tenants in Gezira, and farmers along the banks of the Blue Nile, at the mercy of global markets. Nevertheless, and according to some scholars, farmers in such rural areas of Sudan suffer from a deteriorating productivity rather than from deteriorating terms of trade (O'Brien 1986). The poor households in Al-Takala sold most of their belongings, including donkeys, goats, cupboards, beds and even bed sheets, to pay for medical expenses and to repay their debts. Consequently, these households have become more vulnerable to famine and more dependent on diversified income-generating activities rather than agricultural labour.

Starting in the mid-1960s, an intensification and diversification policy opened new opportunities for tenants to increase their income. According to that policy, the tenant was allowed to grow wheat and groundnuts in addition to cotton and sorghum. Cotton, as it did with the colonial policies, had priority in particular in terms of irrigation. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the tenant sold groundnuts, wheat and sorghum and the returns were his own. The tenants' returns from cotton were less compared to those generated by these other three crops. This system prevailed until the 1981-1982 season under a joint account system. After that, an individual account system was introduced. Each tenant's account was separate from the others and each crop covered its own expenses. For that reason, the tenant's interest in groundnuts, sorghum and wheat was greater than in cotton. Therefore, the tenant concentrated his efforts on those crops rather than on cotton. Another factor that brought the tenant to give more attention to these crops was their suitability for repayment of loans given to the tenants by local merchants. Because the government controlled the cotton market, the merchants gave loans to tenants who grew other crops as these crops were under the tenants' control.

The money-lending system that prevails in the Gezira Scheme is known as the *shail* system. In the *shail* system the tenant sells the crops to the local merchant before the harvest at very low prices due to the tenant's grave financial position. The local merchant accepts all crops, other than the government-controlled cotton, as a guarantee.

The National Islamic Front (NIF) government has changed the relations of production in the Gezira Scheme significantly when it issued a law in 1992 concerning privatisation, whereby the scheme's council was dissolved, the governor's position removed, and a new administrative council established. The new council is authorised to issue new laws that consider the right of the government to determine the use of the land and privatisation of the engineering department, the cotton ginneries, the Gezira railway and stores.

In 2005, and under the supervision and recommendation of the World Bank, the NIF government issued a law that gave tenants in the Gezira Scheme the right to sell or mortgage their tenancy and the right to choose which crops to cultivate. This law cancelled the link between the scheme and the cultivation of cotton and ended the production relationship between the tenants and the scheme administration. It acknowledged the ownership of land by the tenant. To that end, this law suggested two alternatives: the land of the tenants who previously owned land and were given tenancies accordingly would be registered for them; or those land owners who were not given tenancies in the scheme and had additional land would be compensated (The Law of Gezira Scheme 2005).

The freedom of crop cultivation is only theoretical, as there would be no financing for the tenant who does not cultivate cotton. The banks, including the Agricultural and Farmers' Bank, finance production inputs for cotton rather than other crops, as it is the only crop that guarantees repayment of loans. With the policy of priority to the cotton crop and absence of a marketing body for other crops, a poor tenant is left with only one alternative, which is to sell his tenancy to meet increasing costs of living. This law has thus not only ended the relationship between the scheme and the cotton crop, and altered the role of the Gezira Scheme administration and the relations of production in the scheme, but it has opened the door for private ownership within the scheme. Since it came to power, the NIF government has concentrated economic wealth and political decisions in the hands of its followers. Thus, the policy of privatisation in the Gezira Scheme will end up benefiting NIF supporters.

The Gezira Scheme

The Gezira Irrigation Scheme is one of the largest irrigation schemes in the world. It was established by the British colonial government in 1925 to produce cotton for the Lancashire industries. The size of the scheme at present amounts to more than two million feddans and the number of tenants in the scheme exceeds 128,000, while the number of agricultural labourers, who live with their families in villages established mainly to ensure labour availability, exceeds 150,000 (Gaitskell 1959; Barnett 1977; Sørbo 1980; Gasimelseed 1988).

The British considered the Gezira Scheme a model that would lead to the development of the whole region and to an increase of the incomes of the people involved in agricultural production (Gaitskell 1959). However, neither the Gezira region developed nor did the incomes of the involved tenants and agricultural labourers increase (Barnett 1975). While it was predicted that the tenants would produce surplus (Sørbo 1985, 16), many tenants in the scheme have been suffering from accumulated debt and from fluctuations in productivity. This phenomenon has been typical of crops in general, and of cotton in particular. Deterioration of the tenant's income led to a greater deterioration of their living conditions, which forced them to sharecrop their tenancies or hire them out to the agricultural labourers, as will be illustrated below. As a result, the Gezira Scheme, instead of becoming a base for development that improved the living conditions of the people, has sown the seeds of hunger and poverty in the region.

Our analysis indicates that the benefits of development have accrued only for a small number of individuals and not for the real producers. Poor tenants and agricultural labourers within the scheme were unable to benefit from education and health facilities for instance.

Agriculture in the Gezira Scheme and along the River Nile favours the rich tenants and big farmers. The agricultural labourers prefer to work for rich tenants who pay them immediately and also supply them with grain, meat, and shelter once they start their work. The poor tenants whose bargaining power is low cannot afford to provide these essentials, so they have to wait until the work of the rich tenants is completed. By completing the agricultural tasks in the appointed time, the rich tenants get a head start, with high productivity of labour leading to high returns. The farm owners benefit from the Gezira Scheme when they use labour allotted for the Gezira Scheme to work on their farms instead. They expropriate the surplus labour of these agricultural labourers; hence, the benefits of water management in the scheme go to the farm owners rather than to the poor tenants. The picture we have shown is now getting more complex since some powerful tenants have been given the chance to buy tenancies and own farms along the banks of the Blue Nile, with some farm owners having vested interests in non-cotton tenancies.

The selected village

Al-Takala is located 80 km south of Khartoum, along the western bank of the Blue Nile and on the road between Wad-Medani and Khartoum. Nearness to Khartoum and the highway makes it easier for farmers and tenants to access the market, as well as education, health and other social services. These characteristics have profoundly altered economic opportunities for the households in the village. Our survey shows that women are still engaged in agriculture in Al-Takala, as they have been for the past twenty-five years (Gasimelseed 1988).

However, their engagement differs profoundly. While they previously worked as agricultural laborers, they are now investors or moneylenders using the money they get from their migrant sons and husbands.

There are 650 households in Al-Takala, with women heading 65 of them. Households in Al-Takala remain a production and consumption unit. Due to government policies during the last two decades, Al-Takala has witnessed significant changes, including social relationships within families. Elders no longer enjoy economic and social control over the youth or women. Kinship relations are still very strong and have significant influence, in particular during social and economic crises (Gasimelseed 1988). As in many other places in Sudan, the policies of the NIF government have been directed to attract young people that aim to change society according to the Islamic orientation adopted by the government's party. The result of that policy is empowerment of youth and women who back the NIF, excluding all others. Most of the households in the village have been affected as they support the Umma and Democratic Unionist parties. For instance, the program of "the productive family" and the new Zakat laws launched by the government in the early 1990s have benefited NIF followers rather than poor families. Such programs support the men and women who back the NIF, either by appointing them or their sons to local government offices, or financing them to run certain enterprises that can generate even more followers. It is those people who, even with no qualifications or experience, replace officials that do not support NIF policies. Others are financed to be butchers, fishermen, shop dealers or food distributors, positions that enable them to control and monopolize the basic needs of the people.

With regards to where households in Al-Takala obtain sorghum and what portion of it comes from production or the market, the following points need to be mentioned:

- 1 - There are households that obtain grain from production, such as tenant-headed households, sharecropping households, and poor households.
- 2 - There are households that obtain sorghum from the market, such as non-tenant-headed households.
- 3 - Female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households.
- 4 - Some households sell part of their belongings or part of their houses due to health issues.

Household food expenditure in Al-Takala village is very high compared to the household income; therefore, most households state that they do not eat three meals a day. Consequently, the members of the household are vulnerable to health problems due to nutritional deficiencies. The following table shows prices of some food commodities.

Prices of basic food commodities and other basic needs in the Al-Takala village

May-August 2008

	Household need/month	Unit Price in SDG*	Total price/month
Sorghum Kaila**	7 Kailas	22	154
Bread, pieces/day	5x30=150	1	150
Meat	¼ kgx30=7.5kg	3	22,5
Vegetables and salad/month			45
Oil	6 litres	7	42
Onion/day	¼ Kailax30	14/Kaila	3,5
Drinking water/month			14
Electricity/month			22
Total			453

*One USD equals 2.5 SDG.

**One sack equals 7 Kailas and one Kaila equals 12 kg.

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

The table above shows that the prices of basic food commodities total SDG 453 per month. If we add other expenses, like cloth, school-related costs, and health expenditures, the actual cost of living ends up being very high for a household, and unaffordable. If we know that

the average need of a household during one year is about nine sacks of sorghum, and that one sack costs 154 SDG, then a household needs 1.386 SDG a year.

Due to these high expenditures, many households in the village have to meet most of their daily food needs by getting credit from local merchants and paying the credit back after harvest time, in the case of tenants and agricultural labourers, or at the end of every month, in the case of wage or government workers. Thus, Al-Takala tenants are no longer self-sufficient despite the fact that they produce more than they need in terms of grain during a year. Tenants are forced to get loans from merchants and local moneylenders to carry out their agricultural tasks and to meet their daily expenses. After harvesting their crops they have to pay back those loans mainly by selling sorghum and wheat because the government takes the cotton crop, as illustrated by the following table.

Access to sorghum and wheat from tenancies

April 2008

	Over 19*	Keep what they need	Sell all	Keep 20-30%	Keep 30-40%	Keep 40-50%
Sorghum	73	27	0	24	26	23
Wheat	73	3	64	3	1	2

*Average production of sorghum and wheat.

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

The table shows that all tenants in the village obtain nineteen sacks or more from sorghum and wheat. While all tenants theoretically obtain enough sorghum at the time of harvest, only twenty-four, twenty-six, and twenty-three tenants keep less than 30%, 40% and 50% respectively, and only three, one, and two tenants state that they keep less than 30%, 40% and 50% from wheat. Out of seventy-three tenants, only twenty-seven state they keep what they need from sorghum for the whole year’s consumption, while only three households keep what they actually need from wheat. This shows the high proportion of households who sell their produce in advance and means that they have to buy the same amount of sorghum from the market. Here we need to mention the fact that sorghum, rather than wheat, is the staple crop for the majority of households in the village. Therefore, the tenants in Al-Takala village do not actually produce what they need for their consumption from sorghum or wheat during the whole year as what they produced was sold in advance to local moneylenders or to local petty traders. In fact, the tenants in Al-Takala village were less dependent on agriculture in 2008 than twenty-five years earlier, based on a study conducted in the village. At that time not a single tenant reported having purchased sorghum from the market during the year, although some of them confirmed that they took loans from moneylenders and local merchants to cover other needs, such as medical expenses or social obligations (Gasimelseed 1988).

Land ownership

The livelihood framework in general tends to treat all assets from an economics prospective and addresses them as if they were all financial assets. However, understanding access to land and the way in which people are entitled to, or excluded from, accessing it is fundamental to understand land relations. Ownership and access to land in the Gezira Scheme generally, and in the village in particular, are a complicated issue that requires careful analysis. It is always assumed that the farmer owns the land and the produce, which is not always true. Our study shows that there are at least six recognized categories of access to, and use of, land:

1. Households can own and cultivate their land (along the banks of the Blue Nile).
2. Households can own land, cultivate and sharecrop it in additional areas along the Nile banks or horticultural tenancies (*hawashas*).
3. Households can own land, cultivate it and sharecrop-out (either a portion or all).
4. Households with no land may sharecrop land for cultivation.
5. Households with no land may offer farm labour during part of the year in exchange for a small part of the crop or wages.
6. Households with no land, but with their own livestock, can access pasture land for grazing animals after harvesting the crop.

Land ownership in Al-Takala village

April 2008

	Own and cultivate land	Own and share-crop-out	Own land but do not cultivate	Do not own but cultivate land	Do not own share-cropping-in land	Do not own and do not cultivate land
Inside the Gazira Scheme	1	64 men 8 women	72	3	15	489
Along the banks of the Blue Nile	11	8 men 0 women	2	25	7	545
Total	12	80	74	28	22	1034

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

The above table illustrates that all tenants in the village, except one, sharecrop their tenancies and that more than 79% of the households that own land along the Blue Nile do the same. All tenants in the village practice sharecropping-in or -out, but the reasons for doing so are different for rich and poor tenants. While rich tenants and tenants who have sons working outside Sudan sharecrop-out their tenancies to seek non-agricultural labour, the poor tenants sharecrop-in their tenancies to get financing to cultivate their tenancies and to have cash to meet daily basic needs or for social occasions. While fifty-eight of the landowners (79.5%) sharecrop their tenancies to agricultural labourers from outside the village, only fifteen landowners (20.5%) state they sharecrop with people from the village. Cultivation along the banks of the Blue Nile is quite different from the one inside the Gezira Scheme. This land generates more income for the *tarabla* (those tilling land for daily wages) and sharecroppers. During the last five years, however, the high taxes, charges along the road and the high input costs have reduced their income considerably. Only eleven landowners (52%) along the banks of the Blue Nile say they cultivate their land, fifteen (38%) sharecrop-out, and only two landowners (10%) do not cultivate their land. Female tenants, as shown in the table, amount to about 11% in the village but they do not participate in agricultural activities. The table also shows that only 13% of the households in the village own tenancies in the Gezira Scheme and only 0.4% of the households in the village own land along the banks of the Blue Nile. Furthermore, the table shows that only eight (0.1%) households headed by women own tenancies in the scheme and not a single woman owns land along the River Nile. Women theoretically own land but in practice they do not have any power to decide whether to sell or cultivate it.

Sharecropping in Al-Takala

Sharecropping is widely known in the Gezira Scheme. Both sharecropping-in and sharecropping-out are not limited to poor households in the village as they apply to the rich ones as well. The reasons for this phenomenon vary between rich and poor tenants. For instance, rich households sharecrop-out their tenancies or their land along the banks of the Blue Nile to seek more profitable alternatives, while poor households sharecrop-out because they do not have production inputs and do not have access to loans from the banks. A man from Al-Takala village, for example, sharecropped-out his land due to resource constraints, and then sharecropped it in from a landowner with the resources he needed. In other words, while the rich households sharecrop-out because of “pull” factors, the poor household do it because of “push” factors. Furthermore, among women who own land and lack household labour, sharecropping-out is widely known either because they do not have experience in cultivating and managing the *hawasha* or because of cultural constraints. Women in Al-Takala may inherit the *hawasha* and the land along the River Nile or they nominally own it with men but they are not considered able to exercise any power over it. Even when women inherit the land or *hawasha* from their fathers or husbands, they are supposed to pass it to their brothers, or husbands if they have no brothers. When they inherit tenancies from their husbands, and their male children are young, their husbands’ brothers make the decisions on their behalf.

In Al-Takala, sharecropping varies and is driven by context and circumstances. Therefore, it should be understood in terms of crop economy. Several factors create incentives for sharecropping-out and sharecropping-in. These factors include labour input (availability

and costs), the role of the crop in providing credit and its potentiality for profit, irrigation opportunities, cultural reasons, and so forth. Sharecropping arrangements are made also according to the social status of the sharecropper. Poor sharecroppers usually receive some of their share in advance, receiving less at the time of harvest. Others sell part of the produce in advance at low prices to the local merchants or moneylenders and then later buy the same produce from them for higher prices.

The impact of sharecropping in relations among tenants

The relationships among tenants in the Gezira Scheme generally, and in the Al-Takala village in particular, have significant impact on the livelihoods of the households. There are two different categories of tenants: poor tenants and rich tenants. The third category is the agricultural labourer, upon whom work in the Gezira Scheme depends. Each category has its own interests, and each category has its own means to achieve those interests. Therefore, conflict among these three categories does exist. Before we look at how these categories behave with respect to irrigation in the Gezira Scheme, the following points are essential to this analysis:

1. Tenants make decisions that serve their interests on tenancy activities such as whether to produce cash crops, food crops and how to apply and utilise the different resources to achieve better yields.
2. Age is an important element. The older the tenant, the less time he/she devotes to tenancy activities, in particular to irrigation.
3. The sharecropping system enhanced water shortages, especially because of the cotton crop. The sharecropper is merely an agricultural worker who is mainly interested in crops other than cotton. A sharecropper concentrates efforts on sorghum, groundnuts and wheat because of the relatively lower labour costs and time requirements compared to cotton.

As a matter of fact, not all tenants in the Gezira Scheme adopt the sharecropping system. Tenants who have other economic activities, in commerce or with the government, adopt a sharecropping system. Tenants whose financial capability does not allow them to manage the tenancy may either use the sharecropping system or sell part of their sorghum, wheat or groundnut tenancies. Some rich tenants, as well as some poor tenants, manage their tenancies themselves. There is only one tenant in Al-Takala village that cultivates his tenancy. The rich tenants hire labour for all agricultural operations, including irrigation, while poor tenants work their tenancies themselves and hire labour only when it is required. Thus, we can identify four categories of cultivators in the scheme: the sharecroppers, either with rich or poor tenants; cultivators who have purchased allotments from poor tenants; hired agricultural labourers employed by rich tenants; and poor tenants. Conflicts over irrigation ensue among these four categories. These conflicts are rarely solved by the Gezira administration or taken to court. They are mostly solved by mediators from the village, or villages of the individuals involved.

Agriculture on the farms along the Blue Nile

As we have mentioned before, the costs of production on the farms are not determined by the real prices of the production inputs but are mainly determined by the farmer's social network. For instance, the farmer has to provide the bank with an advance receipt from the merchant who sells the fertilizers, seeds, or oil. The merchant usually claims higher prices for these products in the receipt because he knows the bank is going to pay him. If the farmer has any social connections with the merchant, he will get lower prices, or in some cases the merchant will inform the farmer that some of the money will come back from the bank. The farmer has to mortgage his land, or any other assets, to get a loan from the bank. Because most of the farmers do not own land or have assets, the majority of them depend on the merchants to receive production inputs. The merchants get these production inputs from the banks through illegal procedures. It is not easy, if not impossible, to show how this happens but it is easy to prove that these merchants have no connection to agriculture, yet they hold all agricultural products and sell them to farmers and tenants.

Farmers produce different vegetables (tomatos, okra, onions, pepper, potatoes) and fruits (oranges, bananas, grapes, watermelons, and lemons). Most of the vegetables and fruits are sold in Khartoum because of the high charges when selling in other big cities, like Wad-Madani, Kosti or Al-Obied, such as the Al-Shaheed and Al-Jareeh charges, market entrance charges, road charges, and other unpredictable charges. Due to these charges, farmers do not sell their crops outside the region. Because the harvest of most crops occurs at one time, farmers are forced to sell them for very cheap. During the writing of this chapter, the president of Sudan issued a decree cancelling all charges and check points. However, the farmers advised me that his was just a slogan and asked me to follow a lorry carrying watermelons to Khartoum to see what actually happened. I did and they were right. They did not only pay charges, but they had to pay the traffic police to let them go in due time.

Livelihood diversity

The findings of this research show that sources of income of Al-Takala villagers mainly come from non-agricultural economic activities and that people depend on those incomes to purchase grain. The study identifies the following:

1. Both rich and poor households in Al-Takala have diversified income sources and many are involved in a combination of farming and non-farming activities. While for rich households livelihood diversity is usually a long- and short-term strategy of accumulation, livelihood diversity for poorer households is more of a coping mechanism for survival.
2. For the poorest households in the village non-farm-related labour is the most important source of income.
3. Labour migration, in and outside Sudan, for all households is a critical income strategy. Since the late 1970s, Al-Takala, like many other villages in the Gezira Scheme, has witnessed migration to urban centres inside Sudan or to the oil-producing countries in the Gulf. Our study shows that 389 men and 18 women are now working outside Sudan. Not all households have expatriates, in some households there is more than one, and four

households have four expatriates. During the last five years, thirty-nine expatriates have returned to Al-Takala and only three of them returned to their previous jobs, while six now work in the agricultural sector. The remittances of these migrants are of high significance for their households. They open the door for non-agricultural activities and, for women in particular, to be moneylenders for farmers, tenants, *tarabla*, and agricultural labourers. Most of these moneylenders are women whose husbands or sons are working abroad. There are twelve women who practice money lending, but, based on a group interview, forty women were identified as moneylenders. Due to social constraints, only sixteen households admitted they take loans from women while the eight women who were interviewed identified thirty-one households as taking loans from them. More details are needed to correlate diversification of household activities to these remittances, to show their significance and how they affect the role of women within the household.

4. A large number of households in the village are indebted. However, it is very difficult to provide accurate figures and information, as people do not like to speak about it. Indebtedness is a factor in both the creation and continuation of poverty. While rich households in the village take out loans from banks and expatriates for the purpose of production and investment, poor households take out loans from moneylenders and merchants in the village to meet basic needs, such as the need for food or for repaying health expenses. Consequently, rich households have the opportunity to accumulate wealth while poor ones continue to take out loans to meet their daily expenses. Poor households have no access to the banks due to inadequate procedures or lack of land or other assets, so they depend on local traders and women lenders who practice the traditional *shail* system.
5. Women are engaged in many production and income-generating activities that contribute to the overall household income, such as ownership of land, ownership of domestic livestock, petty trade and money lending; still, their income-generating options are fewer compared to men. Because of these income inequalities, and the few activities that generate insufficient incomes to support a family, the majority of female-headed households in the village are vulnerable to poverty.
6. Due to widespread diseases in the Gezira Scheme, health represents the second largest area of expenditure for households in the village after food. It is the major factor that creates indebtedness and forces the poor households to sell their assets to pay for health treatment. Health also has a severe impact on household income as the person that is ill will not contribute financially. It also affects other family members as they look after the sick person. There is no social protection for the poor households, such as government programs or policies. However, households that back NIF policies have access to economic allowances, health services and opportunities to get loans from the banks. Such households have, within a very limited period, accumulated wealth either through these bank loans or through their relationships with the government.

Household income portfolios

In Al-Takala, the size of the land along the banks of the Blue Nile or in the scheme is not enough to determine household livelihood outcomes. In fact, skills, education, household composition, non-agricultural activities, and social networks all have a significant role in determining livelihood outcomes. From the data collected on livelihood diversity, there are a number of observations that need to be mentioned before looking into diversity of economic activities in the Al-Takala village.

The majority of the households in the village have diversified income sources. Members of the same household are engaged in diverse income-generating activities. An individual within the household may have more than one economic activity and this is applicable to rich as well as poor households. The rich households, for example, have between three to seven income sources, the poor ones have about the same amount but with different characteristics. Occupations within rich households include those of teachers, physicians, merchants, government officials, engineers, and university lecturers. The poor household's main economic activities include tenancy labour, farm labour, driving (of trucks and buses), and nursing. This shows that income diversification in the village is not only a strategy for reducing risk but also a strategy of accumulation. The significance of non-agricultural income-generating activities is often positively correlated to the shocks affecting crop income, the high costs of transportation, and unexpected road charges for the households of the *tarablas* and farmers. But for rich households that significance is correlated to accumulation of capital. As agricultural incomes of a certain crop collapse, and prices of production inputs rise suddenly, more households shift from agricultural to non-agricultural opportunities. The following table shows diversity of economic activities in the village.

Non-agricultural income-generating activities in the Al-Takala village (April 2008)

Category	Men	Women
Teachers	9	48
University lecturers	4	2
Engineers	2	0
Officials	14	8
Merchants	39	5
Grocery store owners	19	5
Physicians	3	3
Butchers	8	0
Artisans and tailors	12	1
Industrial labourers	19	4
Drivers	18	0
Expatriates	389 (not specified)	18 (not specified)
Total	536	94

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

In this context, this study identified a link between household size and wealth status in Al-Takala. The larger the size of the household with diversified incomes, the richer and higher the social status of that household. Diversification of income sources is often regarded as a strategy of reducing risk or increasing opportunities. In analysing diversification in Al-Takala, it is important to distinguish between diversification undertaken as a risk-coping strategy and diversification as a strategy for accumulation of income and assets. Our study shows that while different members in rich households are engaged in diverse income-generating activities associated with high levels of education, the diverse income activities among poor households depend on the season, are associated with lower educational levels, and are more local, as shown in the following table.

Diversification of economic activities in the Al-Takala village

Economic activity	Rich households	Poor households
Tenancy	29	63
Agriculture	0	89
Government offices	3	15
Teaching	5	38
Driving	0	14
Commerce	6	2
Petty trading	0	30
Engineering	1	0
University lecturing	6	0
Medicine	5	1
Nursing	0	6
Grocery stores	0	22
Industrial labour	0	20

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

As a clarification of the table above, a household may be represented by one or more individuals for each activity, and zero engagement of households in certain activities means non-direct involvement. For example, rich households possess agricultural land but they do not work it by themselves, they are drivers but drive their own private cars. Similarly, individuals within a household may engage in more than one activity at the same time; for instance, an individual could be working as an agricultural labourer or *tarbal* and sell groceries.

The above table indicates that the low income or heavy duty jobs are more or less limited to poor households, and that high-income-generating activities or occupations that need high levels of education are confined mainly to rich households. Our classification of rich and poor households is based on a combination of education, occupation, land ownership, and household property. This does not mean that there is no middle class; on the contrary, a middle class exists. However, despite the significant impact of NIF policies in weakening the power of the elders and empowering the youth and women of those who support them,

it is very difficult to speak of classes due to the ethnic and social relations within the village. Due to the social factors that bound the villagers in particular during social occasions, such as death, weddings, and hospitalisation, it is very difficult to speak of big gaps between rich and poor households.

Livelihoods and diseases

Before the commencement of the irrigation canals in the Gezira Scheme in 1925, schistosomiasis was practically unknown in the Gezira area. In a survey carried out on children in twenty villages before the canal work started in 1919, not a single child was found to be infected (Bayoumi 1979, 269). When the work on the dam started it was suggested that the Egyptian labourers with schistosomiasis, who were brought to dig the canals of the Gezira Scheme, be treated before being employed or be sent back to Egypt. Instead, they were employed pending the opening of the canal. After the commencement of the irrigation work in 1925, schistosomiasis snails were discovered in six canals and, in 1926, they were discovered in all canals throughout the area (Humphereys 1932). The consequence was a rapid increase in infected people in the area.

Bilharzia has increased significantly during the last decades due to the absence of health services on one side and the inability of people to afford private health services on the other. The disease has resulted in loss of labour efficiency and reduction of working hours and death of labourers in the long run.

Malaria is another major health problem in the Gezira Scheme. Like bilharzia, it reduces human efficiency and is a source of economic loss. Previously, the rainy season (July-October) was the main transmission season for malaria. However, in recent years it has spread regardless of the season due to the deterioration of health services. Privatisation of health services in the present regime has made things worse for the people in Gezira, as the poor tenants cannot afford to pay the high costs of lab tests, hospitalization, and medicines. Establishing the Zakat office in the region did not help as most of its efforts go to people supporting the NIF, as shown previously. In Al-Takala, almost all villagers contracted one or two diseases during the last decade, as illustrated in the table below.

No. of households affected by diseases in Al-Takala Village during 2003-2008

	One person	Two persons	Three persons or more
Malaria	128	89	34
Bilharzia	25	12	6
Tyvoid	98	16	8
Diabetes	119	47	22
Renal failure	8	-	-
Cancer	38	23	2
Total	416	187	72

Source: Fieldwork (2008).

The above table shows that the number of people who have suffered from one disease or more during the last five years is very high. The percentage of households that have one, two or three sick people is 64%, 28.9% or 11.1% respectively. Due to inaccuracy or absence of data available to local clinics, these figures should be compared to those of nearby hospitals.

Loss of the human labour input, especially among poor households, means low productivity. The sick person or his family has to use savings or resort to borrowing in order to meet the heavy medical and hospitalization expenses. Usually, when a sick person is hospitalized, villagers visit and give donations to meet the immediate medical and food expenses. Such donations are given on a reciprocal basis and represent a debt for the sick person and his family.

Conclusion

This study shows that livelihoods in Al-Takala are diversified and that households purchase most of their basic food commodities, including grain, from the market. It shows that the low income or heavy duty jobs are confined to poor households and that high-income-generating activities or occupations are confined mainly to rich households. The moneylenders by and large determine the crop that is to be produced before sowing and its price even before harvest time. They also force the tenants and the *tarabla* to repay in kind. The perception that the tenants in the scheme constitute one homogeneous group is incorrect. They can be divided into four different classes: rich, middle class, poor tenants, and agricultural labourers.

Some issues need further study, such as community support systems that help vulnerable households survive deteriorating life conditions and show how kinship, as well as gender relations, affect the livelihood framework.

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This book is about the history of anthropology in Sudan. Contributors to the book represent different generations of anthropologists who at some point in time either taught at the department in Khartoum or had some sort of connection to it. They also represent different countries: Sudan, Norway, United Kingdom, United States, Germany, and France. Some contributors taught at the department during the 1960s and 1970s, and they represent different traditions of anthropology. British, American and Norwegian anthropologists were part of the department staff during the early days and brought different experiences and traditions of anthropology to Sudan. Their involvement in both teaching and research directed the orientation of the discipline in Sudan and influenced Sudanese anthropologists. The chapters in this book therefore illustrate the diversity and dynamism of anthropology in Sudan and also show how the discipline developed in relation to the specificities of a developing country like Sudan. Through teaching and research, foreign and Sudanese anthropologists contributed to development efforts in Sudan to the extent that the topics with which they engage are relevant to local development needs. Sudan anthropology has been important for world anthropology. The seminal contributions of E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Fredrik Barth, Ian Cunnison, and Talal Asad remain classics in anthropology. The department also occupies a prestigious position in the region: it played important roles in establishing an anthropology department in Ethiopia, and teaching anthropology in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Munzoul A. M. Assal

Professor of Social Anthropology and Deputy Director of Peace Research Institute, University of Khartoum.

Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

Associate Professor of Social Anthropology and Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs, Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, University of Khartoum