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# SUDAN STUDIES

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

Please note the new address of the Honorary Secretary, Alan Kunna, which is:

P O Box 3728, London N1 6LF

The address for all articles and correspondence relating to the Newsletter remains the same, viz. 73 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury SY2 5AT. (telephone 0743 352575; fax 0743 354699).

After the rather slim last issue of *Sudan Studies* I am pleased to have received enough material to produce a fuller and, I think, well balanced issue for Number 15. However I must still repeat my usual request for articles, features and reviews, so that the next issue will be as full and varied as this.

I have received a copy of the following publication, which I believe will be of great interest to many members:

*Nationalism and Arcadianism in the Sudan: The Janus Factor in the Political Service Memoirs*, by A.H.M. Kirk-Greene. Oxford, Privately Published, 1993, pp. 29, and available through the author at St. Antony's College, Oxford OX2 6JF, for £2.85 inclusive of UK postage and packing.

The paper is a recast version of the author's "Nationalism in the Non-Nationalist Literature: the Case of the Sudan Political Service" which was originally presented at the Conference on the History of the Nationalist Movement in the Sudan held at the Institute of African and Asian Studies of the University of Khartoum in January 1986.

Paul Wilson



## SOCIETY NEWS

By Alan Kunna, Honorary Secretary of the SSSUK

On behalf of the SSSUK Committee I am delighted to welcome all new members of the Society. I hope that you find this issue of *Sudan Studies* interesting and that you will be willing and able to contribute your expertise to the Society.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Secretary of the SSSUK. The AGM held on 11th September 1993 expressed its appreciation of the hard work and dedication that Simon Bush displayed during his time as Secretary of the Society. The Committee of SSSUK would also like to record its appreciation of Simon's efforts.

At the AGM Dr Anisa Dani was also duly elected as an ordinary Committee member.

### **AGM and ONE Day Symposium**

Since the last issue of the newsletter the Society has held its AGM and One Day Symposium.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed and also those who attended. The 1994 AGM and One Day Symposium will be held on 24th September 1994 at Friends House. A programme and booking form will be sent with your next issue of *Sudan Studies*. If you would like to present a short paper on a topic of your choice please let me have a title and a brief outline of the content.

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

These are now due for 1994 when renewing membership would you please use the form that accompanies this issue.

### **EVENTS AND NEWS**

Having only two issues a year it is difficult to keep members in touch with Sudan related events. I would, however, be grateful if members could keep me informed of any event related to Sudanese affairs.



## **Sudan Studies Society Of The United Kingdom Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the SSSUK held at Friends House on 11th September 1993 at 1.40 pm.**

### 1) Welcome

Dr David Lindley the Chairman of the Society welcomed all those present to the seventh Annual General Meeting of the Society. Dr Lindley then signed the minutes of the sixth Annual General Meeting as correct.

### 2) Chairman's Report

Change of Honorary Secretary

Dr Lindley requested that the fine work of Mr Simon Bush as Honorary Secretary be formally recognised by the Society.

He then introduced Mr Alan Kunna as the Society's Acting Honorary Secretary.

### Membership

Dr Lindley expressed concern over the falling numbers of Society members and called for a suggestions for membership drive.

Dr Lindley hoped that some members of SSSUK would be able to attend the Third International Sudan Studies Conference to be held in Boston in April 1994.

### 3) Secretary's Report

Membership.

Mr Kunna informed the meeting that there were approximately 180 members of the Society at present. One problem would appear to be retention rates as since it began the Society has admitted just over 650 members. The Society needed to examine ways of retaining old members and recruiting new ones.

### 4) Treasurer's Report

Miss Lesley Forbes introduced the Society's audited accounts for June 1991 to May 1992.

The audited accounts of the 1991 Second International Sudan Studies Conference were correct showing a balance of £1108.25, less final payments, being transferred to the Society's ordinary account for 1992/93. Unfortunately, however, there were several errors in the Society's interim 1992/93 accounts. The total income shown was correct, but an income line



had been omitted Advertising (£43.21) and another line conflated with the 1991 conference balance (£1178.25.) This should have read 1991 Conference balance £1108.25, repayment £70. The Treasurer apologized and assured members that the matter would be put right in the final accounts.

5) Editor's Report

Newsletter

Mr Paul Wilson expressed his concern over the quality and number of contributions to the newsletter he was receiving. He called on all members to make contributions to the newsletter and to encourage others to do so.

6) Nominations.

Mr Kunna was elected to the post of Secretary and Anisa Dani was elected to the Committee. Dr Lindley closed the meeting at 2.10 pm thanking all those present for their attendance and contributions.

Alan Kunna

Honorary Secretary



## A NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR THE NORTHERN SUDAN

### The Attempt by British and Sudanese Teachers at Bakht er Ruda to Reform Education in the Years Before Independence

*So long as control of the curriculum is centralised, the central authority is liable to one very dangerous error of thinking, which is that the quality of education can be improved by administrative order.*

V. L. Griffiths *An Experiment in Education* 1953 (p.50)

In the 1930's the pull of educational reform was beginning to be felt in the Northern Sudan. Several strands of idealism and practical politics were twisted in that rope of change. One of these is illustrated in Sheikh Babikir Bedri's autobiography which tells of a courageous, indigenous effort at reform, building up from the traditional Koranic schools<sup>1</sup>. Another parallel pull in the 40's and 50's was strongly empowered by Government and it came to involve a whole range of remarkably well integrated reforms both to teacher education and to the curriculum resources with which they worked. Reform was directed at the whole of pre-secondary education, though most successfully, in my view, at the first four primary years (7-11 age). The power-house for all this innovation was Bakht er Ruda an "educational dynamo" 130 miles south of Khartoum.

This paper will outline several of the more successful elements or subjects in the curriculum bundle and touch briefly on some weaknesses. Then, with fifty years of hindsight, I shall suggest some of the lessons that can now be learnt from that interesting and optimistic experiment. But first, what were the shaping historical constraints and shared ideals which gave people like V. L. Griffiths and Abdel Rahman Ali Taha sufficient freedom and inspiration to act? <sup>2</sup> Whence the ideas and idealism, the confidence and, perhaps one should add, the naivety?

Professor Sanderson's introduction to the second volume of Babikir Bedri's Memoirs gives a sombre picture of how the Sudan Government's education policies narrowed in the 1920's. "Develop the Judicial and fiscal powers and status of cooperative tribes and cut back on producing dangerous, potentially subversive elites" this was the conventional wisdom. But



the realities of this dual mandate' - central government paralleled by rural-traditional structures - meant that even this required some effective primary education. So the need for a few good rural primary schools became the toe-hold which the reformers needed, Several of these should be renumbered: Cuthbert Scott, for example, and Douglas Newbold, both in the Political Service<sup>3</sup> and, most especially, V. L. Griffiths who was the central visionary of a twenty five year educational saga.

Despite the world recession of the early thirties the case for a low-cost, new-style, rural education centre could be eloquently argued. Reformer and reactionary could find common ground: "away from the corrupting influences of the town" they would intone. Then in 1936 the surprising appointment of Sir Christopher Cox was made. He was chosen by that eminent, scholarly proconsul, Sir Harold MacMichael straight from an after dinner encounter in New College (Oxford) Senior Common Room<sup>4</sup>. His ebullient, energetic bonhomie was soon harnessed to the cause of reform and to increasing support for Bakht er Ruda. The story is well told in V. L. Griffiths' two books.

Ws should also note the presence of two 'anti-imperial' ideological strands in government itself. First, Douglas Newbold; soon to become Civil Secretary (= approximately, prime minister). Right through the war he would read The New Statesman whenever he could get a copy: "it keeps one from fossilizing". He had like-minded friends: for example that civilised, peripatetic critic of Empire, Margery Perham, whose lightning visits reverberated well beyond Khartoum. Second, there was V. L. Griffiths himself. He had been much influenced by Gandhi's ideas about 'Basic Education' - village schools, drawing inspiration and 'rootedness' from the simple technologies of village crafts and produce. He had spent three years as the only Englishmen in an Indian mission college. He and V.B. de la N. Jamieson (a powerful ally in Khartoum) returned to India for holidays. By the end of the war Griffiths had gained strong allies too: most notably Abdel Rahman Ali Taha who was later to become Minister of Education and Sir el Khatim el Khalifa, a future Prime Minister. A powerful consensus was emerging. They were learning together that teacher education and equipping teachers with 'tools for the job', i.e. appropriate books and teaching aids, had to go hand in hand, Griffith explained how this research and development took much longer and involved



more complex issues than, at first, they had expected. What, he would ask, are the natural starting points for child's interest in, and learning about science for example?

I am not arguing against teaching science in the Sudan, but only that what 'rings a bell' in people's minds and gets them interested in an idea is not the same in each country, and needs to be discovered. So for these reasons we needed more time. We came to reckon on two years of experimenting, writing and checking for each one year's course in one subject, ... [There are] many advantages in concentrating such work in one centre instead of calling on scattered individuals to prepare books (ibid p. 38)

In the later 40's textbook production was forging ahead and the Publications Bureau was created to coordinate production and also to pioneer follow-up literature and adult education material. This was where I came in, deserting the embryonic University of Khartoum for the 'ashram' of Bakht er Ruda. My counterpart was a scholarly Maths teacher, Awad Satti, who later became Director of Education.

The illustrations give some idea of the range of our work as it was in the late forties and early fifties. The cartoons are part of a series (designed by Adam Eissa of the Publications Bureau) to illustrate principles underlying the reformed curriculum: activity and enquiry methods and guided projects, maximising interest, rather than verbal and factual cramming. These were used by courses for older teachers who would come in for a three week refresher period. Their aim was to create understanding and support for the young, fully trained teachers who could be seen as a threat. The book list is the English version of the list of third year primary text books and printed material - all in Arabic -as it was in 1950. This was when I took over from Griffiths and when the emphasis was swinging towards the reform of the Intermediate School Curriculum (i.e. of the selective middle schools).

All the books etc. were tested and developed in our local schools. The young teachers and the new material were all followed up in far-flung schools by teacher-training staff on tours of



BOOKS FOR THIRD YEAR ELEMENTARY

Price in Pt.	Distribution	Name	Serial No.	Subject
8	Boys	Al Arabia al Mubaha Part III A Reader	R.X.5c	Arabic
	"	Al Mubaha al Mubaha Part I A Reader	R.X.6	"
5	"	Al Mubaha al Mubaha Part II A Reader	R.X.8i	"
6	"	Al Mubaha al Mubaha Part III A Reader	R.X.8j	"
	Teacher	Verse for Recitation Iqra' li Talimatihik	R.X.12i	"
	"	Stories to Read to Children Talimatihik	R.X.10	"
	"	Questions on the Reading Al Mubaha al Mubaha li Talimatihik	R.X.10i	"
25	"	Arabic Handbook Al Haka al Thani	R.X.14	Arithmetic
25	"	Second book of Arithmetic Kutub al Haka al Thani	R.X.15	"
30	"	Third book of Arithmetic Al Haka al Thani li Talimatihik	R.X.16	"
	"	Al Haka al Thani li Talimatihik Arithmetic Questions	R.X.16i	"
40	"	Al Fajriya al Mubaha Geography	R.X.24	Geography
30	"	Subal Kuth al Ayyah li Sudan Ways of Living in the Sudan	R.X.25a	"
25	Boys	Subal Kuth al Ayyah li Sudan (25 copies of each copy and picture)	R.X.25b	"
30	Teacher	Pictures to Ways of Living Mubaha Subal Kuth al Ayyah li Sudan	R.X.27	"

BOOKS FOR THIRD YEAR ELEMENTARY—contd.

Price in Pt.	Distribution	Name	Serial No.	Subject
22	Teacher	Nahaw wa Gawaween at Tabia Ourselves and Natural Laws	R.X.21	Science
19	"	Murshid Nahaw wa Gawaween at Tabia Method for Ourselves and Natural Laws	R.X.22	"
30	"	Gina Min al Madi Stories from the Past	R.X.20a	History
3	Boys	20 Stories in Games with al Madi (55 copies of each)	R.X.20b	"
	"	Pictures to Stories from the Past		"
60	Teacher	Kutub al Ayyah al Yawmiya wa Kuth al Ayyah al Thaniya wa al Thalitha Handbook for second and third years	R.X.18	Handwork
	Boys	Al Karam al Karim wa Durat Addunya li Talimatihik Religion lessons	M.E.17	Religion



Pages from *A Handbook to Elementary Education for Boys Schools in the Sudan*. (1951). Books for all subjects in the Third Year. Also, three cartoons to encourage head teachers to think sympathetically about the new methods and to be critical of verbal and factual cramming.



inspection. This provided very necessary feedback to the reform process. Such inspection tours were complementary to the regular province education officers' inspections. But all this was putting a strain on administration and bureaucracy.

By the 1950s there were approximately 100 full (4 year) primary schools and these would have been using most of the new material and the new approach. There were also several hundred lower grade Koranic and three year schools which were only slightly touched by reform. The new Arabic Reader, *Kitab al Atfal*, would be found in many. Similarly girls' primary schools would use some of the material but women teachers took little part in the main reforms<sup>5</sup>. I would estimate that at independence, in 1955, the population of the Arabic-speaking Sudan was about 7,000,000 and that therefore something like 25% of the boys and 10% of the girls were being touched by the reforms.

It was beginning to become clear that widespread qualitative improvement was likely to be checked once primary education became widely established. What we were doing was, one can now see more clearly, only possible for a minority. We thought we were doing quite well; but in the longer run, and in our aspirations, we were building on sand.

When independence came it was natural that there should be tremendous pressure to expand. As in India, everybody's son was seen as having a field marshal's baton or a stethoscope in his adult hand. So every aspiring politician promised massive expansion. Class sizes often went from fifty up to ninety. Some of the reforms survived for a decade or more. When Griffiths revisited many of his former alumni in 1970 the reformed method and material was to be seen here and there but hardly anything had been done to update it<sup>2</sup>.

By the time of independence, what conclusions were we beginning to draw from all this effort? Some of the material which was most acceptable, which penetrated most quickly and survived longest was for Arabic and English language teaching. Notable work was done in Arabic language and literature by Abdullah Tayib and his friend and forerunner Ahmed el Tayib. John Bright's very effective Intermediate English language course was favoured by the 'universal language' pull but also by the exceptionally well thought-out 'practical linguistics' approach which Bright pioneered and which later spread world-wide. English as a foreign language was, then, a new subject.



Perhaps the most interesting and successful package, educationally, was the second and third year primary geography curriculum. The second year course was a simple programme involving local mapping and measuring, with visits to the mosque, market, courts etc. The third year course which was aimed at an enhanced consciousness of the Sudan's rich diversity was brilliant. The teachers' manual was a well-researched, detailed and attractive book called Ways of living in the Sudan. It contained fascinating 'anthropological' studies of how nine different families in the Sudan made their living - three modern families and six traditional ones: the engine driver of the Port Sudan train and the Azande farming family from the far south remain in mind. There was a detailed 'locality' map and two very detailed line drawings by Jean Pierre Greenlaw for each settlement. These 27 pictures and maps were the only curriculum material which children handled. The teachers' book was a rich source of farming and economic detail and of customs and traditional songs. And there was an underlying 'hidden' curriculum too; about us all being brothers and sisters, despite cultural and historic differences and of life usually being hard and requiring cooperation and effort from old and young. There was a foretaste, here, of Bruner's Man, a Course of Study. Such themes ran through other aspects of the primary course too and were evident in small money-handling societies and in a modified 'project method' called Topics. We knew, what people sometimes now forget, that moral education with children is best achieved subliminally and tacitly with very sparse didactic talk and plenty of active learning involving good role models.

Running through all this work there was a very important assumption about education which Griffiths represented and which he brought both from his understanding of Gandhi and from the teachings of people like Percy Nunn and James Fairgrieve at the old London Institute of Education. It was in the air long before Piaget and Bruner gave it theoretical substance. 'You learn best FROM practical, feeling-charged, aesthetic and social experience as you move TOWARDS theoretical, verbal and mathematical versions of it. Adults in a stressful world need to be able to move with confidence among different modes of knowing. So, much of a person's motivation and morality is laid down in their actions and inter-actions long before they are ready to theorise or moralise about conduct.



It wasn't only Griffiths who was guided by such ideas. We should not forget Jean Pierre Greenlaw: a brilliant half-French artist, a guitar-playing minstrel arid seeker of wisdom. He represented and taught a set of skills and attitudes that are not easily verbalised. And many Sudanese teachers, both traditional and modern, were developing a wonderful ability to move with confidence between their rich Islamic heritage, across a cultural divide, into a more problematic 'western' universe of discourse. I think of Jemal Mohammed Abmed or Ibrahim Nour or that cheerful firebrand Mohammed Omar Bashir and many others.

The social anthropologist, Professor Ernest Gellner, has written recently about the tensions of such cultural transitions. He has lived in and studied Islamic, communist and western-capitalist societies and he spells out a lesson that we were learning at Bakht er Ruda. The only rational way to navigate between the shifting relativism of 'anything goes' and the passionate, narrow-mindedness of the fundamentalists is to learn and cultivate what Gellner calls 'an enlightened puritanism' - the disciplined abilities and determination to seek truth and concord actively in several modes, and to cope with the ambiguities which occur where cultures meet. This means not just having more than one language. It means taking several modes of exploratory and creative work seriously and honouring their interactions: science and poetry for example. The human mind has evolved with several innate capacities or intelligences and these can be, but usually aren't, well harnessed.

Looking back on our time in Sudan, my wife, Elizabeth, and I who both worked in teacher education, often wish we had been a bit more 'bilingual'; not only in Arabic but also, in Gellner's sense, of penetrating more deeply the rich cultural colours of that great country whose people were so kind to us.

Robin A. Hodgkin



1. The Memoirs of Babikir Bedri, Vol1 (1969). Oxford University Press. Ed. and translated by Youssif Bedri and G. C. Scott, Vol 2 (1980). Ithaca Press. Ed. and translated by Youssif Bedri and P. Hogg. Introduction by G. N. Sanderson.
2. Griffiths V. L. (1953) An Experiment in Education. (1951) Handbook to Elementary Schools and Boys Clubs in the Sudan. Forward by Abdel Rahman Ali Taha. (1975) Teacher-Centred: Quality in Sudan Primary Schools 1930-1970. The last contains important retrospective evaluation.
3. Like many of their generation, Douglas Newbold and G. C. Scott were humanised, rather than hardened, by their experience of World War I. Both developed a deep love for the Sudan and its' people. They were scholarly, stoical, ironic. See K. D. D. Henderson, The Making of the Modern Sudan, life and letters of Sir Douglas Newbold (1953) London: Faber and Faber. While Henderson's writings tend to idealise some of these characters, later commentators, such as G. N. Sanderson, present British civil servants in misleadingly uniform and reactionary colours.
4. As remembered by C. W. M. C's brother David. Later, from 1940-1970, Sir Christopher Cox was educational advisor to the Colonial Office and then to the Overseas Development Administration.
5. Ina Beasley, Before the Wind Changed: People, Places and Education in the Sudan. (1992). Oxford University Press for the British Academy. Dr Beasley concentrates on her visits to girls' schools throughout the country. There are one or two references to Bakht er Ruda.
6. I have written on this subject elsewhere, see Playing and Exploring (Methuen 1985). The phrase 'an enlightened puritanism' is coined by Gellner as representing a creative middle way between the insidious relativism of 'anything goes' and a brittle fundamentalism. See his 'Squaring the ménage à trois' (Times Literary Supplement, July 31 1992). Such rational integrity characterised the most effective Sudanese and expatriate teachers during this period and enabled them to cope with many of the ambiguities generated by our cultural encounter. In a fuller version of this paper I suggest that the limits of this process were reached when Griffiths and Abdel Rahman Ali Taha began to formalise it and produce books on secular moral education as a distinct component in the curriculum without a much deeper, shared cultural and religious root. Even a rational 'enlightened puritanism' can never reach down to the largely tacit and emotional knowledge that underpins a believing community.



## THE TRAGEDY OF THE NUBA PEOPLE IN RELATION TO SUDAN'S CIVIL WAR

### The Seeds of Crisis

Ever since they moved into this enclave of Southern Kordofan, the Nuba people have been brutally marginalised like some other remote parts of the country, namely: the South, Darfur, the utmost north, Beja in eastern Sudan and Ingessena people of southern Blue Nile. The only difference between these regions and the Northern riverain Nubians of the Nile Valley is that the latter have been, since independence in January 1956, enjoying the spoils of power in Khartoum. These neglected yet forgotten peripheries have remained dormant until their patience has become razor-thin. Nuba fulmination against the gravity of power has been aired out by a regional organization, that is the General Union of the Nuba Mountains; and, more nationally, the Sudan National Party after the downfall of President Nimeiri. To disparage these factions, the domineering parties often refer to them as racial movements, to add insult to injury. The Nuba people's demand, and so is the rest of ruralists', is simple: let us cross the river in the same boat, they argue. So the essence of the message is unmistakably fair and just.

The people of the Nuba Mountains are bereft of economic investment, agrarian development, industrial achievement, good schooling for their posterity, basic medical services and so forth. All hopes to gain one or two of these necessities have eroded throughout the successive governments for more than three decades. Not only do the Nuba suffer in their homelands, but in cities where they live in poor conditions are also



subjected to social injustice and pejoratively obscene words: to name but two, *Nubawi* (Arabic word for a person belonging to Nuba) and *gharbawi* (meaning a westerner: from western Sudan). The oppression has reached its nadir when these westerners are racially picked up amongst the town folks and thrown out of the capital just like a tumorous organ incised from an infected body and plucked away; and, consequently, creating refugees in their own country. Officially, this activity of perfidity is known as evacuating the capital from criminals and crimes; popularly, it is referred to as *kasha* (mass eviction).

In referring to the ‘Closed District Act’, the Northern elites have wasted so much a time in a barren debate that the Southern conundrum was planted by colonialism and so was the Nuba Mountains’. This credence is futile because the nationalist governments have utterly failed to address the contentious issues in the bud. Even the too little achievements accomplished by certain regimes have been aborted by the very despots. The war in the South, they claim, has acted as an impediment against developing the Southern part of the country, but what about a once phlegmatic Nuba region which, without plausible reasons, is left in lurch until the war has spread to it.

### **The Transitional Military Council**

After the demise of President Nimeiri in April 1985, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and its moiety, the predominantly civilian cabinet, which assumed power thereafter were infested with some rigorous advocates of arming the ‘Arabicized’ tribes



of the buffer zones. The army is overstretched and outnumbered to purvey security to farmers and pasturists as well, they insist. The Government's objectives were, ostensibly, to combat the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political wing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM); but, at its worst, the TMC was poised to wipe off the face of earth all non-Arab entities in the Nuba Mountains. This clandestine war against the Nuba went on with covert Government backing and blessing throughout the period of the TMC. The killing of the SPLA/SPLM suspects in and around Kadugli, the provincial capital of Southern Kordofan, exceedingly proceeded without public knowledge, since the media was (and is) monopolized by the same elements who were (and again are) conducting this internecine war; and, worse still, wreaking havoc with the very spartan people of the Sudan.

The most alarmingly affected areas in these early campaigns of terror and horror were the villages of Tira, Korongo, Miri, both Masakeen Twal and Gusar and so forth.

### **The Sadiq Government**

The inauguration of Sadiq al-Mahdi as the Sudan's Prime Minister in April 1986 was, to say the least, a fizzled hope. Sadiq tried, but to no avail, to legalize the armed militia as a paramilitary force. Euphemistically dubbed the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), the proposition was categorically rejected by the members of parliament, thanks to democracy and some peace-loving Sudanese. However, this firm opposition had, at least, bludgeoned Sadiq into backing down, but the surreptitious succour to these



perpetrators continued. So what used to be small-scale skirmishes over grazing rights, water resources or cattle raiding turned into a martial rift.

Sadiq could have employed the democratic consensus to cease hostilities in the Nuba Mountains as a part of the missing peace, but he did not care a jot: his reticence, or rather say connivance, was the Government's practical technique and *realpolitik*. Crimes against human dignity in the Nuba areas smelt out acridly when Sadiq was deposed and the former Governor of Kordofan was designated as the key figure who, with personal satisfaction, aided and abetted the militia in the region; nevertheless, nothing was taken judicially to redress the balance of injustice.

Having reneged on their pre-election promises, political leaders were ridiculed by the people who had become less deferential to them and more cynical about the political process itself. Sudan's 'neanderthal' parties were in open disarray, racked by arguments over where they went wrong. This bickering had made things no technically different from the old order – *l'ancien regime*. The chasm separating the rich and poor in Sadiq's Sudan kept growing wider and wider, as a bevy of vested interests politicians took over the reign of power. Much to their disenchantment, the Nuba were represented by Amin Bashir Filleen as a Minister for Tourism and Motels: a very marginal portfolio created by Sadiq to keep the Nuba quiet and acquiesce in the so-called the Government of National Unity.



## **The Bashir's Regime**

The military coup *d'état* of Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir that ousted the elected Government of Sadiq al-Mahdi was a turning point in the Nuba history. Since they usurped power in June 1989, the junta and their lackeys in Southern Kordofan have unabashedly embarked on systematically genocidal policies to obliterate all that Nuba: the inhabitants, their properties, culture are all but on the brink of eradication. Ever and anon the people are massacred in their thousands, the villages are burnt to the ground, the farms are ever and more set ablaze, cattle are plundered by these Government-sponsored marauders, leaving devastation in their wake and promising worse to come. This is hitherto happening. These destitute villagers are not the SPLA/SPLM fighters: had they been so, then the SPLA/SPLM would have formed an army marching on its stomach that no force could hardly stand in its way. Nonetheless, these militia are granted *carte blanche* to commit so many a crime against humanity and ecology alike.

The carnage at Lagowa and Kamda on October 27, 1989 indicated that the atrocities of the Government-armed agents reached the northern areas of Southern Kordofan. More notorious still is the lynching of innocent civilians at Teimein, Julud, Kalandi, Katla, Angarku, to mention but a few. The following year by no means was not better than the previous one: still the Nuba people were (and are) to bear the brunt of the Government's wrath. The advent of Lt-Gen Bashir, first and foremost, as an alleged votary of peace has evaporated amid more disillusion and as the real course of events shows. The former Governor of Southern Kordofan in Bashir's Sudan did his role so badly in impoverishing the Nuba; and, in sequel to that, decimating the bulk of the



population in the region. After the gangs are given guns to assist the morbid regime in its pursuit of this unwinnable conflict, the governor informed the authorities in al-Obeid, the capital of Kordofan State, and his masters in Khartoum that the people of the Nuba Mountains were well fed and bred; thus, and only thus, desisting aid from reaching the area: the consequence of this so foul an act was more death and misery.

Thence to another sort of war: not satisfied by its already human rights violations, the Government kidnapped over 5,000 children and were seen huddled in Sheikan, in al-Obeid, to be trained as future soldiers, only to return home and fight their own clansmen and women. By so doing, the children were deprived from education, let alone the freedom to choose whatsoever they envisage. The abduction of the Nuba intellectuals is now a routine measure adopted by the regime. The culprits have multiplied: the army, the military intelligence, the PDF and the newly-added body of *Mujahideen* who, with evangelical enthusiasm, are committed to the alleged jihad (holy war). There are now periodic raids against the Nuba villages to further the regime's policy of 'ethnic cleansing'. Some villages, such as: al-Nittil, al-Faus, Tundia, Sallara, Karku and so on, were attacked several times. A bunch of the instigators and abettors of popular armament during the TMC's rein were cajoled into the Bashir's Government with, of course, their old bad habits; and still more so contributed, in one way or another, to the ongoing onslaught in the Nuba area.

To the irony of destiny, the Nuba Mountains abut on Northern Kordofan in where, and in Southern Kordofan, the 'black Arabs' of Howazma and Misseiriyya, being herdsman, are coveting the Nuba animal husbandry and their arable lands. To help them



in achieving their motives, the Government has unreservedly engineered a depopulation programme; sarcastically called a 'relocation programme' through which thousands of Nuba people are rounded up from their own homes, crammed into trucks, only to be discarded in the desert of Northern Kordofan in the so-called 'peace villages'. This forcible displacement is obnoxious and in complete antithesis to civilization. These so squalid camps can be found in Bara, Um Rawaba, al-Rahad, en-Nuhud and so on. Worse still, the virile young males are separated from females and the decrepit: the former are sent to work for the Government in the mechanized agricultural schemes, while the latter are 'donated' to wealthy Arab families as unpaid servants, carrying out menial jobs.

The latest and more sanguine 'Holocaust' had taken place in Heiban area on Christmas 1992 in which over 600 civilians were murdered in cold blood. This mass slaughter was the regime's yule-tide greetings; and, more deplorably, the protagonists of the pogrom went away with it safe and sound.

It is obviously clear that the second Abuja peace talks in Nigeria are leading to nowhere. Since the opening of deliberations on April 26, 1993, both the Government and the SPLA/SPLM delegations have not been able to agree on the basic theme of dispute and the stumbling block of any further optimism, that is the separation of 'religion from state'. The Nigerian compromise, however, seems to have been rejected by both sides.

Unfortunately, the almost one-year period that lapsed since Abuja has proved to be fruitless and gained no viable progress. The ceasefire is now holding, however fragile,

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it may be, but when it collapses the serial killing will continue. We appeal to the international community to act now rather than tomorrow to stop the blood shedding and the slaughter of the innocent who have been caught up in the crossfire.

Omer M Shurkian



## THAT FATAL FASCINATION

"Do not you be drawn into that fatal fascination which Sudan Territory seems to have for all Europeans of late years" — Henry Morton Stanley to A.J. Mounteney Jephson, 18th January 1889.

So wrote one of Africa's more violent foreign explorers to one of his lieutenants more than a hundred years ago. Ten years later, the Egyptian army, led by Europeans, killed more than ten thousand Mahdists at the Battle of Omdurman, or Karari as the Sudanese know it. British casualties were forty eight dead. In the next fifty seven years, the British administration lost only five members and one Police Commandant to attacks by its subjects. They on the other hand sustained hundreds of casualties as the million square miles of Sudan territory were pacified by soldiers, delineated and brought under civil administration. South Sudan was born in blood: it knew internal peace only between the killing of the Nuer prophet Gwek in 1929 and the start of the Anyanya war in 1955 - one generation.

It is hard to think of the RAF experimenting with bombs to punish recalcitrant cattle herders, but they did. When I first went to Juba in the 1970's I was told by Bertram Peat, a Nuer headmaster, how as a boy he had been bombed by the RAF while he paddled his canoe through the *Sudd*. He seemed to bear no malice and was also matter of fact about the reason for his pebble-lensed glasses: Government troops had forced his head into a bag of chilli powder and beaten it, during the Anyanya war. His eyes never recovered.

It took the Condominium thirty years completely to quieten the Sudan, with machine guns, bombs and punitive patrols. There are few alive now who can remember much of this. Instead Sudanese people today remember the law and order enforced by the British, the paternal grip of the DC and the good rains. The twenty years or so after the Second World War were tranquil in the Western world and most parts under its rule, despite the partition of India and bloody campaigns in Algeria, Malaya and Kenya. The Sudanese did not need to win their independence by force of arms, but blood flowed in the south even before the Condominium flag came down.

Thirty seven years later, at Pagerau in Bahr el Ghazal, I was shown unburied skulls and bones, burnt huts and roofs holed by rocket propelled grenades. This year I saw the effect of these same weapons on the once idyllic village of Lafon. The Kalashnikov assault rifle is ubiquitous. It is not an accurate weapon. In the Red Cross hospital in Lopeding, in Kenya, I found Kuol, a little boy from Upper Nile, a piece of his hand taken away by the same burst of fire that killed his mother. Civilians are estimated to form 90% of casualties in modern wars in Africa.

In western Europe, no one much under sixty was able to remember what civil breakdown and indiscriminate violence meant, until Yugoslavia imploded. The end of the Soviet empire has led to similar breakdowns in many parts of its former domain. As the technologically advanced nations face the twenty-first century, uncertain how to deal with the effects of global environmental, economic and political change, those they have left behind are still grappling



with the establishment of civil society and rule by consent, which we have for so long taken for granted.

On our television screens we can watch the doomed American attempt to bring order to Mogadishu with helicopter gunships. Our technical ingenuity long ago outstripped our capacity to direct it. The UN is impotent in most of the conflicts it is called to resolve. The profession of arms is seriously compromised. When empires had to be policed or despots confronted, there was nothing dishonourable about being a soldier. Today Ukrainian soldiers trade heroin in Sarajevo, Bulgarian peace-keepers mutiny in Cambodia and ragged militias everywhere kill women and children.

Where does this leave Sudan? Trapped between a twisted Islamic renaissance and the failure of elected and imposed leaders alike, its economy collapsed and its friends few, it is near disintegration. Neglected by comparison with Somalia or Bosnia, it nonetheless receives relief on a giant scale, to which the British taxpayer has been contributing a million pounds a month. Operation Lifeline Sudan costs more money each year than the south has ever generated or cost in its entire history. The government has effectively conceded sovereignty over a vast swathe of the country to the SPLA and foreign relief workers under a UN shield.

The architects of the modern Sudan were British. Many Sudanese ask why Britain does not help them, not understanding its loss of will or power. Yet Britain remains a member of the Security Council, proud of its diplomatic expertise. Britain despatched a mediator and then troops to Yugoslavia, where we have slender historical ties. We eventually negotiated a peaceful settlement for Rhodesia and we invented safe havens for the Kurds. Whilst finally Sudanese salvation must rest in Sudanese hands, Britain is well placed to assist. It refuses to try. When asked why, diplomats point out the lack of public pressure on our politicians, or the lack of British interests, or claim there is no will to stop fighting. American, Dutch, Norwegian, Kenya, Eritrean, Ethiopian and Ugandan diplomats have at least tried. When will we?

P.E. Winter.

December 1993.



## ‘HUMAR AN NOOM’

Iain Marshall

The condition known as ‘noctambulism’ which is less obscurely defined in dictionaries as ‘somnambulism’ and is spoken of in the English-speaking world as ‘sleep-walking’ finds expression in northern Sudan in a colloquial phrase about a donkey.

This ‘donkey of sleep’ [**“humar an noom”**] first blundered across my path on a clear night, on the east bank of the Nile, between the villages of Argo and Burgeig. I was staying with a family who occupied one of a small cluster of government houses. The father and several of his sons worked at the nearby pumping station which poured gallons of Nile water into the irrigation channels [**“jadwalls”**] of farmers up and down the river.

On the first day of my visit I was introduced to the neighbours, and after a swim in the Nile, was taken on a guided tour of the area, visiting the family’s cattle and the huge water pump itself. In the evening we dined on fish which had been stranded in a bend in one of the pump’s massive pipes. The fish was delicious but the water with which we washed the meal down contained a hint of benzene. It too had been drawn from the metal guts of the machine. It was an oppressively hot evening, the final nuance of discomfort being provided by squadrons of ‘dive-bombing mosquitoes, whose tormenting screeches and whirrings, greatly surpassed the itchy swellings resulting from a bite, as a form of mental torture.

At night when I was expecting to be shown to a bed somewhere in the yard, I was instructed to go after my male hosts who inexplicably clambered onto the roof of the house. On following I was surprised to find six beds [**“angarebs”**] laid out under the open skies on the narrow iron roof. The house could hold all of this on its ‘head’ because it was government built and constructed of corrugated iron. The mud and **“jariid”** roofs of locally made houses could not have supported such a weight, **“jariid”** being nothing stronger than straightened palm branches stripped of their leaves.

As we lay above the mosquitoes, gazing at the stars and enjoying the breeze, I tried to explain, in an attempt at humour, that I hoped I did not walk in my sleep to be woken unceremoniously after falling to the street below. My host, Mohammed, choosing to overlook the joke, implored me to descend and sleep in the yard if I really thought it likely that **“humar an noom”** would take possession of me during the night. Being less than enthusiastic about the prospect of a night at ground level, deprived of the wafting breeze and

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at the mercy of the mosquitoes, I elected to stay on the head of the house [**“rass al beet”**], and in doing so, gained a lasting memory of my visit, after sleeping more like **“hajar an noom”**, the stone of sleep than the donkey.



## **PORT SUDAN: THE EVOLUTION OF A COLONIAL CITY**

**By Kenneth J. Perkins**

Boulder: Westview Press, 1993

In *Port Sudan: Evolution of a Colonial City*, Kenneth J. Perkins charts the development of Port Sudan from its founding by Condominium officials in 1904 to the early 1950s. Established at Marsa Shaykh Marghuth, an uninhabited site noted only for the tomb of a local saint, Port Sudan afforded authorities the chance to start from scratch in the planning of a city. For this reason, Perkins sees Port Sudan as a particularly interesting case study in colonial city planning, comparable in some ways to Morocco's Kenitra (established 1913) and Egypt's Port Said (established 1859)

Although the author organizes his narrative along chronological lines, he devotes special attention to a few resurfacing themes. One of these themes is the relationship between Port Sudan and the centuries-old trading depot of Suakin, and the way in which the former quickly supplanted the latter. (Suakin had for long been an important Red Sea port, acquired by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, leased by Muhammad Ali in the 1840s, and formally ceded to Egypt in 1865.) Suakin might have continued to serve as the pre-eminent Sudanese port of the twentieth century, had not British Condominium authorities deemed its offshore coral reefs a hindrance to steamer traffic. The British used this topographical reason to justify the foundation of Port Sudan. They made Port Sudan the terminus for the Nile-Red Sea railway, and hence the hub of Sudanese export and import trade, eclipsing Suakin in the process.

In contrast to the British, Egyptian leaders tended to view the shift from Suakin to Port Sudan in gloomy terms. Some Egyptians saw the new port and railway facilities at Port Sudan as an attempt to siphon off trade from the traditional Nile trade routes that led into Egypt. Others saw it as an attempt to weaken Egypt's position-politically and economically speaking-on the Red Sea coast; Suakin, after all, had been an Egyptian sphere of influence. Moreover, whereas Egypt footed much of the bill for the development of Port Sudan, the British gave Egyptians little voice in the city's development. The case of Port Sudan added fuel to the fire of Egyptian nationalism and anti-British sentiment for many years to come.

An equally salient theme relates to the problem of labour supply. For most of the years before World War II, authorities grappled with the problem of labour shortages. Men were needed for work on the docks and railways in particular, but also for jobs in the construction industry, oil and coal storage facilities, dye and salt works, and other small industrial and commercial enterprises. Much to the chagrin of the authorities, the local Beja population proved reluctant to work steadily or in great numbers; those who did work were regarded by authorities as being lazy and unreliable. The situation forced authorities to recruit labour from



other regions -from Dongola and Berber provinces in the Sudan, as well as from Upper Egypt, Jidda, and Yemen. The division of labour typically fell along ethnic lines, with Yemenis generally in the most highly-skilled and highly-paid dock positions, and with irregular Beja workers performing the most arduous work as stevedores. Over time, Beja representation in the Port Sudan work force slowly increased. Still, it was only after World War II that a series of droughts pushed impoverished Beja into Port Sudan in great numbers, thereby exacerbating problems in urban overcrowding, poverty, and unemployment.

One may perhaps describe a third theme in the book as the inequitable distribution of resources and amenities within the city, an imbalance that reflected the inequitable distribution in wealth and power. Condominium officials planned construction work, road building, water supplies, sanitation facilities, and the like with the European population of Port Sudan in mind first and foremost, and with wealthy Sudanese and prosperous foreign trading communities in mind thereafter. The result was that Port Sudan quickly fell behind in provisioning the labouring populace of migrant and settled workers, and never caught up. Erratic attempts to build cheap housing or to enforce sanitation codes did not suffice to stem the tide of urban overcrowding in the slums that sprang up on the city's outskirts. Thus Port Sudan sailed into the era of independence dragging a host of urban ills in its trail.

Port Sudan: The Evolution of a Colonial City is a valuable case study in colonial urban development. It does, however, fit into a much larger picture of colonial-era African urbanization. The troubles that Port Sudan faced, in regard to labour supply, housing, overcrowding, and the like, bear many parallels with situations in Nairobi, Dakar, and other cities of colonial-era Africa. Perkins might have strengthened his study by placing greater emphasis on these comparative dimensions.

While planning African cities, colonial-era authorities targeted their remarkable achievements in engineering and technology largely for communities of Europeans and African elites. Assuming that the labourers they recruited would somehow be only temporarily or extraneously associated with the city, they largely overlooked the needy of the lower classes. Nor did they anticipate the rural-to-urban exoduses that would soon breed poverty and despair in the city peripheries, and aggravate already imbalanced distributions of wealth. Even so, to say that colonial-era authorities, in Port Sudan and elsewhere, sadly misunderstood their mandates in the planning of African cities, is a luxury afforded only to those with the benefit of hindsight.

Heather J. Sharkey

Princeton, New Jersey



# **GOVERNING THE NUER: DOCUMENTS IN NUER HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY. 1922-1931.**

## **BY PERCY CORIAT**

Edited with Introduction and Notes by Douglas H. Johnson

JASCJ Occasional Papers Series. no.9. ISBN 1-70047-45-1 (Pb): £16.95. Sept 1993

Percy Coriat is only recalled by most social anthropologists and, I suspect, by most students of the Sudan as a name which is respectfully footnoted in each of Evans-Pritchard's three classic Nuer ethnographies. This book does at least three useful things:- (1) it gives flesh and blood to the ghost in the footnotes: (2) rescues some archival papers (often faint carbon) on the Nuer which would certainly have disappeared but for the editor's unique combination of scholarship, enterprise and energy: (3) provides a series of insights about what it was like both to attempt to govern Nuer in the nineteen twenties and to be a governed Nuer. It has to be a part of the "small industry of secondary commentaries on *The Nuer*" (p xix). but it also, most unusually concerns itself with the Nuer themselves and provides us with some fresh data: altogether this is an unusual and welcome volume.

Coriat himself spent nine very active years as an administrator among the Nuer. He took a Nuer wife, for whom he exchanged full bridewealth cattle so that he acquired a set of permanent affines: he learned to dance so stylishly that his performance is still recalled in a Nuer song: he made a number of close Nuer friends and enemies and became "fully conversant" in the language. His gift for friendship and his command of the language eased several tense and delicate situations. He did not fit the stereotype of a Sudan official in that he was neither an Oxbridge graduate nor an officer: he had joined up in the ranks at sixteen when the First World War broke out, ending up as a lance-sergeant with a DCM and having lost an eye. Of all the officials mentioned in this book I think he is the only one with a rankers medal. He first entered the Sudan Service by chance and on a short contract. But he was a "public school man", a "perfect gentleman", energetic, robust and brave so he fitted in: indeed he became "a model DC whose style was to be emulated" (p xxiii).

He was not an intellectual nor a theorist and just set out pragmatically to govern, autocratically but fairly, and to establish an administrative organization which worked. He looked for chiefs who got things done. The son of one Nuer Chief recalled:-"What I know is that my father was a hard man. Coriat was a hard man. They got on well together."[xliv]. But he listened to "his people", and he respected their courage and adaptability to extreme ecological variations. He also had that wry sense of humour which was the first requirement



for any lone DC who was to remain sane: when the Civil Secretary sent his often an extremely dangerous expedition, with “written instructions not to go into the danger zone” presumably to guard his own back if things went wrong. Coriat just comments:—“did not ask him how one knew what was or was not a danger zone before going into it!” [p 104]. In the Second World War he served in the Sudan Defence Force ending up as lieutenant colonel in command of a Nuba battalion. He concluded his career, as an honest, successful and willing workhorse of Empire, in command of the Muscat and Oman Field Force.

There are some 160 pages of documents, mostly official reports written by Coriat, either about the Nuer or about problems which arose in attempting to administer them. They fall into four sections:- on the Central Nuer amongst whom Coriat served first; on the Western Nuer amongst whom he finished his time in Nuerland; on the attempts to fix a boundary between Nuer and Dinka: and on the enforcement of the “Nuer Settlement” following Guek’s rebellion. Coriat had a sharp mind and recorded what he observed in a brisk and clear, almost telegraphic, prose: “like the archetypical district commissioner”. However, unless you are a Nuerophile the documents can be rather heavy going; but their intrinsic value is demonstrated by the historical interpretations which the editor is able to make from them in his general introduction, sectional introductions and notes.

It is the pictures of and insights into grassroots colonial government on a shoestring budget that I have most enjoyed. It is reminiscent in many ways of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya in the early 1950’s. Coriat, like a number of DC’s across Africa, became emotionally involved with his *people* ‘in Kenya the word Maasaiitis was coined to describe the condition.’, and championed “my Nuers” against their enemies, though never to the extent of joining in armed confrontations as Driberg did. When it came to disputes over grazing or cattle, his affections were clear: the “artful Dinkas... being a mean crowd are deadly jealous and scared or the Nuers and go prancing” to their own DC with “yarns”. [p. 33] This constricted boarding school set of values (my house are decent chaps your house are squits), often seems to have been part of a certain type of primitive colonial mentality. For example, Coriat’s “Handing Over Report” (Document 4.1) reads like a series of report cards on house prefects:- “not being a chief by heredity and lacking the instincts of a Leader”: “has managed to steer clear of Jekiang intrigues and is competent subordinate leader”: “completely unscrupulous and hardly less untrustworthy”, “appears to have the makings of a chief in him”. “a very decent fellow” and so one could go on.



The Empire was perceived as a sort of mixture of school and the Roman Empire: colonial territories, like Gaul, had to be divided into parts. Section Two of the documents is entitled “Fixing the Boundaries”, that is those between the Nuer and the Dinka. Of course, they never were fixed, even though “that Dinka should go to Dinka country and Nuer to Nuer” became “the cornerstone” of administrative policy (p 91). The No Man’s Lands which were established to separate them became fields for battle. The policy had to be given up but the ideas lingered on. A true tribesman should know his tribe and stick by it. The trouble was that segments of both Dinka and Nuer kept on acting as if those tribal allegiances were negotiable according to circumstances. So a Nuer *cieng* which settled with some Dinkas “must be ferreted out” (p 49), and the Ballak “a group of mixed Dinka-Anuak-Nuer fishermen....are always mixing *themselves up* with Jekaing” (p 75).

Such unsuccessful attempts to define boundaries between tribes and clans and to delimit the jurisdictions of chiefs are a theme which run through all the documents: as it does through British colonial history. What are the tribes and who are their chiefs? (Who is the prefect? Can he control his dorm’?) That is constant attempts to identify and to establish firm and fixed territorial boundaries with firm and fixed locii of legitimised authority within them. (This ingrained need to establish a familiar order even continues into present day British policies towards the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and even in Ireland).

In sum, anyone with an interest in the Nuer, in the work of Evans-Pritchard and in the history of colonial administration in general and the southern Sudan in particular will enjoy reading this book.

P.T.W. Baxter.



## AL-MUQAWA AL-DAKHILIYA LI-HARAKAT AL-MAHDIYA(1881-1898)

Muhammad Mahjub Malik

Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1987. 301 pages

Although six years have passed since Malik's work on the Mahdiya, al-Muqawamah al-dakhiliya li-harakat al-Mahdiya ("Internal Struggle in the Mahdist Movement"), first appeared, it nonetheless seem worthwhile to give his study due consideration here. Whereas some scholars choose to see the Mahdiya period as the crucible of the Sudanese national identity, Malik, by contrast, envisions the Mahdiya as a period in which tremendous internal conflict produced far more division than unity.

Malik relies primarily on Mahdiya-era documents from Khartoum's National Records Office, while also consulting contemporary Egyptian records from Cairo and Mahdiya Arabic documents from Durham. He uses these materials in order to paint a picture of a Mahdist state plagued from its inception by endemic and multi-causal conflict. He divides Mahdist opponents into two groups: those who resisted the movement from the beginning, such as Khatmiya adherents or members of the Kababish, and those who initially gave strong support to the movement, but who became disappointed by or alienated from it (and especially in the period that followed the Mahdi's untimely death in 1885).

Malik contends that the Mahdist state failed to pull the disparate groups of the Sudan together under the yoke of a revitalized Islam, in part because Mahdist policy (primarily though not exclusively in the era of the Khalifa Abdullahi) worked against this trend. Malik points out that the Mahdi's early decision to group his military into ethnically- and geographically-based divisions, to be led by his *khalifas*, sowed the seeds of the ethnic discord which grew during Abdullahi's rule. This conflict pitted the Awlad al-Balad of the riverain north, including the Mahdi's kinfolk, the Ashraf, against the Awlad al-Arab of the west, including the Khalifa's Ta'aisha tribesmen. In the end, ethnic chauvinism triumphed over the ideal of a Sudanese Islamic universalism.

Malik divides his book into short sections, each dealing with a different arena of conflict. He deals with such issues as the early opposition of Azhar-trained ulama, who articulated their support for the Turco-Egyptian regime in *fatwas* denouncing the Mahdi; the interrelation of the various *tariqas*, and notably Khatmiya tariqa resistance to the Mahdiat movement; and the resistance of such tribes as the Kababish, Shukriya, Ababde, and Amrar. He provides in-depth discussion of groups and individuals whose initial support for the movement evolved into resentment and/or revolt. The latter category includes, for instance, the Mahdi's early cohort, al-Manna Isma'il, as well as the western Rufa'a of the Jazira, whose members found themselves as dissatisfied with Mahdist taxation as they had been with Turco-Egyptian taxation. He also considers the oppositional nature of claimants to the vacant caliph 'Uthmn position (which al-Sanusi of Cyrenaica had turned down) and of self-declared *nabi* 'Isa



figures, purporting to fill the role of Jesus (according to popular Muslim Mahdist eschatology).

Some aspects of the book are far more developed than others. Malik goes into great detail, for example, on the Khalifa Abdullahi's efforts to purge the Ashraf from office in towns along the Nile as well as in Kordofan and Dar Fur, as a means of stemming the opposition of the Awlad al-Balad. Likewise, the author repeatedly emphasizes the Khalifa's policy of *hijra* (demanding immigration to the Mahdiat capital at Omdurman) and *jihad* (sending groups or individuals to war fronts far from home) in order to extinguish the threat posed by recalcitrant individuals or groups. Equally detailed are his sections on tribal resistance-on the trade- and profit-related motives which prompted some tribal elites (such as the Abu Sin family of the Shukriya) to retain Turco-Egyptian loyalties. His treatment of the *nabi* 'Isa and caliph 'Uthman uprisings are also quite valuable. Malik argues that these uprisings flourished in the west or among westerners dispersed throughout the northern Sudan. He notes that the west was the locus for much of the popular Mahdist eschatology that had enabled Muhammad Ahmad to launch his own movement so successfully, and that Mahdist eschatology provided a vocabulary in which westerners could express their grievances against the Mahdist state. Yet although Malik devotes a hefty section of the book to the role of tariqas in the Mahdiya, it would have strengthened his book to develop this theme more thoroughly-and in particular, by going into greater detail on the nexus between *tariqa* identity and tribal identity in determining Mahdiya opposition or allegiance.

Malik concludes that the Mahdist movement took a decisive turn under the Khalifa's rule. Endemic and bitter conflict, and most notably the struggle over political power and wealth waged between the Awlad al-Balad and the Awlad al-'Arab, destroyed the unifying potential of the Mahdiya. Malik writes, "Indeed, the Khalifa 'Abdullahi's reliance on the Awlad al-'Arab stripped the Mahdist movement of its nationalist quality and changed it into an ethnic movement" (p. 271). However, given the unbridled ambitions of the Awlad al-Balad, and their unwillingness to cooperate with the Khalifa, the author admits earlier that this turn of events may have been unavoidable (p. 199). In any case, Malik would no doubt discourage those who seek the roots of the Sudanese national identity from digging too deeply into the Mahdiya.

Heather J. Sharkey

Princeton, New Jersey



## **THE MAHDIST REVOLUTION IN THE SUDAN: AN OUTLINE OF A NEW APPROACH (IN ARABIC)**

**Authors: Abd-Alaziz Hussein al-Sawi and Mohammed Ali Gadein**

Dar al-Farabi, Khartoum, 1990 (distributed by Dar al-Faris, P.O.B. 9157, Amman, Jordan).

Much has been written about the Mahdist Revolution and its state (1881-1898) but the angle chosen by the authors to deal with the subject is unique in that it attempts to supplement the Islamic and Sudanese nationalist dimension of the Mahdist era highlighted by those writings, with the Arab dimensions. This task which constitutes in effect a partial rediscovery of the Mahdist revolution, is tackled in four studies titled 'The Arab Dimensions of the Mahdist Revolution: The Distant and Near Roots', 'The Mahdist Revolution and European Colonialism', 'Khalifa Abdullahi's Era: Challenges and Horizons' and 'On the Mahdist Revolution and the Arab Awakening'. The first and last studies deal with the issue of the Arab dimension, while the second and third are not related to it except through their link with the general subject of the Mahdist Revolution itself.

The first, and most comprehensive study presents the new approach indicated in the title in the form of an analytical summary of the history of Sudanese Arabism until the Blue Sultanate (1504-1822), the latter being the suggested source of the distant roots of the revolution. The second part of the same study consists of a number of chapters on the Mahdi's thought and the make-up of his personality, the equivalence of the concepts of Arabism and Islam from the viewpoint of the causes, nature and limits of the revolution, the seeds of the theoretical formulation of the concept of Arabism in the documents of the revolution, the role of the unity of the (Arab) national make-up as one of the causes of the success of the revolution, the relationship with the Arab 'renewal' movement, the concept of the 'Greater Mahdist State' and finally the relationship of the movement with West Africa. In the final part of this first study they trace the impact of the Arab dimension of the Mahdist revolution, as previously, in the establishment of Sudanese national unity between Arabs and non-Arabs and in the politics of the British administration after 1898.

The final study in the book seeks to place the Mahdist revolution directly in the framework of the 'Arab revival' movement of the late 19th century. An introduction summarizes the main developments of this movement in the Arab world and then concentrates on diagnosing the national character of its Sudanese component, describing also the distinctive features of the latter. This is highlighted in a discussion of three aspects: the origin of the idea of the 'Awaited Mahdi' in Arab-Islamic heritage, the aims of the Mahdist revolution, and the national character of its popular base.

The two other studies in the book are only tenuously related to the approach indicated by its title. Despite their richness in information, their logical coherence and the importance of their themes, these two studies are not related in any concrete sense to the fundamental thesis of the book. It may, therefore, have been more appropriate editorially to either modify the book's title or published these two studies separately.

The book envisages a limited goal for itself. Although it tackles what it sees as a completely new hypothesis about the nature of the Mahdist revolution, it also sees itself as a reinforcement of "the efforts made by Sudanese historians because it gives added support to the independence of the Sudanese perception of the Mahdist revolution compared to the British and foreign perception in general" (Introduction). Likewise, the authors consider their new approach as complementary to the Islamic, Sudanese national, and class interpretation of the Mahdist



Revolution rather than alternative or contradictory to them. Within these limits it can be said that the book succeeds in establishing a minimum degree of credibility for the thesis of the Arab dimensions of the Mahdist revolution through a number of deductions based on a reasonable academic and intellectual effort. Even those deductions which look somewhat far-fetched (e.g. the probability of a relationship between Mahdist thought and practice and the Arab renewal movement in Egypt and Greater Syria through the Mahdi's teacher) are interesting even if only through being controversial. However most of the deductions reflect scholarly endeavour, a reasonable ability to employ the results reached regarding the process of Arabization in the Sudanese historical context, with all its distinctive features, and the relationship between the emergence of the objective realities in this regard, and the close interlinkage between what is Arab and Islamic in the Sudanese experience, to attain a full explanation of various aspects of the Mahdist revolution using the (Arab) national factor. An example of this is the exact manner in which the revolution broke out and progressed, the make-up of its leadership, and its similarities and differences with similar crosscurrents in the Arab and non-Arab countries.

In addition, the book presents its conclusions as interactive with the impact of the religious and social factors and not exclusive of them, which reflects a commendable sense of scientific responsibility. This can also be discerned in the footnotes and references used, which are for the most part academically acceptable, although full details are not given in the conventional manner. Overall, the book can be seen as a preliminary outline of the thesis it aims to explain, and is thus worthy of more attention than it has hitherto received from Sudanese and Arab intellectuals and, consequently, from their foreign colleagues. This is the more so because, due to the importance of the Mahdist revolution in Sudan's history, it has received so much scholarly attention, giving the impression that nothing new can be said about it.

A. M. El-Hassan

Dept. of Economic & Social Studies

University of Bradford



## NORTH EAST AFRICA SEMINAR

**Convenors:** Wendy James, Douglas H. Johnson, Alex de Waal, Patricia Daley

**FRIDAYS. 2.15 - 3.45**

Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology Annexe,  
61 Banbury Road, Oxford

ALL WELCOME

Hilary Term, 1994

<u>Week 1</u> 21 January	<u>Arop Madut</u> ( <i>Journalist</i> )	Church and State relations in the Sudan: 1988-93
<u>Week 2</u> 28 January	<u>Gaim Kibreab</u> ( <i>University of Uppsala</i> )	Involuntary resettlement and the environment: Eritreans in the Eastern Sudan
<u>Week 3</u> 4 February	<u>Douglas H. Johnson</u> ( <i>St. Antony's College</i> )	Egypt, Britain, the UN and the legal fiction of Sudanese self-determination (1952-56)
<u>Week 4</u> 11 February	<u>Diana Witts</u> ( <i>CMS</i> )	The Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to the Southern Sudan: hopes and fears
<u>Week 5</u> 18 February	<u>G�rard Prunier</u> ( <i>CRA, Paris</i> )	The structure of the Sudanese opposition
<u>Week 6</u> 25 February	<u>Helen Pankhurst</u> ( <i>ACORD</i> )	New development initiatives: ACORD's programmes in Ethiopia
<u>Week 7</u> 4 March	<u>Charles Ambler</u> ( <i>University of Texas</i> )	Alcohol, leisure, and state power in colonial Kenya
<u>Week 8</u> 11 March	<u>Mario Aguilar</u> ( <i>SOAS</i> )	The Eagle talks to a <i>Kallu'</i> : Waso Boorana ritual perceptions of Ethiopia in Kenya



**NORTH EAST AFRICA SEMINAR**

**ESRC SUPPORTED WORKSHOP SERIES 1994-5**

*(General co-ordinators: Wendy James and Douglas H. Johnson)*

**I**

**WOMEN AND WAR**

Convenors: Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar

**ADVANCE PROGRAMME**

**Saturday, 19 February 1994, 10 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.:**

**Workshop at St. Antony's College, Oxford (Woodstock Road)**

The programme during the day will include presentations dealing with the theme of Women and War in Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia/Somaliland, Kenya and Uganda. There will be historical as well as current treatments. Positive as well as negative aspects of the role of women in war, as fighters, active agents and beneficiaries as well as victims, will be considered. There will be a variety of contributors and discussants, local and international, drawn from a range of institutions in Britain and elsewhere. Papers will include the following confirmed contributions:

Fawzia Musse	Sexual violence against Somali refugees in Kenya
Judy el Bushra	Women and gender issues in conflict
Rakiya Omaar	Women and peacemaking in Somaliland
Jenny Hammond	Women in the Tigray liberation struggle

To book for this workshop and receive the full programme, please return the slip below, to Dr. Douglas H. Johnson, St. Antony's College, Oxford, OX2 6JF. Fax: 0865 54465.

**NOTE: ESRC funded students working on Africa who wish to attend under special subsidised arrangements should write to Douglas Johnson in advance**

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*I would like to book for the N.E. Africa Workshop on Women and War, 19 February 1994*

Name.....Affiliation (if any).....

Address.....  
.....

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*I agree to pay my fee on arrival for light refreshments, documentation etc as follows (please tick):*

Waged: £5.00.....Student or unwaged: £2.00.....

Signature.....Date.....