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SUDAN STUDIES: Number 24 (June 2000)

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SUDAN STUDIES

Number 24 June 2000

ISSN – [0952-049X]

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Editorial

Welcome to issue 24 of *Sudan Studies*. I must firstly apologise to all members for the long delay in the publication of this issue, which is entirely my responsibility as editor. It should have been issued in October of last year, and therefore represents the second number of 1999, even though only appearing now. The next issue will appear in September this year and will be the first of 2000, with a further issue to appear before the end of the year so that we shall be back on track with the required two numbers per year.

Nevertheless, such a long delay is clearly unacceptable, both to myself as editor, and I'm sure to all members. With this in mind, I wrote to the committee earlier this year and tendered my resignation as editor, to take effect after the next (September) issue. I have greatly enjoyed my decade as editor, but increased commitments have made it difficult to continue. I shall remain, I hope, active in the society and continue to be engaged in many Sudan-related projects, including book acquisition programmes for Sudanese colleges and libraries and through work on the Council of SOS Sahel.

Some material for the next issue is in hand, but all articles continue to be welcome. The forthcoming Durham conference, the major event of the year, should give a boost to material received, and hopefully give the new editor a good start, with a varied selection of articles for publication. I look forward to seeing members at that conference, or at the annual symposium which follows on shortly afterwards, where the new editor will be introduced.

Paul Wilson



TRIBAL CONFLICTS IN DARFUR

By Dr. Mohamed Suliman Adam

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the causes of the ongoing conflicts in Darfur and to demonstrate how irrational and contradictory decisions from central government have initiated inter-district conflicts, which have often escalated into ethnic wars between what were originally harmonious multi-ethnic, multi-cultural communities. The paper will start with an overview of the location of Darfur, its history, peoples and the interrelationships that characterise its ethnic communities, and will continue by surveying the causes behind these conflicts.

Darfur: Position and Geography

Darfur is the most westerly part of Sudan and was the last province to be incorporated into the Sudan (in 1916) following the defeat of Sultan Ali Dinar (Takana, 1997, O'Fahey, 1980). The region covers an area of nearly 140,000 square miles – about the size of France, and as can be seen from Figure 1 (the main map been compiled from Morton, 1994), the region was divided into two main provinces – North and South Darfur – which were subdivided into a number of small districts around the main major towns that include Al Fashir, Nyala, Al Geneina, Zalingei, Al Da'ain, Kutum and Mellit. At present, though, there are different divisions based on the *wilaya* (state) system introduced by al-Bashir's Government. In this new system, the region is divided into three states: North Darfur, South Darfur and Western Darfur. Each state is further subdivided into a number of districts which are in turn subdivided into localities. Some of these districts are renamed as emirates with an emir as a chief. This specifically applies to the state of Western Darfur. In the eyes of the peoples of Darfur, however, these district boundaries are rarely meaningful. It is the *dar* boundaries that still have the greater significance (see sections 2 and 3.4).



The region consists of a vast plain which ranges from arid desert in the North to dense savannah woodland in the South, and has a varied climate. The population of Darfur, which has grown from a quarter of a million at the turn of the century to over four million today, enjoys considerable linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity (Takana, 1997). Its inhabitants are from both Arab and African origins and although Arabic is widely spoken, there are also many other languages that are actively used.

Darfur: Economic and Ethnic Divisions

The traditional way of life for the region since the establishment of the Darfur Sultanate was predominantly that of the Fur who were the peasant farmers, occupying the **central part** of the region, including Jebel Marra. Within the central region also resided other tribes of African origin such as Berti, Bargu, Bergid, Gimir, Tama and Tunjur, who also were settled farmers. The Western area of the region, Dar Masalit, and is inhabited principally by the Masalit who are non-Arab and mainly farmers, in addition to a vast number of Arab nomads including Mahariya, Mahamid, Beni Hussein, Hotiyya, Beni Halba, Ta'aisha, and Salamat (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, Al Hassan, 1995, O'Fahey, 1980).

The **Northern part** of the region is known as Dar Zaghawa and is occupied by the mainly camel nomad tribes of Zaghawa, Bedeyat, Mahariyya, Irayquat, Mahamid and Beni Hussein, and they are mainly camel herders. This part is the most ecologically fragile area of Darfur and has been blighted by drought, desertification, abandonment and active conflicts due to, among other things, competition for limited resources (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, Al Hassan, 1995, O'Fahey, 1980).

The **Eastern and Southern parts** of Darfur are inhabited mainly by Arab nomads and some settlers such as the Rezeigat, Habaniya, Beni Halba, Ta'Aisha, Salamat, Tarjam, Fallata, and



Ma'aliyya. The majority of these tribes are cattle herders (*Baggara*), but many also farm. (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, Al Hassan, 1995, O'Fahey, 1980).

Despite their differing cultures and ethnicity, the peoples of Darfur have managed to strike a balance between life as farmers (agriculture) and livestock herders (pastoralism). During the *kharif*, or rainy season, the nomads move to the North of the region giving the farmers the required time for cultivation. After *darat*, the harvest, the nomads move towards the south along well-defined livestock migration routes known as *Maraheel* (sing. *murhal*). The tribal or native administration, *Al'idara Al'ahlia*, usually supervise these maraheel and settles any conflicts or disputes (Morton, 1994).

Under the rule of the Daju Sultans, Fur Sultans, Turco-Egyptian, Mahdiyya and the British, the tribal groups in Darfur were left to look after their internal affairs within their *dars*, or homelands, sometimes in exchange for certain taxes and at other times for just nominal submission (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, Harir, 1994, O'Fahey, 1980).

This led to a peaceful equilibrium between the ethnic groups and made it possible for their respective tribal administrations to arrange livestock migration routes. It has also been possible to arrange resettlement of other tribes in years of low rainfall, thus minimising the chances of conflict. This peaceful equilibrium continued up until the 1970s, with only small outbreaks of conflict and limited raids on agricultural areas and livestock, which was always part of the way of life in the past. (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, O'Fahey, 1980).

However, since the 1980s, a dramatic increase in the number of tribal wars has occurred (see Table 1, and also Takana, 1997, and Harir, 1994). These clashes have coincided with the



destruction of the already weak infrastructures as well as with environmental degradation, long droughts and desert encroachment. These natural factors have all degraded the security and peacefulness of these ethnic communities, but the major impact has been human. The central government in the 70's had used the regional government system introduced by Nimeiri's regime to exercise the tactic of divide and rule, instead of using it to devolve real power to the people of the region (for example Gimir and Fallata conflict in 1987). What this encouraged at a local level was that efforts were wasted in the struggle for political status among the elite, rather than invested in tackling the outstanding issues of development and good governance.

2. A Background to the Tribal Conflicts

The history of Darfur can be traced back to the Fur Sultanate (1650-1916) which dominated within the present boundaries of the region (Udal, 1998, 1995, O'Fahey, 1980). These boundaries meet Libya in the North, Chad in the West and Central African Republic in the Southwest. The region has its historical links with central Africa, Egypt and Libya more than with central Sudan, until the Turco-Egyptian rule (1821-1885) and then under the Mahdiyya (1885-1898) when more links with the rest of Sudan began to evolve (Harir, 1994). However even during this time

Darfur maintained its independence until it was finally brought into the British domain in 1916 (Arbab, 1998, Udal, 1998, Al Hassan, 1995, O'Fahey, 1980).

The British colonial authorities maintained the relative independence of Darfur and administered it through the indirect rule, which maintained to a greater degree the status quo.



This had taken many forms. Some systems of tribal administration were abolished, while others were developed through a series of legislation. Under indirect rule, tribal conflicts were managed through conferences and inter-tribal arrangements which allowed the integration of livestock and crop activities (Harir, 1994). In Darfur, such arrangements were mutually beneficial to all peoples of the region where it was almost certain that any misunderstandings or unqualified arrangements would cause economic losses and conflicts. For instance, this is exactly what occurred in Zalingei in 1948 when the nomads entered the Fur farms before the Fur crops were harvested, due to the extension of the rainy season. The Fur seizure of large numbers of nomad's cattle threatened to initiate a major conflict, however the tribal administration managed to defuse the tense situation (Takana, 1997, Harir, 1994).

Between 1921 and 1931, a wide range of legislation was issued which extended the powers of the tribal administration. The Closed District legislation of 1922, which was mainly applied to the southern part of Sudan, was extended to cover some parts of Darfur (Harir, 1994). In the late 1930s the British colonial authorities extended the tribal administration by introducing elected representative councils as part of an attempt to widen popular participation in local government. The legislative process continued with the elected local government running in parallel with the tribal administration until independence in 1956 (Arbab, 1998, Takana, 1997, Harir, 1994).

The period from the 1950s to the 1970s was characterised by a very low intensity of conflicts with only one or two outbreaks of tribal wars, such as the Meidob and Kababish in 1957 and Rezaikat and Ma`alia in 1968 over grazing land and raiding on animals (Takana, 1997, Harir, 1994).



In Darfur there are about 170 tribes who live in various parts of the region (compiled from Takana, 1997, Udal, 1998, O'Fahey, 1980). Most of these tribes claim to have a *dar*, a homeland, and insist on exercising their rights over this *dar* although this has not prevented others from residing within a certain *dar*. Tribal *dar* boundaries have always been porous and open to individuals; groups of people or even whole clans can move from one part to another as best suits their circumstances. Disputes between nomads and farmers over land, grazing areas and water resources are frequent and ethnic origin (Arab or non-Arab) is of little significance. When Zaghawa moved to south Darfur in the early 1960s and settled in areas around Nyala, Al Da'ein and Buram (which is an area within Fur and Arab territories), the tribal administration made simple arrangements and welcomed the new settlers (Takana, 1997). In Darfur at that time and to a certain degree up to the present day, social relations between different tribes are very close and are often cemented with inter-tribal marriages. All Darfurians are a mixture of Arab and non-Arab tribes - in Darfur it is impossible to find a single person who has no other blood connection but with his own tribe.

In 1971, the Local Government Act abolished the tribal administration and replaced it with a local government (Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Morton, 1992). The tribal administration were responsible up to that time for the operation of tribal courts, collecting animal tax for district councils, and above all for resolving land and grazing conflicts between different tribes. Their responsibilities extended to the marking and opening of livestock migration routes and time of entry in wadis and farms after harvest. The abruptness with which the tribal administration was abolished and new administrative structures imposed upon Darfur without prior study, led to confusion and power struggle at the local government level. Darfur's remoteness, ethnic and cultural diversity and sensitivity to any administrative changes have presented great difficulties to rulers over the years. Had the tribal administration been



dissolved gradually, and with adequate research, study and consultation with the people, and had the new legislation been backed up by local participation and by development, the new local administration might have worked.

The abolition of the tribal administration occurred in a revolutionary manner and was replaced with regional districts and local administrations which disregarded any advice and appeals from Darfur's people. The pattern of conflict in the region changed very dramatically with large-scale tribal wars in the mid 1980's (see Table 1 and also Takana, 1997 and Harir, 1994). The city and town-based government officers and the locals have repeatedly appealed to regional and central governments for the return of the tribal administration, as the conflicts were mainly between tribal groups over land and grazing areas. Since there is no tribal control there has been a more systematic drive by some tribes to occupy land especially in central Jebel Marra and unfortunately that has escalated into a civil war, with villages wiped out and thousands of lives lost. In 1984, the governor of Darfur instructed that the tribal administration be reintroduced (Harir, 1994, Morton, 1994). However its revival came too late because it had become very weak in the eyes of the people. The tribal administration had come with less judicial powers, and their policing powers were not restored at all. Attempts of successive governments to achieve peace have been influenced by the undermining of tribal leaders, and by the infiltration of modern weapons and armed groups from neighbouring countries, indiscriminately raiding Darfur villages.

The outbreak of Darfur tribal conflicts in the 1980s has continued until today, with an added element of racial prejudice since the formation of an alliance of Arab tribes against the non-Arab, or African tribes. The increase in those wars can be seen in Table 1 below which shows some of the major reconciliation conferences that attempted to resolve wars that had



taken place (Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Harir, 1994, Harir, 1990). Clearly there were many more tribal conflicts recently than before which indicates that there is a shift in the way these wars are being fought.

As can be seen from Table 1, the major causes of these conflicts were access to natural resources, land disputes, migration routes and animal thefts. These conflicts used to occur in the past between different tribes and occasionally between different clans of the same tribe. Moreover, the likelihood that a conflict will occur between two Arab tribes is as high as that between Arab and non-Arab. *Although most reasons shown suggest that competition over limited resources was to blame for many of these wars, it must be observed that there is a tendency nowadays to fight for sovereignty over land and identity much more than over the explicitly stated reasons.*

Most of these conflicts started when displaced groups from drought-hit areas flooded the area of central Darfur and Dar Masalit, the area of Fur, Birgid, Berti and Daju from northern Darfur. These groups include Zaghawa and various groups of Arab origin whose grazing areas suffered from the ecological crisis. Due to political instability and environmental problems, displaced people from Chad and other neighbouring countries fled to these areas hoping for better natural resources and a safer environment. The regional government at that time was led by individuals belonging to the Fur tribe who, it is claimed, have been seen to be taking sides during the conflicts. On the other hand the Arabs formulated an alliance of nomadic and settler Arab tribes to combat the Fur by raising claims such as the liberation of Arab land.

The most recent conflicts between the Masalit and the Arabs (in Jan. 1999) and the war



between the Fur and the Arabs present a new and different ethnic conflict, which is new to the region (Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Harir, 1994, Harir, 1990). This ethnic element is clearly being imposed by elements from the central government who benefit from the divide and rule policy that worked for them for many years. While livestock migration routes, access to water, and grazing areas might start the clashes, the conflict is quickly transformed into ethnic territorial war with an added political element. These recent racial conflicts have transformed social relations and caused great adverse changes in the economy and lives of the tribesmen.

3. The Main Factors Affecting the Tribal Conflicts in Darfur

As mentioned before, the causes of past and present armed tribal conflicts in Darfur are numerous, and are a consequence of many factors. The tribal conflicts usually range from the violation of individuals or a small group from a certain tribe, to the systematic attack of the structure and the law of the land of another group or tribe. Some of these conflicts could be over grazing land, scarce water resources, or they could be historic issues of identity and sovereignty over land or Dar. The drought, and central government interference plus the struggle between the local elite for political power, have given the conflict a new dimension. The only solution to these problems is via a thorough understanding of the origins of these conflicts, and by negotiating equitable access to the resources of the immense land of Darfur, which is more than enough for everyone living there.

In the following sections, I shall explore some of the factors and the effects they have in sparking off conflicts. We shall deal with the stock routes, droughts, government intervention, *dars* and *hakura*, and armed highway robbery.



3.1 Livestock migration routes or *maracheel*

Some tribal conflicts in Darfur often begin as an every-day dispute between nomadic pastorals and sedentary farmers over livestock migration routes or over natural resources. It is well known that livestock herders should avoid cultivated areas during the season and farmers should not cultivate crops on known livestock routes. The principal routes or *maracheel* are usually defined by custom and then cast into local government orders. As can be seen from Figure 2 the main livestock migration routes extend along the region with the wet season migration towards the North and the dry season migration towards the South and the Southwest. Livestock usually travels quickly along the major *murhal* running between cultivated areas in order to reach open ranges between farms where herds can spread out and settle to graze (see Figure 3) (Morton, 1994).

In Darfur migration can be described in terms of three lines of movement. For sedentary farmers with some herds, the movement is not far – they usually graze just outside the farming area. For semi-nomadic herders the movement is within about 100 km and they return to their villages to settle. The nomads move during the rainy season to the North and they return at the end of the harvest. For example, the Rezeigat move south to Bahr al Arab, and the Fellata and Ta'aisha south-west to the Central African Republic. During these movements clashes between farmers and herders are mostly the result of a herder losing control of his stock in the transit. On the other hand, farmers sometimes block the routes and access to communal grazing areas or water resources. To avoid these clashes, some villagers and individuals fence-off vast common areas with the purpose of protecting their crops. These enclosures are known as *Zara'ib al hawa*, or air enclosures.



Table 1: Some of the Tribal Conflicts reconciliation conferences

(compiled from many references including Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Harir, 1994, Harir, 1990).

Year	Region	Parties to the conflict	Main issues
1957	Kordofan	Meidob against Kababish	Access to natural resources and animal raiding
1968	North Darfur	Rezaiqat against Maalia	Land dispute and tribal administration problems
1974	South Darfur	Zaghawa against Birgid	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1976	South Darfur	Beni Helba against Northern Rezaiqat	Access to pasture and water, migration routes, animal thefts, local politics
1980	South Darfur	Taisha against Salamat	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1980	South Darfur	Beni Helba, Birgid and Daju against Northern Rezaiqat	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1982	South Darfur	Beni Helba against Northern Rezaiqat	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1982	North Darfur	Kababish and Kawahla against Meidob, Berti and Ziyadia	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1984	South Darfur	Missiriya against Rezaiqat	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1985	North Darfur	Missiriya against Hawazma	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1987	South Darfur	Gimir against Fellata	Access to grazing land and water, migration routes, animal thefts
1989	North Darfur	Fur against Bedeyat	Territorial access and animal thefts
1989	North Darfur	Fur against Arab	Territorial access and animal thefts
1990	North Darfur	Gimir against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1990	West Darfur	Gimir against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	South Darfur	Maalia against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1990	South Darfur	Gimir against Taisha	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	North Darfur	Marareet against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	North Darfur	Gimir against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	North Darfur	Birgid and Miyma against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	South Darfur	Birgid against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1991	South Darfur	Targem against Fur	Territorial access and animal thefts
1994	North Darfur	Arab against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1996	Chad	Zaghawa of Sudan against Zaghawa of Chad	Territorial access and animal thefts
1997	South Darfur	Rezaiqat against Zaghawa	Territorial access and animal thefts
1997	West Darfur	Arab against Masalit	Territorial access and animal thefts
1998	South Darfur	Habaniya against Abdarag	Appointment of new Omda for Habaniya, territorial Dar boundaries.
1999	West Darfur	Arab against Masalit	Territorial access and animal thefts and access to pasture and water



In normal circumstances there are acknowledged procedures for negotiating compensation for damage sustained to crops by livestock. There are also customs and arrangements made by tribal leaders and administrators for grazing areas, water resources, livestock routes and time of entry to farms. These arrangements have provided means and powers to defuse conflicts and abilities to solve such problems without *outside* interference. But alas, these historical arrangements and well-defined customs have been breached not only by tribesmen, but also primarily by officials who have little understanding, if any at all, of Darfur and its systems.

3.2 The drought element

The events leading up to the famine in Darfur and the drought of 1984-1985 drove the tribes from north Darfur into the central, southern and western parts of the region (De Waal, 1989). Some of the Zaghawa and Arab tribes are nomadic pastoralists who lost all their animals, and others are sedentary farmers who have not seen rain for three years. Some of these tribes sought water and grazing for what remained of their herds, and others were seeking to settle permanently, intending to start a new life.

The Zaghawa, who moved to urban areas had some success in trading, while those seeking farming and settlement in rural areas encountered hostility from the settlers. During this time a number of cattle raid incidents and tribal clashes occurred. The elite among the sedentary farmers utilised their positions in government to resist the nomadic influx, and by using their power over the police and the army inflamed the conflict. The Arabs and the nomadic pastorals formed an alliance and responded to this resistance.

The resettlement of drought victims from the North of the region, coupled with interference by the government, and the struggle for regional and local political power has polarised the various tribal and ethnic groups. The vacuum, which has been created by the inability of the local government to recognise historical and traditional issues, has affected its ability to solve



problems. The only way out of these conflicts will be to recognise their origin, and to involve the local tribal leaders in decisions affecting different ethnic groups. The only way out of these crises in Darfur is to negotiate through reconciliation conferences equal access to Darfur's resources. The abundance of land in Darfur will be enough for everyone if only all worked towards common objectives.

3.3 Government intervention element

Throughout the tribal conflicts one side or the other accused the central government of being a direct factor in the conflicts. First, the swiftness by which the tribal administration has been abolished for no reason but an ideological one, and without proper study, left a power vacuum in the region. Secondly, the reinstating of the tribal administration as political figures, only with no real powers, has damaged the credibility of the government even further.

The regional government has been accused of favouring one tribe over another, while the central government forces have failed to prevent the tribal clashes. No one in Darfur actually believed in the ability or efficiency of the government to stop the war or even to be neutral in its handling of the conflicts. The way with which the army and the police handled the clashes by accusing innocent villagers and dragging them to prisons, merely showed that government power has further inflamed the conflicts. In addition, the failure of the government to involve local tribal leaders in decision-making has further fanned the flames of the already burning fire. These decisions included changing the district boundaries, the time of entry to farms after harvest, or even changing the titles of the tribal leader: for example from "Omda" to "Prince" in western Darfur (Takana, 1997).



Figure 2.

Livestock migration routes or murhal

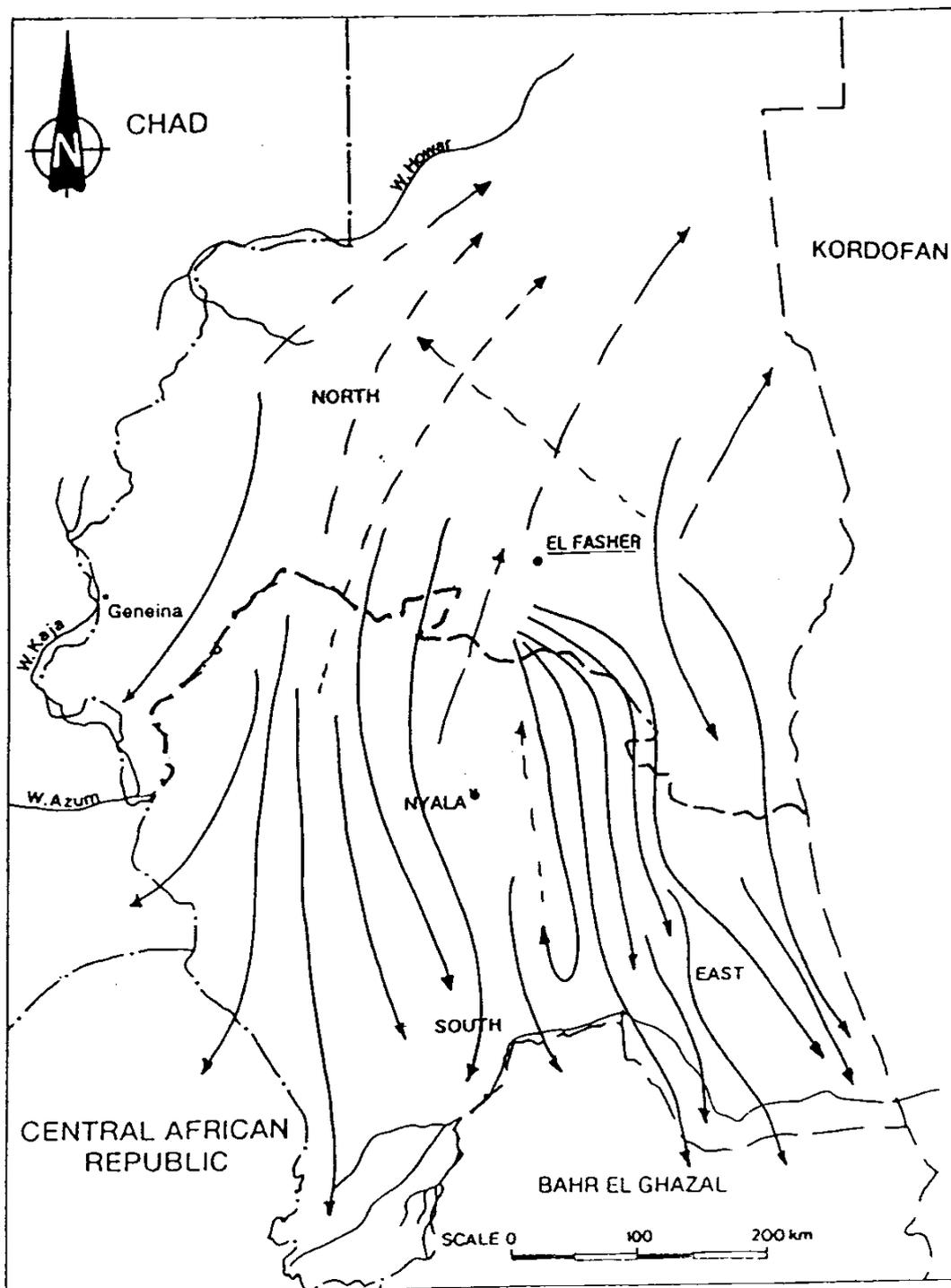
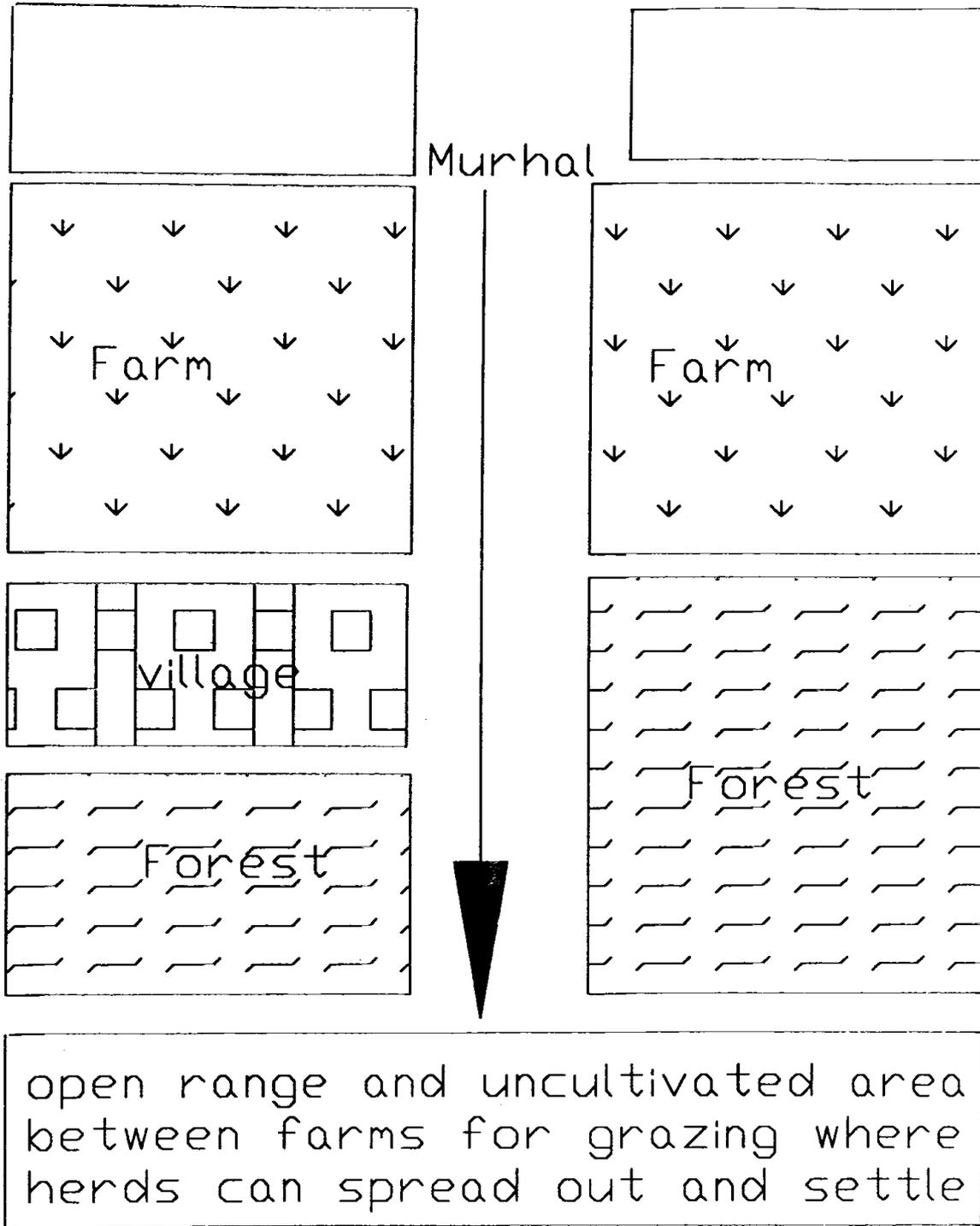




Figure 3.

A major murhal between farms and open range





3.4 Dars and Hakura element

Under the Fur sultans, a system called *Hakura* for the distribution of land had been developed (O'Fahey, 1980). The Hakuras were granted by written documents, some of which are still used in land disputes. The dry seasons in the last twenty years have driven a number of ethnic groups to move into the central, Southern and Western areas of Darfur. Whole tribes or clans have moved fleeing from drought and hunger and settled in these areas. To advance their interest in the area into which they had settled, they began to elect their own political leaders and tribal administrations. From the indigenous people's point of view, these are intruders looking for land and access to productive natural resources, and also seeking political status. From the migrant point of view, they see themselves as Sudanese who have an equal right to stay where they choose.

The gap between this new concept and the customary practice of Dar and Hakura is markedly wide. The local groups have seen this as a denial of their hereditary right, which led to clashes and conflicts. Due to differences in culture and identity, a call for ethnic rather than geographical administration has been made. The government then made some changes to the tribal administration to accommodate the new tendencies. Even the regional government and ministers were divided along ethnic lines, with each group supporting the claims of one tribe or the other in the conflict.

3.5 The armed highway robbery element

Not many people dispute that armed raids between nomadic pastorals and sedentary farmers and even between rival groups within the same tribe were part of the historical way of life in



many parts of Darfur. However, in the last twenty years, these armed raids shifted from acts of individuals to organised armed banditry, not unsupported by tribes sometimes, where modern and more deadly weapons were used. This resulted in considerable fear being felt by the Darfurians, with public security being at its lowest, with cattle raiding, armed truck robbery and village markets being raided in daylight hours. Subsequently, any of these acts of armed robbery could escalate into a tribal conflict, drawing on the atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and competition over resources and political clout.

Thus armed robbery has developed into ominous military raids and a fast growing money-making business. It is obviously the tribal groups on the border between Darfur and Chad that have facilitated the swift evolution of tribal clashes and raids into real conflicts. These tribes are armed with modern weapons, some of these weapons are even more advanced than those of the government army. Some of these border tribes have links with others in Darfur, which served to intensify the conflict. The drought element has also added to the escalation of armed robbery, as some of the tribes have lost all their animals and as they acquire modern weapons they have used them to demand land, and to raid trucks to compensate themselves for their losses. There is a need for a border policing strategy to control the acquisition of weapons.

4. The Impact of the Conflicts

The tribal conflicts in Darfur have turned the region into one of the poorest places in the world. These conflicts have affected the social structures of the inhabitants of the region, the previously harmonious coexistence of farmers and pastoralists, and it has affected the whole population of Darfur. In many parts of Darfur today, travelling between villages has become



something of the past. Welfare services and schools have been destroyed. Farms and villages have been burned and crops been laid to waste. Darfur now faces the threat of famine every year even in good rainy seasons due to the conflicts.

Table 2: Losses of neutral tribes during Zaghawa vs. Rezaigat conflict 1996

(compiled from many references including Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Harir, 1994, Harir, 1990)

No.	Type of losses	No. of losses	Comp./head Sudanese pounds	Total per item in Sudanese pounds
1	Human death	9	500,000	4,500,000
2	Human injury	1	250,000	250,000
3	Animals lost/killed	62	50,000	3,100,000
4	Materials and houses			175,000,000
Total				182,850,000

Table 3: Diyya and compensation (in Sudanese pounds) between Zaghawa and Rezaigat

(compiled from many references including Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997, Harir, 1994 Harir 1990).

1	Rezaigat tribe should pay Zaghawa tribe	1,165,066,100
2	Zaghawa tribe should pay Rezaigat tribe	137,812,000
	Total	1,302,878,100

As a rule, during conciliation and resettlement conferences, all human losses are settled by Diyya or blood money, while material and animals are settled by defined compensation systems. These compensations and Diyya between tribes in dispute and others who may have been caught in between has affected the psychological, social and material conditions of individuals and sometimes whole tribes. Table 2 shows the losses of 27 different tribes who played no part in the recent conflict between Zaghawa and Rezaigat in 1996, while Table 3 shows the amount of Diyya and compensation paid between the Zaghawa and the Rezaigat in the same conflict (Takana, 1997, Salih, 1997).



5. Conclusion

Darfur is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse areas in the world. Over the years the political power and the rulers usually originated from the elite of central Sudan who have very little knowledge of the region, and it is suspected sometimes not even the good will to govern it well. In Darfur the understanding of tribal conflicts and tribal clashes cannot be made without taking into account the general political and tribal environment. Prescriptive solutions for the conflicts cannot be imported from outside the region. A real focus on the creation and maintenance of local administration, be it tribal administration or local administration, should be generated with the full involvement of the local people.

Solution to conflicts should be sought in reconciliation conferences with open dialogue, which should be free from any prejudice, coercion or bias. New understandings of, definition and improvements to tribal administration are needed and should be carried out after a thorough study and consultation and involvement of tribal leaders. Darfur has been ruled for centuries by institutions which are tribally democratic (the tribes elect their leaders); such tribal democracy should be maintained in a federal or confederal model which suits the region far better than the present way of government. For example, elections should be carried out in a way which reflects the ability of individuals, rather than their ethnic or tribal background. However, positions in local governments should reflect the diversity and the ethnic mixture of the population and should protect the rights of minorities.

The failure of reconciliation conferences is in many cases due to the inability of local government authorities to promote a social consensus and to stop hostilities after peace has been mediated and reached. Outcomes of conferences are usually kept secret; it is very rare



that they have been passed to local people. The solutions to conflicts are invariably imposed upon the tribes for mainly political reasons from people who know very little about the culture and attitudes of the tribes. But above all the failures have always been a result of the inability, or perhaps the unwillingness, of the central government to fulfil its duties towards those affected peoples. The agreements often presuppose that the government undertakes its responsibilities in building and restoring the degraded infrastructures so that peoples' lives can return to normal. The result of the failure to do so is that immediately after the agreements in conferences are signed up to, people go back to confronting the very same scarce resources that had allowed the conflict to occur in the first place. It is once again back to square one.

Tribal conflicts in Darfur can be prevented or at least reduced in number and intensity if the real issues leading to conflicts are properly addressed. Issues relating to migration routes, water and grazing areas could be effectively addressed by developing rules and means which can allow the sharing of resources in a more democratic way, one that ensures equity between local farmers and nomads. The people of Darfur have developed several ways of preventing conflicts before they occur, rather than compensating the victims of the conflicts after the event, so to speak. The government could develop similar methods of conflict-prevention by better planning for sustainable land use, and by avoiding last minute panicking during periods of droughts. A better transportation system would allow effective mobilisation of people, and assisting needy areas during bad seasons, which would alleviate the suffering and reduce the need for movements.



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SUDAN STUDIES: Number 24 (June 2000)

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THE COLLAPSE OF THE FIRST MILITARY REGIME OCTOBER 1964

By Philippa Maghrabi

Introduction

Phillippa Maghrabi (née Castle) went out to the Sudan in 1933 to work as a nurse for the Sudan Medical Service. She met and married Abdelfattah al Maghrabi (at that time a lecturer at Gordon College). The following article details the events surrounding the collapse of Aboud's military regime in 1964, as experienced by Mrs. Maghrabi.

Background to the Events surrounding the Coup of 1964

Though our life at Burri was, in the main, full of satisfying activity, the backdrop to life in the Sudan was becoming less so. From the time of the 1st Coup in 1958 (which deposed the 1st Supreme Council) there had been a sorry string of fresh coups and revolving civilian governments, leading to the frightful civil war that has been waged against the South for many years. With the wisdom of hindsight, even pro-Independence Sudanese (such as Azhari, a later Prime Minister & President, among many others) have acknowledged that political independence came far too soon. (Azhari had been imprisoned by the British for a period before Independence. Later on, when he was Prime Minister, he was making an inspection of the Kober prison in Khartoum North – and was presented with a rug that he had woven when a prisoner there himself.)

We had only been at Burri a short time before there was a coup against the military regime (that had taken power in November 1958). This coup took place in October 1964 and before that there had been a long period of sporadic outbreaks of violence. On one occasion I was at the vegetable suk when a group of people, mainly students, came tearing through – vaulting



tables in their haste and pursued by soldiers with guns. Sheikh Ahmed of the Fruit Market hustled me to shelter behind some market stands saying, "You will stay here till this is over." People were killed during these commotions. Capture by the police meant prison straightaway. But it was a popular revolt and became a large scale civil disobedience as the repression and discontent increased. Lorries and taxis would be used to block certain streets and bridges. But neither Fattah and I would know of anything specific when we came into town and on one occasion Fattah found his way barred by just such a blockade. As he tried to find a way round someone in the crowd called out, 'What do you think Hawaja?' (Fattah was fair skinned in comparison to most Sudanese and was often assumed to be a foreigner-hawaja.) He was slightly at a loss to answer the question and simply replied, "I am Abdelfattah." And the crowd went crazy, following him and chanting his name, 'Abdelfattah, Abdelfattah'. Poor man, he didn't know quite what to do. It was quite funny really, though an enthusiastic mob is still a mob and their mood can so easily change, especially during political ferment. I kept a record of events over the twenty days of turmoil that led to Aboud's resignation and this is reprinted below. I hope it will give you some feeling for the intensity and uncertainty that prevails when social structure is breaking down.

* * *

The Collapse of the First Military Regime – October 1964

Weds Oct 21st 1964: University students wished to hold a meeting in the University re. the status of the South. Quite a few of them were from there and news was circulating that the army had been shelling villages and brutalising the population. As a result of this protest the students were attacked on the campus. One of them was killed and 27 seriously injured, with many others arrested by the police & soldiers. A curfew was imposed; no one was allowed to



move without a permit after that. Our telephone was suddenly 'out of order'.

Fri 23rd: I had been in England and flew in at 8pm. Fattah met me and told me of the curfew. The airport was almost deserted. All of BOAC's planes had been sent to Aden as a safety precaution. The plane I had been on refueled and took off immediately. Feeling tense everywhere.

Sat 24th: Into town in the morning to get in stores. Armed police everywhere, plus soldiers at the alert and tanks and machine guns at all points. The suk was shut. Settas (the main grocer) was full. There was a hectic atmosphere inside with people hurriedly buying in for a 'siege'. The curfew continues.

Sun 25th: Fattah went into town again. It was deserted but there had been huge demonstrations in Omdurman, where many cars had been burnt and people shot indiscriminately – women, children and merchants. There had also been a big disturbance at the hospital. The roads are strewn with stones and broken glass. Many traffic lights are bent and inoperative. Similarly, petrol stations are smashed and unuseable. Appeals and deputations to see Aboud by the likes of judges and Azhari (the leader of the Ashigga) are turned back. Kurushi (a nephew of Fattah's in the police) has the distasteful job of enforcing this refusal.

Mon 26th: We went to Omdurman to check that relations of the family were alright. Signs of destruction are all over. Tanks, guns and armoured cars are everywhere. Rumours are flying around that two imprisoned officers had escaped. It was known that Haile Selassie was about to arrive in Khartoum. Will he intervene or simply pass through? Sheik Sulieman (a Burri sheik from whom we had bought our land) is triumphant in his response to the end of a dictatorship. The thought of freedom of speech and action once more is heady. All the



world is pleased.

That evening, about 7.30pm, Aboud broadcasts the message that owing to the state of affairs, he is calling the Council back from its recess (which he had initiated) as soon as possible. Then only 90 minutes later – at 9pm – he comes back on air to say that he is dissolving the Supreme Military Council and the Council of Ministers!! Complete collapse of their regime. Sounds of great rejoicing from the three towns but also shots at Kobe (the main prison in Khartoum) where prisoners tried to escape. They were shot. Fattah is rather worried about the possibility of looting as no government is in place.

Tues 27th: Everyone is very happy. The phone is now back on. Fattah rang up Mahjoub, Faris & Azhari (contemporaries who had some sense of what was going on). Then into town, where there was pandemonium. No police or soldiers and huge demonstrations swirling from all directions. Slogans being shouted: 'We will kill you Aboud'.

12 noon. Aboud broadcasts to say 'owing to the seriousness of the situation' the council would meet on Monday – in 7 days time! He has, he says, all constitutional powers in his hands! Sayed Sadiq, Azhari & the Communist leader (who had been in prison) go to the Palace to discuss matters with him. He doesn't seem to comprehend the full extent of the situation. Aboud holds a press conference at 6pm, but says nothing really. He is playing for time – and everyone knows it! The workers are out till final victory. Chaos threatens. Luckily, the power station at least is being maintained by extra soldiers. There are demonstrations all day long and one group is sleeping at the airport to stop ministers flying away. A bust of Aboud is hung by the neck from a tree and then dragged by the mob through the streets to the cemetery, where it is abandoned.

Weds 28th: Supposedly the Council is still being called on Monday. The workers stick it out



and will only confer with a fresh Government. Azhari is forming an opposition council with others – the National Front. Word spreads that the military want to be represented on the council. Crowds surround the Palace, pelting it with stones and iron bars in response to this news. Anyone moving by car is stopped and the keys removed. The bridges are closed so no one can run away. All taxis are on strike. The rumours are that water and electric light may fail. We filled the bath as a precaution and went for some paraffin. Many people are killed through indiscriminate shooting with machine guns. All officials and the whole country at a standstill.

Thurs 29th: We hear a broadcast that National Front representatives have been meeting with Aboud until 3am. Uncertainty reigns, especially on also hearing that the broadcasters have now walked out. They are unwilling to carry on giving out military statements under force. A complete standstill of the whole country is in effect.

Fri 30th: An announcement is made of new Cabinet Ministers. Sir El Khatim is to be the new Prime Minister – but Aboud is to stay on as Head of State. No one is convinced this represents real change. A lull takes hold. Sixty army officers send a petition to Aboud asking that the Army be kept out of politics. Seven of them are arrested and sent into exile at Darfur, out in the far West. The military is fragmenting. There is now the possibility of a military backlash which will ignore both Aboud and the National Front!

Nov 7th: Large demonstrations spring up against this possible threat from the military. They are hugely unpopular as they are the force that has kept Aboud in power all this time. The crowds demand that the former Military Supreme Council be brought to trial as traitors. Aboud forestalls a military coup by arresting all the old Military Council and sending them to Gebel Marra. He offers to resign!



Nov 8th: Huge demonstrations continue everywhere. Everyone is aware of the obstructions put in the way of the cabinet doing its work by the remains of the armed forces. Absolute uncertainty as to the outcome; the military may yet take control. Everything is on a knife edge. The National Front is now organising the demonstrations, which are quite orderly. The demonstrators clamour for the old military clique to be brought to trial.

Nov 9th: Rumours surface of an Army Coup, so Broadcasting House (now run by the National Front) asks for volunteers to surround all important buildings to prevent an army takeover. 60,000 surround the radio station and all the strategic places. Gamaa Avenue is blocked by taxis. There are road blocks on all entrances to town. Brick & cement lorries, with their tyres deflated, are placed sideways on the bridges. There is noise all night.

Nov 10th: Huge demonstrations continue everywhere. The universal cry is 'Aboud must go now'.

Nov 11th: Aboud finally resigns!!

* * *

A civilian government under Sir el Khatim took over. Unfortunately he was a weak man, something of a shilly-shallier (which is why Aboud had chosen him) and so the civilian government tended to limp along rather than act decisively. The National Front, despite its effectiveness during the upheavals, failed to coalesce into an effective political force. So this situation dragged on for seven years until a fresh military coup took place in 1969, this time under Numeri.

Numeri was an extremely unpopular man, though an effective dictator in that he was in power for over 15 years. There were several coup attempts against him, often with a lot of bloodshed, but he always managed to escape when the plotters came to arrest him. He



became quite good at it – out of a Palace window and away on the river, where he would head for a power base of support. Then he would return with the army to crush the coup forces. He also introduced the Sharia laws and, in a rank piece of megalomaniac hypocrisy, bank notes with his image on them. This is directly against the tenets of Islam, which forbids depiction of the human form. Many people would not use this money for some time.

This article is taken from the author's autobiography 'A Variegated Pattern', encompassing her 51 years in the Sudan (1933 - 1984). A copy is lodged with the Sudan Archive at Durham University.



WITH FOUR WIVES TO NAITA

By P. E. Winter

A shot cracked out ahead, as we plodded uphill, causing Debbie to wonder if the Kichepo had arrived to reclaim their mountain from our escorts, the Nyangatom. I thought a Turkana sniper had taken a potshot, but then saw two klipspringers running away. Lorot fired and missed again.

The Nyangatom, or people of the yellow gun, are known in Kenya as Donyiro and in Ethiopia as Bumi. They live between the Omo River in Ethiopia and the Lopotokol River in Sudan, growing crops and herding livestock as terrain and climate allow. Like all the people of the Lower Omo and the Ilemi Triangle, their relations with the neighbours are often violent, but they stay on good terms with the Toposa of Sudan, who are members of the same linguistic group, which includes the Turkana and the Karamojong. In the last ten years or so, their acquisition of automatic weapons, through the civil war in Sudan, has helped them to expand their territory. This seems to have been done northwards at the expense of the Koroma (known in Sudan as the Kichepo and in Ethiopia as the Surma) – whose women are famous for their large lip plates – and the Mursi to the east, a group whose fortunes have been well documented over many years on film and in print by the anthropologist David Turton. To the south, although they often raid the Turkana too, the Kenyan army has put pressure on them to keep their distance. Thus the Nyangatom told us that Mount Naita had once belonged to the Kichepo, but they had driven them off. The volatility of the area, its remoteness and heat, and the ubiquity of G3 and AK 47 rifles, make it an unlikely setting for a mountain climbing



safari. On the other hand, my own visits have shown me that people there are not hostile to visitors, unless they threaten the water, grazing and livestock which allow their survival.

The dominant feature for miles in the border area is the elegant 7,000' pyramid of Mt. Naita. It served as a landmark for early explorers, soldiers and adventurers such as Bottego, Austin and MacMillan. Bottego mapped the course of the Juba River in 1892 and the Omo in 1896, dying on his way home in an Abyssinian ambush. Five years later, the British Royal Engineer H. H. Austin recorded the name of the distinctive mountain of Naita; it remained in his view for five weeks as he struggled around the base of the Ethiopian escarpment en route to Baringo, losing three quarters of his men to starvation, disease and attack en route. MacMillan was the wealthy American adventurer who endowed the memorial library in Nairobi which survives to this day under his name. Two members of his party recorded their experiences in books about the expedition, which was far less grim than Austin's. John Millard, who still lives in Nairobi, camped for a week to the south on the Lokwanamur Range in 1934, in order to get a bearing on Naita and fix his position for the Fuchs expedition to Lake Rudolph, or Turkana as it became.

Today Mt. Naita is a point of reference for the uncertain borders of three countries, although I doubt if any official from Khartoum, Addis Ababa or Nairobi has ever visited it. The British occupied Kapoeta, nearly 200 kilometres to the west, only in 1926, to administer the Toposa. They did not garrison Boma or Loelli until 1936, in reaction to the Italian invasion of what was then Abyssinia. When I first saw the area in 1993, the old British military roads, built to keep the Nyangatom in Ethiopia and the border safe from Italian incursions, were choked with thorns and trees. Then the prospect of medical and veterinary services from Operation



Lifeline Sudan led the Toposa and Nyangatom to clear and reopen the roads. When I returned the following year it was relatively straightforward to reach the foot of Matarba, a 5,000' mountain twelve or thirteen miles north west of Naita, on the Sudan-Ethiopia border (also known as Tomadur). By 1995, drilling rigs and the Catholic church were installed, roads were being rediscovered and the Eastern Toposa and some Nyangatom were being offered schools and health centres.

At the end of 1996, I got permission to visit the Naita area again with Paul Clarke and Debbie Snelson, veterans of several ascents of huge, hot, hills in Turkana and Karamoja. Early travellers had porters; we made do with a Landrover and a Landcruiser. After a four day drive we reported to the local administrator, one of the few educated Nyangatom, who was welcoming. We met a local elder, Bala, who said he and one of his age mates, Longolesia, would accompany us to the mountain, although we could not be sure that they understood that our goal was to reach the very top. We made camp in the bed of a small *wadi*, where a few stunted trees gave shade for lounging and chat. I showed the elders pictures from Wilfred Thesiger's Danakil Diaries, taken 63 years before. The details of pack animals and dress, caravan and carbine, although from the opposite corner of Ethiopia and from another age, were scrutinised with the expert eye of the herder whose daily life depends on them. The elders' wives lugged water a mile or so across the plains for us from their new handpump. To the Western eye, the Nyangatom look exotic and picturesque with their scarification, beads and goatskins, their bangles, ochre and headstools; but in this land we were exotic, not they.

We rose before it was light and, carrying as much water as we could, walked up the little *wadi*, through thorn bushes and, as dawn broke, into the foothills of Mt. Naita. We walked



all morning, over the Nile-Omo watershed and into Ethiopia. The only water we found was a muddy puddle deep in a little ravine, where Nyangatom goats were being watered by their herders. The only other people we met were two warriors who looked mildly surprised to see us but accepted their elders' explanations and examined us curiously. On the barrel of his rifle, one had the ear from a white-eared kob, the antelopes which still migrate in their thousands past the Boma Plateau to the north west. In South Sudan, not only are two million people thought to have died of war-related causes, there has also been a faunal holocaust. Toposa-land for example has been largely stripped of its fauna – the result of the automatic weapons every man carries. Wildlife now survives only where no man goes.

We had no common language with our guides and were worried that our route seemed to involve a lengthy traverse around the shoulder of the mountain to avoid a chasm which looked unfriendly in descent and unlikely of ascent. An hour or so after midday, we stood on the edge of a hanging valley looking at the sharp descent we would have to take if we were to reach the north-eastern shoulder, which appeared to offer the only route to the summit ridge. We each had some water left, which would have got us probably to the top of the mountain but left nothing for the descent and return. Coming from Nairobi, we were not acclimatised and needed much more water than our guides. The prospect of perhaps another eight hours of ascent and descent, some after nightfall, followed by a two hour walk back to a muddy pool, was not appealing. The alternative was to bivouac near the summit and hope we found water somewhere. It looked unlikely. Reluctantly, we turned back. It was a long, hot slog over stony ground and dry yellow grass, then through thorns which tore at our clothes. Finally we came down a cattle track, by the light of fading headtorches. When we got into camp, we had



been on the go for 15 hours; even our guides lay on their *shukas* in fatigue, demanding food.

The next morning we examined our sore feet and decamped to Nakudocwar, a new Toposa settlement at the foot of Matarba. Paul and I climbed this the next day, as a consolation prize, with a surly Toposa called Namu, his shoulders covered in raised cicatrices to denote opponents he had killed. He was exasperated by our slowness uphill, but I was relearning the lesson that if you walk on blisters for long enough, the pain seems to fade, albeit slowly. We surprised Namu however when we had to surmount a scree slope, where his tyre sandals gave less purchase than our mountain boots and we overtook him. He lingered at a *col* and Paul went off to take photographs. Alone, I wandered the last few hundred feet to a pleasant summit with trees and rocks for shade and fine views of rolling hills, open plains and remote valleys all around. I climbed nothing more for a year.

The following Christmas, Paul and Debbie hid from bad weather on Mt. Kenya while I traversed Mt. Elgon, on the Uganda side. The inconveniences of earning a living kept us all busy in 1998, but they found time to get married – on a mountain trip – and we found time to plan another attempt on Mt. Naita. None of the early explorers' writings mention an ascent. The surviving members of the British administration in Sudan whom I questioned had never heard of anyone ever going to Naita, let alone climbing it. Two former officers of the Sudan Defence Force explained that their brief had been to keep the Nyangatom out of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, with the bren gun if need be. They had not been up the mountain. The local people certainly grazed their cattle on Naita's slopes, but the final pyramid was too steep and overgrown to afford any pasture and none claimed to have stood at the highest point, though clearly they walked across the mountain with cattle from time to time. The only possible



candidates for an ascent seemed to me to have been such Italian army officers as might have found time to visit during the five year Italian occupation of Ethiopia, from 1936 to 1941. We seemed to be planning a first ascent.

The run up to Christmas is more fun for children than adults. Our Christmas was not going to involve turkeys and Christmas trees, but it too required planning and logistics, balancing lists, calls, letters and discussions. This time we flew to Lokichoggio, sending the cars ahead to gain ourselves two days to finish Nairobi chores. Our entry into Sudan coincided with the arrival overhead of an Antonov aircraft, bombs from which had killed six and wounded fourteen the previous week. The local administrators were understandably more concerned about casualties than our Christmas plans: we were sent to the mission with instructions to park the cars beneath the trees and keep out of the way. The aircraft flew off eventually, without dropping bombs on us, and we left the next morning with one Toposa companion, George, as interpreter, and one Dinka, Deng, as liaison officer. Neither had been to Naita before.

When we found Bala at his village, his legs were painted and he said he was too busy with an important ceremony to talk to us. The village wives were not too busy to surround me, dancing, singing and laughing. I asked what the dance meant. "It is the tobacco dance" I was told. We duly gave the women tobacco and the watching elders complained that they should have received priority. They did not offer to dance. A few miles away, a new mission had appeared, where we were received with great hospitality, so we retreated to our quarters until the cool of the evening before trying again. We had sent messages asking for donkeys so that we could carry enough water for three days, but Bala insisted that Nyangatom women would



do the job. We protested, but it became clear that our modern scruples would have to be swallowed: four wives were duly enrolled as water-bearers. The next day, jerricans were filled, food was doled out and camp set up at our old campsite. The Nyangatom lounged under the trees watching us prepare our rucksacks for what we guessed would be two nights out. Their own preparations involved eating lots of Kenyan maize meal, drinking gallons of strong tea and reclining on their headstools.

At 4.30 a.m. Paul woke me and we sat like sahibs in the streambed breakfasting. Fifteen minutes later it poured with rain and the four wives and three warriors squashed into my Landrover. Debbie, looking stately under her umbrella, ate Melba toast by the light of her headtorch, as the stream rose around her ankles. At length she gave up while Paul and I scurried around rescuing things and getting soaked. When day dawned, we were muddy and in need of reorganisation. Grease and ochre from the four Nyangatom ladies had redecorated the Landrover. Bala resigned from the expedition, leaving his son Lorot to guide us and Lokala and Longolesia to guard us. The latter had accompanied us two years before. Lorot was one of the two strapping warriors we had met then, armed with a G3 rifle and a headstool, his loins girt with a *shuka* in the mini-skirt style of the men of the region.

At 8.30 we got underway, leaving Deng to watch over our camp. As we rose, we admired the rhythmic swing of the porters' hips as they balanced water and food on their heads, while negotiating low branches and tricky rocks, in bare feet or tyre sandals. They regarded us rather as a parent regards a recalcitrant child, to be either admonished or humoured according to behaviour. When we stopped by a rock pool, they brewed a huge pan of tea, which they drank black, unsugared, at a strength beyond the limits of even my addiction. We regained



our route of two years before and, after a seven hour walk, came out on the cattle trail near where we had turned back. We were in Ethiopia. I made my "bed", putting a space blanket on a piece of damp earth I had partially cleared of thorns and stones. Then I went to find Paul and Debbie who had gone with Lorot to reconnoitre the hanging valley. He thought there would be rainwater in pools below, to which we faced a steep descent and correspondingly longer climb in the morning. We brewed tea, ate Christmas cake and took lessons in firelighting from Bala's wife, the youngest of the four, whose approach was signalled by the clinking of her aluminium anklets, a veritable jingle belle.

We were now used to pre-dawn rising, which maximizes time walking out of the heat. The four wives were to remain at our camp, under the guard of Longolesia and his Kalashnikov. Lorot, Lokala and George would accompany us. Across the valley, we could hear colobus monkeys and baboons calling. Down we plunged, into the tree-filled gorge, until we found the promised rock pools, small but serviceable. Had they been there two years before, and had we known, we would have been able to continue. Across the stream bed the ridge was clear of scrub but gave us instead a steep, rocky meadow with thorn trees here and there. Lorot and Lokala tended to rest under them every 45 minutes or so, perhaps out of consideration for us. I preferred the slow and steady plod which has got me up such mountains as I have climbed, minimizing rests.

Thus I found myself alone when the grass ended and the bush began, on the steep final 700' ridge. Not wanting to waste time I plunged straight in, up to my armpits in thorns and stinging nettles, with branches lashing my face. Having got this far, I was not going to be put off by a bramble patch. Paul and Debbie caught up, as did our escort, but the warriors did not



stay the course. We realized later that people who have never had medical services avoid cuts and scratches for fear of sores and ulceration. Also a mini-skirt presents little barrier to stinging nettles and thorns, so our guides retreated to watch us from the clearing below.

Ahead we had awkward scrambles on loose earth and tricky choices about which undergrowth offered least resistance. I pushed on, finding Paul's secateurs useful, pausing for breath and tea from my flask after an hour or so. The ridge ahead became a cliff, the thorns were still thick and I handed over to Paul, who circumvented the rocks by plunging through bushes on our left. No real climbing was necessary, but the terrain was difficult, falls possible and any injury would have been hard to deal with at that point. Debbie caught up and we joined hands for the last steps to an overgrown summit which fell away sharply on all sides and was covered in trees and bush. This meant that the views were limited. We did not linger, writing our names and the date and leaving them pinned to a branch in a plastic bag. There was no sign that others had ever been there before.

Now we had to get down, following our trail through the undergrowth. Caution was needed. When we rejoined our guides where they waited in the clearing, they shared our excitement and obvious pleasure. Perhaps our performance in thorns redeemed our failure to out-walk them. We bathed quickly in the rock pools before the long plod back up to our bivouac, where we were not allowed more than an hour's rest. We were told "bad people" were around and there was a good place to sleep "not far". This turned out to be a two hour hike, across boulders dressed in grass, to a bivouac on a stony piece of open ground. We were tired. We viewed the fine night sky as we sampled Paul's special revival brew – mashed potatoes made with tomato soup. If followed with Christmas cake and tea, this appears to do the trick. I



slept. The wind howled. I woke. We rose, before dawn. More stones, a streambed, the sun growing hotter and, at last, a meander through a group of hillocks, dodging boulders on a cattle trail, acknowledging exclamations of astonishment from Nyangatom children as we passed their houses and strode down to our little camp. Then it was tea, Tang and a rest. We thanked our guides and water porters, paying them in tea, tobacco, salt, sugar and soap. I pondered the challenges next Christmas might offer. One thing was clear: four wives are better than none.



THE STORY OF THE DARK BOY AND THE GROWLING BUSH

By Babiker Yahia

If you follow me with interest,
I shall tell you the touching story
how
by the edge of the palms,
where the turbid waters bend,
the hounds of the conquest
chased the dark boy,
not only to the end of the bush,
but to his own veritable end.

How the mother,
deprived of her life's bloom,
her soul swooped in ache and gloom.

Many things barely could she apprehend
amongst which
the untimely departure of her life's groom.
Of the bunch of sons
him she heeded best.
(pondering she for a while)
Whom the hounds of the conquest
might chase next?
In a nameless chunk on earth -
the village of the pale yellow temple -
whose tolling used to frighten the jackal
whence calling the elders for faith
once,
twice or maybe more
the following story rebounded to the fore.



In that very village by the verge of the bush
there was a boy.
From the silt in the mead
with the waters of the bend
moulded and salinated he was.
Laved under the Sun of the East
the moonlight fed into his knead
plumed
incensed
by the descendant Spirits of the Dance-feast
his eyes lustrous and wistful
his heart selfless
his face hatchet and wilful.

By the edge of the palms
where the turbid waters bend
the village
the temple
the bush
the jackal
each in his own
and in a way
to the other
ever
acted friendly and helpful.
In short,
life was serene albeit forlorn.
All was before the conquest.

Then
and here our true events begin.
Among the bunch of sons,
he it was
who came to speculate



- when seven gaunt years prevailed;
toddlers their wizened breasts deferred.
The moor at the far end
intended he
to enrich and cultivate.

Off he started
upturn the heavy clay
throughout the searing hours of the day.
And though floundered he
- weary and worn
in many a way -
his ego endured.
Innately craved
perhaps
the whole countryside to liberate.

In a haunting lapse
between dusk and dawn
spread some dubious sounds –
the befalling blitz of the growling hounds!
The instant they sniffed his gender
swifter of pace
prowling of temper
him they chased to the other end.

At the sign of the breaking day
pools of blood blushed the hay.

The village fretting in disarray
heaped its humility.
Chanted,
vented
to the muted toll of the pale temple.
The closing lines in dismay



shuffled for a votive space within.

The sun rinsed its ruby veils

into the boiling river.

The wind no longer caressed

or wafted over

the tearful pasture.

On the distal verge of the bush

her eyes lost

breath tight

arms empty

mind in flight

pondered the mother for a while

on times come-and-gone

when the bunch of sons would leave one by one.



"EMPIRE OF THE WARRIOR PROPHET" Exhibition Review:

By Heather J. Sharkey

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

From October, 1998, through April, 1999, the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston presented "Empire of the Warrior Prophet: The Sudan in the Age of the Mahdi, 1881-1898". Organized by Timothy Kendall, curator for the Ancient Nubian and Egyptian collections at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, this exhibition brought together an impressive range of materials relating to Gordon, the Mahdiyya, and the "Reconquest". Although Kendall displayed his own collection of Mahdist and Gordon memorabilia on a previous occasion (for the 1994 conference of the Sudan Studies Associations), this exhibition was a much bigger undertaking, since it combined materials on loan from the American Museum of Natural History, Brown University in Rhode Island, and seven private collections (five from the United States, two from Great Britain).

"Empire of the Warrior Prophet" may have represented one of the largest displays ever mounted on the Sudan's 1881-1898 period. Its most dazzling items were Mahdist weapons – padded helmets, chain mail, daggers, double-edged swords, and crocodile- and hippopotamus-hide shields – together offering rich material evidence for the study of military tactics and technology. The display also included six patched Mahdist jibbas of different



styles; suits and a hat that belonged to General Gordon; Mahdist copper drums, protective amulets, and animal-headed maces; and money from both the Mahdist and Gordon eras. Finally, there were printed and photographic works: contemporary British journals, books, popular prints, drawings, pictures, and maps. Together with a recently published work of British primary-source materials¹, "Empire of the Warrior Prophet" helped to mark the centenary of the Anglo-Egyptian conquest. At the same time, it paid respectful tribute to the artistic and military accomplishments of the Mahdist period.

¹ Peter Harrington & Frederic A. Sharf (Eds.), *Omdurman 1898: The Eye-Witnesses Speak* (The British Conquest of the Sudan as Described by Participants in Letters, Diaries, Photos, and Drawings). London: Greenhill Books, 1998.



Sudan Studies² is published twice yearly by the Sudan Studies Society – UK (SSSUK).

Views expressed in notes, articles and reviews published in **Sudan Studies** are not those necessarily held by the Sudan Studies Society – UK, or the Editor. They are published to promote discussion and further scholarship in Sudanist studies.

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