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# EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 20 of Sudan Studies. Comments on any of the articles contained herein are welcome, for possible inclusion as a Letters Page in future issues. We would also like to have a regular section on current affairs and would appreciate receiving any articles on this subject area. To continue to cover as wide a range of subject areas as possible, we still continue to need articles and features from members and non-members alike.

Please note that we shall shortly be getting an E-mail address, which will be announced in the next issue.

Paul Wilson

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SUDAN STUDIES: Number 20 (October) 1997
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# 'The Sudan is sui generis:' Past failures and future prospects in Sudanese History

Douglas H. Johnson

Periods of great political or social upheaval and crisis force a re-evaluation of history: not only the researching and writing of history, but of the common understanding of the past. Marc Bloch's recollection of the anguished cry of a member of the French general staff on the day in 1940 when the Germans entered Paris, 'Are we to believe that history has betrayed us?' helped to provoke his own attempt to answer the question 'What is the use of history?'[1] The drama of upheaval may bring an urgency to the historian's own evaluation, but the perspective of the present always informs the most penetrating analyses of the past as the American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, proclaimed over a century ago, 'Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in it's own time... .For the present is simply the developing past, the past the undeveloped present.. .the historian strives to show the present to itself by revealing its origin from the past.'[2]

The Sudan is currently in the grip of the most far-reaching political, social and economic crisis of its crisis-ridden post-independence existence. It is clear that much of mainstream Sudanese history produced since independence is unable to offer any convincing explanations for what is happening today. The Sudan has always been a fragmented country: now more so than in the past. Scholars concerned with describing and analysing it are almost inevitably fragmented too, each taking a place in an academic version of the blind men and the elephant. But it is the elephant's trunk which mainstream scholarship has recognised as representing the entire elephant, even though Khartoum-based scholarship has been largely insulated from events in the regions-especially during the first civil war in the 1960s, and even more so during the current civil war. Attempts at a comprehensive account of the country have usually been written by scholars primarily concerned with the dominant political culture and have failed to come to grips with the different historical experiences of all Sudanese peoples, or the alternative perspectives various regions have on a common past. Even though the future of the nation is now being decided in the South, political scientists writing about the state (especially those writing since the 1970s) have either ignored the South completely, or have approached it entirely through the secondary literature; they have not engaged themselves directly in research inside this periphery to the nation's capital.

It is not just scholarly history which has failed to confront the past. At the popular level, whether among active supporters of the current regime, or among the vast Sudanese exile Diaspora, there is a contest to co-opt the past which, on the whole, resolutely refuses to acknowledge the uncomfortably sharp edges of that past which protrude into the present. The events of the 19th century are all but overlooked. The Mahdiyya is represented by some members of the current opposition as a time when the Sudanese were united in a common nation where slavery was abolished and Islam expanded by peaceful conversion; and by the current government as a heroic era when the Sudanese Islamic nation relied on its own resources to confront a hostile world. The problems of the present, it seems to be all but universally agreed, are purely 20th century problems, bequeathed by the policies of a foreign imperialism.

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[1] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Manchester, 1954, p. 6.
[2] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of History' in Everett E. Edwards (ed.), *The Early Writings of Frederic Jackson Turner*, Madison, 1938, pp52-53.

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These views, and many more, are on the whole unsupported by sustained written research but they form part of the education of a new generation of *khawajas* in the aid and relief industries active in and around the Sudan today. As modern aid consultants scarcely ever read anything beyond the bullet points in the executive summaries of aid-related grey literature, much of their understanding of the past is now derived through oral transmission from politically active Sudanese, and as they are usually exposed to only one set of actors in the current war, the performance of blind *khawajas* and the Sudanese elephant continues, with dire consequences in relation to international policy.

Last year, as a member of a review team evaluating the performance of Operation Lifeline Sudan, I found myself being lectured on Sudanese history by a senior UN official in Khartoum. The current war, he assured the team (most of whose members had far longer experience in the Sudan than he), had nothing to do with race or religion, it was all down to development. The way to peace was to harness the development potential of the country. The development he proposed was that proposed by the government to use international resources to service large economic projects in areas where the war was being fought, the Nuba Mountains and the South; on land first cleared of its inhabitants by the army and PDF and sold to the government's financial backers; using the labour of the same inhabitants, now dispossessed of their customary rights but resettled as workers on subsistence wages. In other words, the pursuit of the government's war aims by other means. This was not the first time in the current war that I was forcibly reminded of 19th century precedents. In this as in the previous century what distinguishes those who gain control of resources and those who are dispossessed is very much a product of race and religion, however disguised by the language of contemporary economic theory.

The assertion of the UN official illustrates the failure of Sudanist historiography, and that failure lies largely in a reluctance to face honestly the country's legacy of slavery, its multi-colonial heritage, and the extreme narrowness of its nationalist movement. It is difficult to imagine a similar statement being made by any well-educated and sympathetic foreigner in relation to other countries-such as South Africa or the United States-where racial divisions have been such a salient feature of recent politics.

Sudan studies suffers from a self-imposed isolation. 'Of course, the Sudan is *sui generis'*, was a phrase that used to frequently appear in the correspondence between the Foreign and Colonial Offices in the early 1950s, as the Foreign Office tried to reassure their Colonial counterparts that the accelerating constitutional development towards self-government and self-determination would have no impact on territories beyond the Sudan's borders. In many ways post-independence Sudan studies has taken this to heart, taking as its main point of comparison the Sudan itself, so that much of what has been written about the Sudan's past appears to be unrelated to that of its neighbours, and sometimes even to other regions within the Sudan itself. Much of the regional study within the Sudan has been self-contained. Certainly Sudan historiography has been largely indifferent to some major debates in related fields. The phenomenon of slavery in the Nile basin remains understudied, in comparison with slavery studies in other parts of Africa. The history of the Condominium has taken no note of the perspectives of 'subaltern history' in India, nor has it engaged in the examination of the nature of the colonial state, which is so prominent a feature of recent Kenyan history.[3] Nor has there been a sustained effort at studying centre-periphery relations, as there has been in Ethiopia.[4] Nationalists have, by and large, taken the state as the locus of their study, and not the fragmented polities contained within it. And since the modem state is the focus, the

[3] See especially B. Berman & I. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley. Clan, Class & Stole in Colonial Kenya,* London, 1992.
[4] As in D. Donham & W. James *(eds), The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia.* Cambridge. 1986

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20th century has become the starting point of most studies of modern politics, as if the watershed of the re-conquest obliterated all traces of past indigenous political life or ideas. The concept that there might be anything approaching a *tongue dude* in Sudanese history is implicitly rejected. We deal in historical discontinuities, not continuities. Yet if there was ever a region in Africa where it is possible to attempt a *tongue dude* it is the Nile basin; and if there was ever a country where a *tongue dude* could be traced, it is the Sudan.

Having made a series of sweeping allegations, unsupported by specific references, it is of course necessary to proclaim that things are not as bleak as they seem. For there certainly have been significant advances in our understanding of the Sudan's past published in recent years and some of the most important advances in historical understanding have been made by non-historians. What these scholars all have in common is that they have used field-work methods to incorporate indigenous source materials into their analysis.[5] These studies, to which I now turn, all offer bridges between the regions within the Sudan, allowing for dialogue and debate as we examine common themes, even as we uncover different experiences and perspectives within that past. What is more important, they alert us to the broad continuities within Sudanese history, and enable us to propose trends which span the centuries.

One of the inhibiting factors in the development of Sudanese history has been the persistence of the nationalist agenda as first set out in the 1950s and 1960s. In common with nationalist history elsewhere in Africa it set out to establish the existence of a nation and a national feeling. It was essentially political history, preoccupied with the development of institutions of the state and the transfer of those institutions to a nationalist elite. It was the preoccupations of that elite which, in effect, defined the character of Sudanese nationalism and the Sudanese nation. Their roots in pan-Arabism were traced back to the early nationalist agitation of the 1920s, and kept alive in the literary activities of the reading clubs of the 1930s.[6] The central constitutional problem which confronted that elite, however, lay not in the centre of power at Khartoum, but in one of the remoter regions, the South. The Sudanese state very nearly fell apart only a few months before independence was declared, and failure to resolve the constitutional challenge represented by the South constituted the main failure of politics in the Sudan until 1972. A solution eluded the Sudan as long as the political elite pursued the policies of Arabism which, nationalist historians proclaimed, formed the foundation of Sudanese nationalism. A political and constitutional solution was made possible only when that early nationalist agenda was abandoned (however briefly) by the government of the day.

Historians and political scientists, for the most part, did not confront this issue directly. In fact, the academic response, by and large, was to deny that the problem existed as an inherently Sudanese problem. Rather, the explanation lay in the colonial past and the administrative policies of the Condominium. In the 1970s Southern Sudanese graduate students at the University of Khartoum were encouraged to write 'resistance' histories of their home regions, but resistance histories defined by the Condominium records in the Central Records Office. That resisting the British was a good thing was something that Southern Sudanese students and their Northern Sudanese supervisors could agree on. The experiences of the 19th century were still too contentious a subject to approach during the brief honeymoon of the Addis Ababa peace. The nationalist construction of the past thus remained unchallenged by local research. The legacy of slavery and the issues of religion and race

[5] I am here confining myself mainly to published material in English, since this is still the language in which research and ideas receive their widest currency.

[6] See, for instance, Muddathir Abd al-Rablin, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan. A Study in Constitutional and Political Development: 1899-1956.* Oxford, 1969.

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continued to be presented as artificial divisions created by imperialists, or at least problems which had been exaggerated and exacerbated by colonial policies and propaganda. The intellectual climate was such that even khawaja scholars were disinclined to study these topics or raise these questions.[7]

In the face of the resurgence of slave raiding in the current civil war[8], the jihads proclaimed, the use of rape to forcibly introduce an Arab 'bloodline' in the Nuba Mountains and so eliminate the problem of difference[9], it is difficult to maintain the old nationalist pretence. Sudanese independence has now lasted nearly as long as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. As the late 20th century in many parts of the Sudan comes to resemble more and more the late 19th century, it is best to search for underlying continuities in the country's past.

We can begin with the studies of historians who have looked at the internal workings of the Sudanic states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The predatory nature of the states of Sinnar and Dar Fur has now been well described, especially in the creation of state hinterlands from which resources (especially slaves) were extracted through organised state adding, with the state recreating itself either in the structure of its raids, or in the structure of tributary frontier kingdoms.[10] The context of the complex nature of 'race' in relation to a state's activity along its periphery has been intriguingly explored in the James-Spaulding debate about Funj identity.[11] The question which historians used to ask, '*who* were the Funj?' has been replaced by the question '*what* were the Funj?' Wendy James particularly has explored power relations in the Sudan-Ethiopian borderlands, where states created standing armies of slave soldiers through whom they imposed their order on nomads and vassal hill peoples alike. It is her contention (contested in part by Spaulding) that 'Funj' is a term of status in a highly stratified slave-owning kingdom, and that those exercising power on behalf of the state included the black slave soldiers originally drawn from what was increasingly defined as a non-Muslim periphery.

In such a stratified society the matter of race is equally complex. Transposing European and American notions of a 'black-white' opposition makes little sense in a region where people describe themselves as black, blue, red, green and yellow. Again status and power are prominent in these categorisations, and an understanding of them is probably best approached through the methods of field working anthropology, where we can draw on East African-as well as Southern Sudanese--examples of power associated with the colour red. The language of colour here is part of the vocabulary of power and power relations.

We can see from the foregoing that we do not need a theory of race migrations to explain the complexity of social status and race in the Sudan. Spaulding has proposed an altogether more convincing scenario of the penetration of Islamic law and 'the ways of the Arabs' to replace the older notion of an Arab invasion and conquest of the Sudan. His identification of the names of reputed 'Arab' ancestors with vassal shaikhs who appear in Funj land charters is

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[7] Indeed, the policy of the Central Records Office was (as I believe it still is) to deny access to slavery records to foreign non-Muslim scholars.

[8] Ushari Ahmad Mahmud & Suleyman Ali B Baldo, Al Diein Massacre - Slavery in the Sudan, Khartoum, 1987; Africa Watch, Denying the Honour of Livhmg: The Sudan - A Human Rights Disaster, London 1990.

[9] All documented is detail is African Rights, *Facing Genocide: The Nuba of the Sudan*, London, 1995, especially pp 137-308.

[10] See especially R.S. O'Fahey, 'Slavery and the slave trade in Dar Fur'. *Journal of African History*, 1973. Prof O'Fahey himself has remarked on the similarities between the way 18th and 19th century slave raids from Dar Fur were organised, and the way more recent raids have been structured: O'Fahey, 'The past in the present? The issue of sharia in the Sudan', in H.B. Hansen & M. Twaddle (eds), *Religion & Politics in East Africa*. London. 1995.

[11] W. James, 'The Funj mystique: approaches to a problem of Sudan history', in R. K. Jain (ed.), *Test and Context*, Philadelphia. 1977; J. Spaulding, *The Heroic Agé in Sinnar*, East Lansing MI, 1985.

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one of the most brilliant pieces of historical detective work to come out of the Sudan, and is entirely in keeping with Ian Cunnison's earlier anthropological work on Arab genealogies.[12] The adoption of 'the ways of the Arabs' was linked to the penetration of trade and the alienation of land, historical trends which have assumed even greater importance in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The 'great divide' came in the 19th century with the Egyptian conquest and the creation of an Egyptian colony in the Sudan. The divide was not just between North and South, but between a centralising state with greater military and economic power than previously known in the region, and an expanded definition of the old exploitable hinterlands of the Sudanic states. Not only were power relations changed by the subjugation of previously independent kingdoms, but economic relations were altered in Nubia with the introduction of new land tenure and tax regimes. Pressure placed on the subject peoples of the central Nile valley were accompanied by growing opportunities on the expanding periphery. All of this has been described in forceful detail for Nubia, the Blue Nile and Taqali by Bjørkelo, Spaulding and Ewald.[13] The great explosion in slave raiding and slave owning, which Spaulding has described,[14]" is a direct result of the superimposition of Egyptian colonial rule on existing distributions of power on the Sudanic states. Those dispossessed in the North had an outlet as allies of the Egyptian colonial power in the opening up of new hinterlands. This alliance (however unwillingly undertaken on the part of the Northern Sudanese subjects) very quickly established a religious divide in the country as well-though it was not, in itself, religious in origin. Those who could benefit, those who could claim rights, were those who were Muslim. and this became a main criteria in defining those parts of the country who took slaves, and those who provided slaves.[15]

Lest one place the events of the 19th century too firmly in the past, note two legacies which have persisted until recent times: the out-migration of Nubian traders as a means of accumulating investment back home,[16] and the creation of the original Sudanese, the 'Sudani' communities descended from former black slaves.[17]

We have yet to have detailed histories of local experiences of the Turkiyya right throughout the Sudan. With the work of Spaulding, Bjørkelo and Ewald we have some account from Nubia, the Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains. With the work of Kapteijns and James we also have some account of experiences from the far West and the Sudan-Ethiopian borderlands.[18] What is missing is any sustained and systematic description and analysis of those areas of the Southern Sudan most affected by the Turkiyya. Again, it is recent anthropological work which presents new analyses of Southern Sudanese experiences of the 19th century. Kurimoto on trade connections between South Western Ethiopia and Eastern Equatoria has

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[12] I Cunnison, 'Classification by genealogy: a problem of the Baqqara belt', in Yusuf Fadl Hassan (ed.), *Sudan in Africa*, Khartoum, 1971.
[13] A. Bjørkelo, Prelude to the Mahdiyya.: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region. 1820-1885, Cambridge, 1989; J. Ewald, Soldiers, Traders and Slaves. State Formation and & Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley. 1700-1885, Madison WI, 1990.
[14] J. Spaulding, 'Slavery, land tenure and social class in the northern Turkish Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1982.
[15] See W. James, 'Perceptions from an African slaving frontier', in L. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour*, London, 1988.
[16] El Haj Bilal Omer, *The Danagla Traders of Northern Sudan. Rural Capitalism & Agricultural Development*, London, 1985.
[17] G. Markis: 'Creating history: a case from the Sudan', *Sudanic Africa*, 5, 1994; 'Slavery, possession, and history: the construction of self among slave descendants in the Sudan', *Africa*, 66/2,1996.
[18] L Kapteijns, *Mahdist Faith and Sudanic Tradition. The History of the Masatit Sultanate, 1870-1930*, London, 1985; W. James, *'Kwanim Pa: The Making of the Uduk People. An Ethnographic Study of Survival in the Sudan-Ethiopla Borderlands*, Oxford, 1979.

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significantly dented the old line about pre-colonial Southern Sudanese isolation; and Simonse traces the decline of the rainmakers and the rise of the 'cargo chiefs' and warlords of the same region.[19]

The Mahdiyya was not a major break with the Turkiyya. To what extent the Mahdiyya united Sudanese peoples and to what extent it increased divisions is a question that needs a sustained answer. Certainly the Mahdi's early proclamations stigmatising other Muslims as infidels and declaring a jihad against them has striking parallels with today. Lidwien Kapteijn's study of Dar Masalit has brought into relief the colonial nature of the Mahdist state even in relation to Muslim areas on its periphery. She has also shown how the anti-state aspect of Mahdist ideology was turned against the Mahdist state itself as part of a continuing post-independence anti-colonial struggle in the West. This suggests a new line of analysis for the neo-Mahdist movements of the early 20h century: more anti-state than proto-nationalist. And if anyone still needs convincing that Southern Sudanese perceptions of the Mahdiyya are negative, there is my own study of historical memories in an area only marginally touched by the Mahdists, where the brutalities of the 19th century *ansar*, which are commemorated in contemporary songs, resonate with the recent memories of the brutalities of an army under the command of an *ansar* government in the l960.[20]

The legacy of the 19th century is clearly complex, and we begin to see different aspects of it reflected again in the work of field-working anthropologists rather than historians. Janice Boddy and G.P. Makris highlight the way in which Sudanese look at themselves through the medium of spirit possession. In Boddy's study of the Zar we see grand historical echoes as well as more immediate domestic prejudices.[21] In Makris' work on Tambura among the 'Sudani' we see the descendants of a slave community placing themselves within the context of a Muslim society which first enslaved them, but also elevated them to a status above those still living in the old peripheries.[22] Back in those peripheries Wendy James has described how the experiences of 19th century violence and slave-raiding have been impressed on the self-image of a whole people, informing not only their notions of survival, but other notions concerning exchange, marriage, trade and the profit motive.[23]

With the historiography of the Condominium we break with the historiography of the previous centuries, because the focus of study shifts from the Sudanese to the British, the mode of historical explanation rests on the agency of 'personality' and is divorced from the concern with global or regional trends which mark the best of the 19th century studies. It is an agency of *khawajas* personalities, not Sudanese; the field of study of bureaucratic; and the essential accuracy of the colonial record is assumed, rather than demonstrated. Set side-by-side with the post-independence historiography of colonial rule in other African states - Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe spring to mind- Condominium historiography has a decidedly antiquarian look about it.

We again have to turn to field-working scholars for any local studies of the impact of the Condominium on Sudanese societies: whether in the construction of social status and power relations among nomadic peoples of the West,[24] the reorientations caused by the construction

[19] E. Kurimoto, 'Trade relations between western Ethiopia and the Nile valley during the nineteenth century', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* 28/1, 1995; S. Simonse, *Kings of Disaster. Dualism, Centralism and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan,* Leiden, 1992.
[20] D.H. Johnson, 'Prophecy and Mahdism in the Upper Nile: an examination of local experiences of the Mahdiyya in the Southern Sudan', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 20/1, 1993.
[21] Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan.* Madison, 1989.
[22] Makris, 'Creating history'; and 'Slavery, possession and history'.
[23] James, *'Kwanim Pa.*
[24] T. Asad, *The Kahabish Arabs. Power, Authority and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe,* London, 1970.

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of the Jebel Aulia Dam,[25] the outcome of the competition for pagan souls (and bodies) between Islam and Christianity along the Sudan-Ethiopian border,[26] or the cumulative change in women's rights before the customary courts of the Nuer.[27] It is a curious development in the historiography of the Sudan that Condominium historians have shown more interest in the social lives of British administrators than in Sudanese social history. Without Sudanese perspectives on the workings of the Condominium our understanding of it is incomplete. Nationalist historians have seen to it that the nationalists' perspective is represented, but given the overwhelmingly rural character of administration under the Condominium, rural testimony must also be included. We know from Francis Deng's biography of his father that British administrators remained ignorant of many aspects of the personal rule of someone so prominent as Deng Majok.[28] The official record does not automatically correct itself.

There is a general consensus among Condominium historians that the Condominium itself was generally a benign institution, concerned with justice, if in a paternalistic way. And certainly, in many fields, compared with its successor regimes, there are still former subjects who remember aspects of it as benign. But again, local studies of the Condominium in action on the ground must force us to revise our understanding of the colonial state. In my own research I was surprised to be told by my informants that those archetypal anti-colonial resistance leaders, the Nuer prophets, were no such thing; that the most prominent of them were concerned mainly with the regulation of peace within and between communities; and that many had attempted to make their accommodation with the Condominium government. On checking Nuer testimony against surviving official documents at the district, provincial and national level, I found that the contemporary record substantiated Nuer claims on many significant points. If the Nuer and their prophets had had resistance imposed on them, I then had to look into possible motivations of government officials to make complete sense of what I had been told. This motivation I found in the official suspicion of religious movements in the Sudan, and in the personal struggle for increased power and autonomy between the governor of Upper Nile Province and Khartoum in the late 1920s.[29] This example of administration through force of arms, during a time when civil administration was already the norm throughout the country, seemed to me to require a different interpretation of the nature of the colonial state in the Sudan. The results of my research, though not the research itself, have found their way into Condominium histories;[30] but Condominium historians still resist the inevitable conclusions that, first, indigenous sources and oral testimony can throw a different light on the administrative actions of British officials and, second, a fundamentally different interpretation of the Condominium as a whole is likely to emerge from a systematic engagement with Sudanese sources, in which they are used to evaluate the more readily accessible British sources.

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[25] Abbas Ahmed Mohamed, *White Nile Arabs. Political Leadership and Economic Change*, London, 1980.
[26] W. James, *The Listening Ebony. Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power among the Uduk of Sudan*, Oxford, 1988.
[27] S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State*. Los Angeles, 1996.
[28] F.M. Deng, *The Man Called Deng Majok. A Biography of Power, Polygyny, and Change*, New Haven, 1986.
[29] The evidence was first set out in my 1980 UCLA thesit, 'Histoty and prophecy among the Nuer of the Southern Sudan'. Specific aspects were further developed in 'Ngundeng and the "Turuk": two narratives compared', *History in Africa* 9, 1982, and 'C. A. Willis and the "Cult of Deng": a falsification of the ethnographic record', *History in Africa*, 12, 1985. For a more complete treatment of the subject see my *Nuer Prophets*, Oxford, 1994.
[30] R.O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass. Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956*, New Haven. 1983, pp 123-124, where there is no reference to the evidence I produced (nor, in fact any reference to my work); and M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile. The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934*, Cambridge, 1986, pp401-402, where Collins is cited as the only source of information.

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This does seem to be borne out by the, as yet, unpublished work of another non-historian, Gaim Kibreab, who is better known for his work on modern Eritrean refugees.[31] His latest study takes several steps further his original interest in the debates surrounding common property resources as they related specifically to refugees, and it places that question within the broader historical context of the manipulation and erosion of common property rights in the Sudan during this century. He documents in considerable detail, using specific case studies, the progressive erosion of common rights institutions in the rural areas of the Sudan as a result of government actions: first through the policies of the supposedly impartial Condominium government in confirming or denying access to common lands as a means of rewarding tribal allies or punishing recalcitrant peoples; next through the economic policies of post-independence governments who have transferred to themselves the control of common lands first through state-managed projects and more recently in privatisation schemes, which in the context of the current civil war have political and military, as well as economic objectives. The recent experience of both Eritrean refugees and internally war-displaced is thus placed firmly in the context of much longer economic and political trends in the region.[32] It is the Sudanic state, preying on its exploitable hinterlands, by modern means.

We are clearly in need of a general interpretation of the impact of the Condominium on Sudanese societies. And while we are still a long way off from that, Tim Niblock has offered a most stimulating answer to the question, who, among the Sudanese, came to have an economic or political stake in the Condominium government? He focuses on trends in economic differentiation which allowed various groups--nomad shaikhs, merchants, leaders of religious brotherhoods, and graduates among the civil service--to acquire rights in land or labour, and to accumulate and reinvest capital.[33] What is surprising about his study is that he establishes that many of these figures became economically entrenched in the first thirty years of the Condominium: a period that Condominium historians, following the argument of the internal memos of administrators, claim saw the 'decline' of the tribal system in the rural areas of the Sudan; and which nationalist historians claim was the period in which the colonial government was most hostile to the 'effendia', one of the groups which was benefiting economically from the Condominium. Yet these are the very groups who took the lead in nationalist politics, and many of whom continue to benefit from the type of rural exploitation documented by Kibreab.

With this perspective on the formative period in the creation of the classes who subsequently inherited the Sudanese state, what can we begin to say about the nature of Sudanese nationalism? The Japanese historian Yoshiko Kurita, who has published a brief biography of Ali Abd al-Latif in Arabic, documents that the split in the Sudanese nationalist movement in the early 1920s was more over matters of race and class than ideology. The inclusion of descendants of slaves such as Ali Abd al-Latif drove away those (especially from the rich merchant class) who still adhered to the religious notables. It was only in the effendia (the civil service and army) that men of 'good' family and men of non-Arab origin could meet on any level of equality of status, but the *Hadra al-Sudan* group opposed the White Flag League precisely on matters of class and race. She describes how Ali Abe al-Latif objected to a fellow member of the White Flag League's dedication of a book of nationalist poetry to 'the noble Arab people'. Why not the 'noble Sudanese people?', Abe al-Latif insisted, in a

[31] Gaim Kihreab, *People on the Edge in the Horn*, London, 1996.
[32] Gaim Kibreab, 'Common property institutions, state intervention and environmental management in the Sudan 1898-1990', in preparation.
[33] T. Niblock, *Class and Power in Sudan. The Dynamics of Sudanese Politics, 1898-1985*, London, 1987. Again one can contrast Sudanese history, to its detriment, with the history of Ethiopia, East and Southern Africa where imperial colonial and post-colonial land policy has been a central topic of historical investigation. In the Sudan it is mainly development anthropologists who have addressed the question for the post-Funj period.

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confrontation which contributed to the split in and ultimate demise of the League. But of course, in the context of the Egyptian army, from which Ali Abd al-Latif came, and the racial attitudes of the 1920s, to be 'Sudani', was to be black and either a slave or an ex-slave, rather than Arab, and certainly not 'noble'. Ali Abd al-Latif's vision of Sudanese who included people of all classes and races did not become the defining vision of the Sudanese nationalists.[34]

Nationalists and their sympathisers have clearly been uncomfortable about confronting directly attitudes which helped to define Sudanese nationalism in such narrow, not to mention racist terms. But that such attitudes were at the very heart of the nationalist movement after WWII, in the final decade of the Condominium, is revealed in this encounter between the British Air Minister, Lord Stansgate, Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and Judge Shinqitti in December 1946, during the 'nationalist' agitation against the Sidqi-Bevin Protocol:

> In conversation the distinction between the north and south Sudan became very clear. Shangetti boasted that the Sudanese had come from Arabia. He spoke very contemptuously of Abdel Latif (now in an insane asylum). He said his mother was a negress, his father was unknown, and that he, Latif, had at one time collected old tins from barracks. S.A.R., also, when the South was mentioned indicated that they, the North, could deal with it very satisfactorily. The people in the south were called slaves, but Shangetti explained that this term was not much used now and probably his sons would never employ it at all.[35]

There is beginning to be a revision of the study of nationalism in Sudanese scholarship, brought on by the clear failure of the nationalists to create and preserve a nation.[36] This has yet to become a major project within mainstream political science of the Sudan, where there is often still, surprisingly, a preoccupation with parliamentary arithmetic and the manifestos of parties and organisations easily identified by alphabetic titles.

What we do not yet have are studies of Sudanese politics which recognise the precedents of previous centuries in the subterranean continuance of the Sudanic state, in which race, class, religion and gender do define a citizen's rights, or lack of them. The preoccupation of the *Hadra al-Sudan* group with the propagation of an Arab heritage and Shinqitti's boast to Stansgate are both expressions of the definition of nationality by bloodline, and efforts to turn what is a fiction into reality have led to the current state in the Nuba Mountains where rape as a means of establishing that bloodline becomes national policy. The particular character of the racism of the modern Sudanese state is something which much of northern-based *khawaja* scholarship has been reluctant to admit it is to be expected that politicians will deny the undeniable, but scholars should not. It is our duty to describe the Sudan as it has been and as it is, not as we would like it to be. We do no service to our Sudanese friends otherwise.

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[34] Yashiko Kurita, 'The concept of nationalism in the White Flag League movement' in Mahasin Abdel Gadir Hag el Safi (ed.), *The Nationalist Movement in the Sudan*, Khartoum.

[35] Document 116 in D.H. Johnson (ed), British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 5, *Sudan*, 2 vols, London, forthcoming.

[36] See for instance G.N. Sanderson, 'Sudanese nationalism and the independence of the Sudan', in M. Brett (ed.), *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization*, London, 1978; M.W. Daly. 'The transfer of power in the Sudan', in P. Gifford & W.R. Louis, eds., *Decolonization and African Independence. The Transfer of Power 1960-1980*, New Haven, 1988; and more importantly, Mansour Khalid, *The Government They Deserve. The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution*, London & NY, 1990.

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# AFRICANS, ARABS, AND ISLAMISTS: FROM THE CONFERENCE TABLES TO THE BATTLEFIELDS IN THE SUDAN

Robert O. Collins

In April 1987 former President Jimmy Carter launched his third initiative to seek a resolution to the conflict in the Sudan. In December 1989 his attempt to mediate foundered on the rock of the Shari'a. Five years later in March 1995 he proposed a cease-fire which lasted only four months, but since it was never conditional upon renewed negotiations between the government and the opposition, it compromised a position painstakingly constructed by the presidents of the Eastern African states while enabling the Sudan government time to prepare a reinvigorated military offensive in August. Now in 1997 he has sought to reconcile this terrible conflict once again. No one can doubt President Carter's good intentions or his personal sincerity, but between his first and last initiative the beliefs and objectives of the Government of National Salvation in Khartoum and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Asmara, particularly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, have crystallized and thereby hardened their determination to destroy one another. There is no longer a common ground upon which to negotiate; there is only a common ground upon which to wage war. Without external support, however, there appears no Armageddon in the future only a continuing and debilitating struggle of attrition in which everyone will claim victory out of desperation and exhaustion. Jimmy Carter is not alone in his anguish at such a prospect.

Unlike many coups d'etat which are motivated more by discontent than a vision of a brave new world, the officers who seized control of the Sudan government on 30 June 1989 were determined to construct from the lost generation of Sudanese, who have searched for an identity, a New Sudan clearly defined by Islam, the manifestation of which would be the laws of the Quran interpreted and regulated by the doctrines of the National Islamic Front (NIF) and promulgated by Arabic, the language of the Quran. Upon these twin pillars would reside the lintel of a defined and homogeneous Sudanese society. To be Sudanese was to conform to this rigid ideology. Whatever determined non-conformity to its creed resulted in exclusion for not being Sudanese. Neither all the fifteen officers of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), who carried out the June 30th coup d'etat, nor all the members of the amorphous Council of Forty, who advised it, could pass this test of citizenship and soon disappeared from positions of authority in direct proportion to the accession to power by members of the National Islamic Front. In October 1993 the Revolutionary Command Council was dissolved, the leader of the coup d'etat, Lt. General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, became a civilian president, and all the essential offices of government were now securely controlled by members of NIF or their sympathizers. The coup d'etat was over; the

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revolution could now begin to create the new Sudanese divested of those ethnic, linguistic, social, and religious indigenous traditions to be replaced by allegiance to the Islamist ideology defined by the National Islamic Front and its principal political and religious thinker and spokesman, Hasan al-Turabi.

In order to produce the new Sudanese the Islamists introduced a complete ideology which affected all aspects of life in the Sudan in order to indoctrinate, shape, and thereby control the Sudanese without any allowance for dissent. The first and foremost instrument of instruction and control was the law, a comprehensive Islamic legal system encoded in the Shari'a. By 1991 the Shari'a had been embodied in the Sudan Penal Code; in 1992 Islamic legal traditions were employed to justify the *jihad* against apostates and heathens; after 1993 Islamic principles were invoked as the guide for all agencies of civilian government. The army was purged, the officers and ranks replaced by a Muslim militia; the police and the civil service have been systematically dismissed and staffed by members of NIF given preferment more for religious orthodoxy than ability. The foreign service, judiciary, and the hitherto untouchable trade unions were Islamized. The most insidious of these new cadres was the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) consisting of existing Arab militias, ironically established by Sadiq al-Mahdi in 1987 to become the infamous *murahiliin*, student and professional "volunteers" who rushed to the call of the *jihad*, and adults dragooned into six weeks of compulsory military training the curriculum of which was absorbed by callisthenics and religious indoctrination. These soldiers of God have never been a great success judged by their heavy casualties on the fields of battle in the Southern Sudan. Much more effective have been NIF's own security forces despite being too many agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and rival responsibilities. President Bashir had inherited State security, Military Intelligence, police, and foreign security to which he now added separate units recruited from NIF membership - the Revolutionary Security guards, Guardians of Morality and Advocates of Good, Turabi's own household guard, and the People's Police. The most feared were, of course, the Revolutionary Security Guards whose accomplishments have included torture behind the walls of "ghost houses" in the cities of the Sudan.

No revolution committed to the transformation of a whole society could limit its efforts only to the indoctrination of its government servants. Family life was now to be regulated by the Shari'a, and the role of women strictly defined, including dress, employment, and relations between the sexes, all enforced by NIF's religious police. The hitherto powerful trade unions were banned within the hour after the success of the coup d'etat, and the sentence of death for strikes and political opposition left no doubt as to the role of labour in the future community of Islamists. Not wishing to discriminate against the workers, the Bashir regime reduced the Bar Association to a trade union and emasculated the powerful and respected doctors society.

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The Sudan Human Rights Organization, a frail but intrepid band, was dissolved. Christians were, of course, dismissed from government, prohibited from worship and persecuted, particularly in the Southern Sudan, by harsh policies which were modified by international pressure and Pope John II who denounced them in Khartoum during his pastoral visit in February 1993. Not even Sudanese Muslims were immune from penalties, for historically those co-religionists who deviated from a revealed doctrine have often been more harshly punished than those of a different faith. In 1992 the Khatmiyya *tariqa* was dissolved, and its properties and assets seized. The following year the government nationalized the holy sites of the Ansar in Omdurman and launched a campaign against the Sufi *turuq* (sing. *tariqa*) whose beliefs and religious practices did not conform to the religious doctrines of NIF. The Islamists appeared to moderate their strictures against these popular and widespread religious fraternities but continued to use as their instruments of religious persuasion the *al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Call), the African Islamic Agency, and its religious police to promote and enforce its definition of the Islamist revival for the Sudan.

Education was, of course, the preeminent means to create the Islamist state. Not only would proper Islamic education thwart the tide of westernization, which had flowed into the Sudan during the twentieth century, but the inculcation of the "true" *tarbiyya* (upbringing) was the instrument by which to purify and achieve an Islamist society. The reorientation of education and the administrations of the universities were publicly purged; their faculties replaced by circumscribed attrition. The curriculum was Arabicized and Arabicized. To consolidate their control of the universities the Islamists selected double the number of students, creating nine new universities to accommodate them in an effort to subsume the established institutions. The once formidable and feared Khartoum University Students Union purchased its survival at the price of becoming a paid instrument of NIF. In any coup d'etat or revolution the media is as important as education, and the national radio station is usually the first building to be liberated. June 30th was no exception. The media was firmly instructed to support, not to criticize, the regime and its policies. Control was more systematically defined in the Press and Publications Act of 1993 and interpreted by the NIF minister of information. Those newspapers which did not comply were summarily closed, journalists imprisoned or banned. Foreign correspondents have been harassed, and the importation of foreign newspapers restricted.

Until it assumed power in the Sudan NIF had attracted the allegiance of only a small minority of the Sudanese peoples, but it never has appeared to want for the resources to achieve power. Some of its funds have been provided by Islamic patrons from outside the Sudan, others from internal sources most notably the Faisal Islamic Bank whose success in Islamic finance has been emulated throughout the Muslim world. Once established in the Sudan the Faisal

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Islamic Bank became the principal paymaster for NIF and the prototype for the rapid expansion of Islamic banking which was soon employed to infiltrate the Sudanese commercial community. The Sudanization of commerce after independence in 1956 rewarded the traditional mercantile class which largely consisted of members of the Khatimyya brotherhood and less so the Ansar. Financed by the Faisal and newly established Islamic banks, and guaranteed contracts and sales from government agencies and those whose self-interest coincided with the regime's preferment, the Islamists subtly extended their presence into the economy of the Sudan as they had more visibly insinuated their authority over its cultural, social, and political life. To accelerate this trend the government has granted commercial privileges to foreign firms and merchants with the proper Islamic credentials.

The pursuit of the Islamist nirvana by the Bashir regime of the National Islamic Front clearly precludes any modification of its program to achieve a monolithic and homogeneous Islamist society. The Government of National Salvation was not the first in the Sudan to beat the drum for *jihad*. In 1881 Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi proclaimed his determination to rid the Sudan of corruption, meaning the theological corruption of Islam by the Turks, which most Sudanese translated to mean political and economic discontent. The message of the Mahdi was in the great reformist tradition of the Muslim holy men of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not the teachings of Hasan al-Banna in the twentieth. His appeals were enthusiastically absorbed in the countryside by the Baggara and the Beja, less so by the riverain *awlad al-balad* or the Africans beyond the Sudd. Moreover, the Mahdi did not live long enough to find the Sudanese, he only discovered the Ansar. The Mahdist Revolution was certainly inspired by religion, but upon the Mahdi's death in 1885, like that of al-Hajj Umar in the Western Sudan in 1864, the mantle of the movement was bequeathed to a military dictator whose governance foreshadowed that of General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir. The legacy of a territorial rather than a theocratic state belongs more to the Khalifa than the decrees of the Government of National Salvation which, by definition, recognize no ethnic frontiers nor geographical boundaries. The appeal for a new religious orthodoxy by NIF as a substitute for secular Sudanese nationalism is but a bizarre recrudescence of nineteenth century religious reform served with a sauce spiced by a century of technological *shatta*.

The ends and the means to define the national identity, what is expected and what is required to be a Sudanese, have been made abundantly clear and vigorously implemented by NIF and its Government of National Salvation. To be sure, the regime could be flexible on peripheral issues but not the twin pillars of the revolution - the law of Islam, the Shari'a interpreted by the National Islamic Front, and its promulgation by Arabicization. Without the complete acceptance of this dogma, the search for the national identity, as envisaged by the Islamists,

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will surely fail. It is ironic that this experiment in an Islamist cultural revolution is being attempted in one of the world's most diverse states so that its very success would paralyze any negotiations seeking to recognize the reality of the Sudan's multiculturalism. On the one hand, this very diversity explains why this cultural revolution has occurred in the Sudan whose citizens have already experienced so many frustrations in the search for national identity to make the seekers all the more desperate for definition. On the other, the Sudanese have learned during this past half century by the sacrifices of their peoples that perhaps the best definition of "Sudanese" is no definition at all. This emerging concept, symbolized by a passport, is neither mystical nor unobtainable. The literature about unity in diversity is abundant; the exhaustion in the search for the Sudanese has absorbed ethnic historicism and relieved religious rivalries; the dreams of a more beneficent future appear to be more possible in an open not a closed society, in a free not a prescribed exchange of ideas, and in a recognition of worth defined not by creed but by humanity.[37]

The National Islamic Front has declared that the search for the Sudanese has ended; Hasan al-Turabi has closed the debate. The new Islamist state in the Sudan cannot possibly tolerate either those Arabs whose interpretation of the Quran remains unacceptable to the theology of Hasan al-Turabi or those Africans who refuse to accept the political, economic, and social suzerainty of the Islamists. The Africans of the Sudan have been excluded by definition from the Islamist state and included in practice by deception. Determined to impose their vision of a New Sudan, the Islamists seek to resolve the conflict with those Africans equally determined to defend the integrity of their own culture history.

Since the Government of National Salvation launched its *jihad* armed with the legal principles of Islam embodied in the Shari'a interpreted by the NIF and its ideological guardian, Hasan al-Turabi, the Bashir regime has liberated itself from the tyranny of secularism and its incompetent diversity which has confounded the search for the Sudanese in the past. The singleness of purpose, the tenacity of the converted, and the grim determination so characteristic of reformers has, not surprisingly, alienated those Northern Sudanese who use Arabic in the *suq* and Islam in the mosque but cling to an historic, ethnic past which cannot be dismissed by decree nor forgotten in an uncertain future. Arabs when required; Sudanese when convenient. In the Southern Sudan the Africans wander in the wilderness searching, like those tribesmen of the North, for a more universal identification than kin, clan, and lineage, a greater loyalty which can accommodate diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Their search has been more arduous and dangerous, for no single creed, however interpreted, can bind them together so that the call and the messianic message of the *imams* in

[37] See: Robert O. Collins ***In Search of the Sudanese.*** Keynote Speech delivered at the Annual Banquet of the Sudan Studies Association of the United States, Williamsburg, Virginia, 15 April 1988.

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Khartoum has appeal for only those seeking personal preferment at the price of disavowing their past. The individual allegiance of the Southern Sudanese remains attached to an infinite array of diverse identities along many paths not lit by the lamp of religious orthodoxy. They stumble through the Sudd unable to shed their indigenous remembrance for a new identity which cannot accommodate that which would have to be abandoned. Summoned to join the legions of NIF, the dilemma for the Southern Sudanese is no different from that of their Northern Sudanese brothers, only more acute, more complete. In order to prosper or rather simply to survive, the choice presented to them by the Government of National Salvation is no choice at all. To become an Islamist Sudanese may bring relief and security in the totality of commitment to that interpretation of Islam without the obligations required of a secular Sudanese to accept the integrity of customs and beliefs not his own. Perhaps the message of NIF appeals to the subterranean streak of religious xenophobia which lingers in the Sudanese soul on the frontiers of Islam. These are the two paths ahead, and although some have attempted to cross from one to another to escape from the labyrinth, they are no nearer the end of their journey than the beginning, beguiled by rhetoric which can drown one in the din and thunder of battle.

Although it was widely believed that the coup d'etat of 30 June 1989 and the subsequent Government of National Salvation would not last six months, this prediction has never been fulfilled because of the determination of the Islamists for the revolution, on the one hand, and the divisions within the Northern and Southern opposition on the other. Those in the Northern Sudan hostile to the regime remained as impotent in opposition as when in government. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) originated in 1985 when all unions and political parties except NIF signed the "Charter of the National Alliance" and the "Charter to Protect Democracy" in order to organize civil disobedience to frustrate any future coups d'etat as in the days of generals Abboud and Numayri. The determination of the RCC and the strong support of the emerging Islamists promptly dismissed the National Democratic Alliance as serious opposition whose paper organization was a sombre testimonial of personal and political rivalries. The same determination soon destroyed the unity of the Southern insurgents whose hostility had hitherto consisted of ringing manifestoes and military skirmishes. The declaration of the Government of National Salvation to impose a monolithic Islamist state upon the Sudanese rejuvenated those Southerners demanding self-determination, convinced many of the undecided to seek a separate state, and eroded the goal of John Garang and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leading the Southern insurgents fighting for a united, secular, democratic Sudan. None of the Southerners had much use for the NDA whose patrons had waged war against them, and a separate South now appeared all the more appealing when President Mengistu's departure from Ethiopia in May 1991 deprived the SPLM of its most ardent ally and invaluable support necessary for the

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military operations of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) committed by Garang to a united Sudan.

Garang's vision of a new, united, Sudan soon became a dream of an independent Southern Sudan, a confederacy of Nilotes and Equatorians in an unreal "Republic of Azania". There were those in the SPLM, Lam Akol, Riak Machar, and Gordon Kong who seized upon Garang's authoritarian and often preemptory leadership to cut their losses, secede, and follow the Eritreans into an independent utopia. Three months after the fall of Mengistu they broke with Garang, formed the SPLM/A-United (later the Southern Sudan Independence Movement), and promptly sold themselves to the Islamists at Frankfurt in 1992, Nairobi in 1993, and in the Palace Gardens of Khartoum in 1996 in return for arms and survival. In none of these agreements was secession in any form nor independence considered a serious option, and in the Political Charter of April 1996, the unity of the Sudan was unequivocally affirmed. This division within the ranks of the SPLM decimated but did not destroy the Southern liberation movement but not before more Southerners lay dead and dying from the callous and barbarous fratricidal strife inflicted by the rival factions upon Southerners than had ever been killed by the security forces of the Sudan government. Despite numerous attempts to bring the factions together the dissidents slipped into safe obscurities as petty warlords, while John Garang drifted increasingly into the orbit of a revived NDA in Asmara with the only viable military force in opposition desperately seeking a means to reconcile self-determination with his dream of a united, secular, democratic Sudan.

During this tragic and convoluted decade both the Islamists and the Africans engaged in Byzantine negotiations to end the terrible conflict which had cost millions of lives, ruined the economy of the Sudan, and threatened the stability of the fragile states of northeast Africa. In reality the goals of the Government of National Salvation and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement were fundamentally incompatible, yet both parties continued to negotiate in bad faith throughout the 1990s from irreducible positions which created for some a false impression that a peaceful settlement was possible. Neither side could accede to the terms of the other nor even a modification without destroying themselves. Unwilling to abandon the ideological pillars upon which their movement sought to succeed, the Islamists were more than willing, indeed it was to their advantage, to prolong discussions at the conference table in order to gain time to recover, regroup, and to seek support for the greater goal - the New Islamist Sudan - the territorial configuration of which would remain obscured by a conflict without end.

After 30 June 1989 General Bashir wasted no time in defining the goals of the regime which would be decided after a cease-fire by a popular, statewide referendum administered under Islamic law in which the Southern Sudanese would be a minority unable to participate fully

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either by the conditions of war or by the application of the Shari'a. Neither side displayed much interest in a halt to hostilities, and at the beginning of the dry season of 1989-90 Bashir launched a major offensive. Garang was under no illusion as to the intentions of Bashir, Turabi, and NIF to establish an Islamist state, but he could hardly refrain from discussions to resolve the conflict with the new government in Khartoum.[38] Emissaries scurried back and forth between Khartoum and Addis Ababa, but no amount of rhetoric could disguise the deep differences between the Islamist state and a secular, democratic Sudan. Suddenly in August 1991 the rebellion against Garang's authoritarian rule and the split within the SPLM dramatically affected negotiations. The Southern Sudanese had been killed and pillaged when caught up in the security sweeps of the Sudan army. They were then massacred, mutilated, and enslaved by the Arab militia, the dreaded *murahiliin.* Now they were entrapped more firmly in the internecine strife and unforgiving ethnic warfare between the insurgents within the SPLA and those loyal to John Garang. The disintegration of the SPLA, however, only served to convince Khartoum that the military victory which had mysteriously eluded all former governments of the Sudan since 1955, now appeared not only possible but imminent. Concessions which may have been contemplated for the conference table in June 1989 were now happily unnecessary. Weakened by disaffection and desertions Garang had little choice but to negotiate particularly when he was encouraged to do so by the United States and the new head of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida whose intercession could not even by ignored by Khartoum.

The Abuja Conference opened on 26 May 1992. The government came to Abuja prepared to concede nothing when its forces were everywhere on the offensive which provided John Garang, the reluctant participant, an excuse to remain at the front. He sent as his representative William Nyuon Bany, a volatile, illiterate soldier who promptly displayed his limited diplomatic skills by merging the SPLM delegation with the opposition, the SPLM-United - led by Lam Akol, demanding an independent Southern Sudan. This bizarre turn of events not only produced bewilderment among the Southerners and ill-disguised bemusement by the government but certainly no agreement. The cynics have argued that Garang purposely sent Bany knowing that his disabilities would wreck the talks; the chivalrous argued that his naiveté would serve to unmask the devious designs of the more sophisticated Lam Akol. The Nigerians recovered to work tirelessly to continue the negotiations at a later date by limiting the discussions to a vague interim period of peace during which the future could hopefully be more rationally decided. Everyone retired in confusion; they were not to meet for another year.

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[38] See: Text of Garang's address. 10 August 1989 in John Garang, ***Call for Democracy: John Garang***, Mansour Khalid (Ed.), London, Kegan Paul International, 1992, pp. 237-68.

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Throughout the history of the Southern Sudan military victory has always proved illusory for the invaders - Turks, British, the governments of the independent Sudan. In the spring of 1992 Bashir's troops had taken Kapoeta and penetrated into the Nuba Mountains and the Ingessana Hills. By the spring of 1993, however, the government offensive had stalled, the Western nations had become aroused over the Sudan's human rights abuses (particularly the United States for Sudan's support of terrorists), and the NDA and the SPLM had displayed a surprising spirit of cooperation by a willingness to discuss matters of mutual concern at Nairobi. Consequently, in a more conciliatory mood Bashir himself travelled to Abuja in April. Garang did not repeat his mistake of the previous year; the SPLM delegation was led by Major Silva Kiir Mayardit with a Nuba commander as deputy and a new proposal for a confederation. Neither the presence of competent personalities nor a new but convoluted initiative could overcome the fundamental differences, and after three weeks of the usual rhetoric, informal meetings at the Abuja Sheraton, and the exasperation of the Nigerian mediators, the conference concluded with no agreement, no communiqué, and the overthrow of President Babandiga.

Once Nigeria had fulfilled its responsibility as head of the OAU to confront the Sudan conflict and failed, the presidents of the East African countries assumed the mantle of mediator which was, in fact, in their self-interest in order to resolve a dispute that had become regional and threatened to destabilize their own fragile states. Utilizing the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), which had been established in 1986 to address the devastation by drought in the Horn of Africa and included representatives from all the states of Northeast Africa, the presidents had formed their own committee under its auspices in September 1993. The "Standing Committee on Peace in Sudan" was chaired by President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya and composed of the presidents of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda. The Sudan was not a member but curiously welcomed the initiative presumably on the misplaced assumption that the Eritreans and Ethiopians would remember the Sudan's support in the past for their insurgency movements. Bashir was soon disabused. The presidents used their influence, with strong support from the United States, to seek reconciliation between John Garang and the Southern secessionists which Bashir denounced as a "Hostile Act". By January 1994 Bashir realized that IGAAD mediation was not Nigerian. He refused an invitation from President Moi to come to Nairobi as the 1994 dry season offensive commenced (amidst the usual declarations of certain victory) and delayed any meeting with IGAAD until the government forces had made substantial but not decisive gains against the SPLA.

The invitation from the presidents of IGADD could not be indefinitely ignored, however, and the first meeting finally opened at the Kenyan foreign ministry on 17 March with President

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Moi in the chair and the presidents of Uganda and Ethiopia in attendance. All parties were represented including Mubarak al-Mahdi, the secretary of the NDA. The intractable spokesman for NIF, Dr. 'Ali al-Hajj Muhammad, led the Sudan government delegation. The Standing Committee had optimistically proposed an agenda of only two items - the interim arrangements, the agreement of which would then move the talks to the constitutional question which presumably would resolve the conflict. The government insisted only on discussing the interim accord; the SPLM wanted only to discuss constitutional commitments. The government sought to delay negotiations in order to wage victorious war; the SPLM sought to mobilize the growing East African support by talking at Abuja while organizing a congress at Chukudum in preparation for overtures to the NDA.

The first IGADD meeting was followed by three others in May, July, and September 1994. Amidst the rhetoric the positions of the government and its opposition became more clearly defined - which in turn illuminated each other's vision of the "New Sudan", no longer obscured by smoke and mirrors. After the adjournment of the second meeting on 22 May the Standing Committee startled the government and the SPLM by presenting to them their own views regarding the terms for a settlement known as the Declaration of Principles (DOP). The document was a dramatic condemnation of the ideology and policies of the Government of National Salvation. After perfunctory recognition of the unity of the Sudan, the DOP set forth principles by which it should be achieved: self-determination; recognition of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity; legal, political, and social equality; a secular and democratic state; freedom of belief and worship; independence of the judiciary and a guarantee of human rights. The Islamist Government of National Salvation in Khartoum could never agree to this Declaration of Principles and survive, let alone achieve its New Sudan. The Islamists were outraged and strenuously rejected the principles. The SPLM was surprised at their good fortune, accepted the DOP with alacrity, and lavished confidence upon the African mediators. Inflammatory and then desultory discussions accompanied the third (18-29 July) and fourth (5-7 September) meetings which only served to harden the positions of the government and the SPLM as Armageddon moved relentlessly from the conference table to the battlefield. Despite the efforts of President Moi the IGADD negotiations were over, and with them the fantasy that a settlement for the New Sudan could be forged from the weapons of the contestants upon the anvil of the conference table.

During the autumn of 1994 the members of the Standing Committee confirmed their distrust and hostility toward the Government of National Salvation. President Yoweri Museveni was alarmed by arms shipments from Khartoum for the Uganda dissidents, particularly the Lord's Resistance Army and the West Bank Nile Front. President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea broke diplomatic relations with the Sudan when Eritrean Jihad raided across the border and NIF

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agents sought to subvert Eritrean Muslims. President Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia denounced the Sudan's blatant encouragement of Ethiopian Islamists, PDF bases on the frontier, and support for the Oromo Liberation Front. President Moi was just plain weary of the whole affair which had consumed his energies and confirmed his suspicions of the Islamists in Khartoum. Whatever their original intentions the authors of the DOP had precipitated a confrontation with Khartoum the outcome of which now appeared could only be resolved by force of arms. Since neither side was prepared to abandon their deepest beliefs, which were their best guarantee of survival, no compromise was possible.

Although the Declaration of Principles had decidedly separated the Eastern African governments from that of the Government of National Salvation in the Sudan, it also provided a medium by which the two principal opponents of the Sudan government could settle their differences. To achieve a reconciliation would not be easy. The SPLM and the Southerners were deeply suspicious that the NDA would permit the SPLA to fight on their behalf while the patricians of the NDA would negotiate the terms of any transfer of power. The past hostility of Sadiq al-Mahdi and 'Uthman al Mirghani to the first SPLA penetration from Kurmuk in 1987 could not be forgotten, and their opposition to secession may have been acceptable to John Garang but not the Southerners. Moreover, the ineptitude, rhetoric, and impotent military response of the NDA in opposition did not inspire confidence or allay Southern suspicions. On their part the NDA was disconcerted by the division within the SPLM in 1991, and although the leadership condemned the dissidents and strongly supported Garang, they could not hide their apprehension that Garang would drift toward separatism in order to maintain his authority over the movement forcing them in turn to embrace secularism in return for unity. The NDA did not immediately grasp this reality. The leaders of the DUP and the Umma parties dithered throughout the winter of 1991-92 over a secular or Islamic constitution which only reaffirmed Southern distrust of their intentions. This prevarication was repeated the following October in an ambiguous declaration for the New Sudan, but after five days of intensive discussions at Nairobi in April 1993, which were designed to support Garang at Abuja II, the communiqué remained silent about self-determination, amidst pious pronouncements for unity. Under pressure from Congressman Harry Johnston and his powerful colleagues in Washington, D.C. in October 1993, the concept of self-determination for the South was included in the communiqué to the consternation of just about everyone in the NDA - DUP, Umma, the Communists, military officers (Legitimate Command), the Nuba, and even the Egyptians who had hitherto remained diplomatically silent. Southerners who did not sympathize with the SPLM-United and many within the SPLM-Mainstream were contemptuous of the NDA and suspect of yet more promises, promises from those who had betrayed them in the past and who in pursuit of their own self-interest would most likely betray them in the future.

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During the winter of 1993-94 Garang laboured to repair the fragile alliance between the NDA and the SPLM which appeared destined to collapse after the Washington Declaration. Desultory and convoluted discussions dragged on for another year amidst the growing realization within the NDA, particularly by the Umma, that they had to accept the Declaration of Principles and self-determination or become increasingly irrelevant in the search for the New Sudan. On 12 December 1994 Nur al-Dai'im, the liberal Umma lawyer, and Mubarak al-Mahdi, Sadiq's faithful henchman, acknowledged the right of the Southern Sudanese to self-determination. The symbolism of the Umma signatories travelling for the first time into the South to Garang's headquarters at Chukudum to accept self-determination for the Southern Sudanese was to roll up an historic carpet of deception now to be displayed for the Southerners to tread when their colleagues in the NDA had woven a new fabric. Two weeks later the principal leaders of the NDA signed the Asmara Declaration on 27 December 1994 to reaffirm the Chukudum Accord.

Without the intervention of the Eastern African presidents by their Declaration of Principles in May 1994, the NDA/SPLM coalition would not have survived their past differences which could hardly disappear at the stroke of a pen in Chukudum and two weeks later at Asmara. From outside the coalition the Egyptians vociferously denounced self-determination which they interpreted to mean secession; from within influential members of the NDA, particularly the DUP who were not present at Chukudum, were adamantly opposed to any compromise on the ultimate unity of the Sudan. Even disgruntled Umma patricians muttered against betrayal, secularism, secession. The supporters of Chukudum and Asmara sought to circumscribe dissent at the "Conference on the Fundamental Issues of the Nation" subsequently held in Asmara between the 17th and 23rd June 1995. The first meeting of the NDA in two years opened in a spirit of compromise and promise in the search for a New Sudan where the somewhat anxious participants found themselves in an Asmara *zariba* surrounded by the DOP, the Chukudum Accords, and the Asmara Declaration, and the forbidding realization that they must all hang together in Asmara or hang separately in Khartoum. Here in the former Sudanese Embassy the Asmara agreements were concluded, guaranteeing unconditional self-determination; from that fundamental commitment all other principles fell into place for a secular, democratic Sudan.

During the many years of mindless meetings, worthless rhetoric, and virtuous pronouncements the proposition of the Asmara agreements are not that new but the commitments are, the most important of which being self-determination not just for the Southern Sudanese but as a "basic human, democratic and people's right".[39] For the first time

[39] For the Text of the Asmara Agreements see: "Final Communiqué of the Asmara Conference", *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, London. Vol. 63,

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all the opposition political parties signed a document affirming their pledge to that principle. In the past both the leaders of the DUP and the Umma had given lip service to self-determination, but now the sincerity of their signatures was a grudging acknowledgment that no future government in Khartoum could rule without such an agreement which is probably the best guarantee that self-determination will be a commitment to be honoured and not just another politician's promise.

The most important pledge to self-determination was, ironically, not that of the Northern opposition leaders but from Colonel John Garang himself. Hitherto his dilemma has been to reconcile his belief in a new but united Sudan with the Southerners' demand for self-determination with its inherent risk of independence. His has been an unenviable journey between the Scylla of a united Sudan and the Charybdis of the Southern separatists. The dissident movements advocating an independent Sudan have either been disgraced or defeated in battle, but their demise has not extinguished the desires of the multitude of the Southern Sudanese to choose. Garang, like his Northern allies, realizes that only by a mutual alliance will the possibility to overthrow the Islamist regime in Khartoum become a probability, but the price for success will be the right of the Southerners to have that choice. He and his Northern allies must convince the Southern Sudanese "in an atmosphere of democracy and legitimacy and under regional and international supervision" that their future must ultimately be associated with that of the North.[40] In order that persuasive powers may prevail to salvage the dream of a united Sudan, Garang has insisted upon interim arrangements in the hope that time will heal the wounds inflicted by a generation of war which the Government of National Salvation appears determined to continue.

Although numerous participants at Asmara displayed ill-disguised ambivalence towards these constitutional commitments by the representatives to the conference, there was no ambiguity about the determination of the disparate members of the NDA to overthrow the Islamist regime in Khartoum. Strategy was discussed, the impotent Legitimate Command of former Sudanese generals was ignored, and John Garang was given the overall command of the "United Forces of the North and Southern Sudan" which consisted mainly of the veterans of the SPLA represented in The New Sudan Brigade who were now joined by the ragamuffin warriors from the Beja Congress, more reminiscent of the Blemmyes bandits of the fourth century than the redoubtable Fuzzy-Wuzzies of Kipling, and defectors from the Sudan army organized into the Sudan Allied Forces. Despite the euphoria generated by the common cause at Asmara this armed conglomerate was hardly the juggernaut capable of overthrowing a determined regime in Khartoum quite prepared to sacrifice the inspired youth of the Popular

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August 1995.

[40] *Ibid*.

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Forces (PDF), the Jihad Units, and militia of the National Islamic Front seeking martyrdom as a rabble in arms.

There were also those romantics in the NDA who fondly remembered the finest hours of their youth when in 1964 they had surged through the streets of Khartoum to overthrow the military dictatorship of General Ibrahim Abboud and everyone could remember the glorious moment ten years ago in 1985 when the populace had marched past silent soldiers by the Nile to the Palace to end the military regime of Jafaar Numayri. The third Sudanese military dictator, General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, however, not only remembered his history but was now anointed with a theological legitimacy not possessed by his predecessors to justify and to strengthen his resolve not to repeat the past. Throughout the autumn of 1995 the security forces and NIF cultural police crushed popular demonstrations against the regime in the towns and cities of the Sudan. Even the most sanguine leaders of the NDA, comfortably ensconced in the former Sudanese embassy in Asmara, began to comprehend that the Government of National Salvation was not just another inflated instrument of a frustrated general which would collapse with his person, but a regime rooted in a conviction whose credibility required it to be challenged by blood and iron.

Over a year after the Asmara Conference it was apparent that there would be no successful, popular uprising in Khartoum, and consequently a "Higher Coordination and Supervising Committee" was established to organize military operations, but its membership hardly signified aggressive action against the regime. The committee consisted of four members including Muhammad 'Uthman al-Mirghani of the DUP who had belatedly committed himself to the Asmara Declaration and the immobilized General Fathi Ahmad 'Ali of the moribund Legitimate Command. They appeared to recognize the reality of their pretensions, however, and left John Garang alone to plan a renewed offensive by the SPLA in October 1995 which captured garrisons in western and central Equatoria defended mostly by the hapless militiamen of the PDF who suffered heavy casualties.

President Bashir responded. Politically, he convinced Dr. Riak Machar and Lt. Colonel Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, formerly of the SPLA-United but now separate militias (the SSIM and the SPLA/BAG respectively) to sign "The Political Charter" in April 1996 by which these two dissenters from Garang's SPLM-Mainstream abandoned their struggle for the independence of the Southern Sudan in return for their personal survival and that of their troops rearmed by the regime to fight for a united Sudan under the aegis of the Government of National Salvation. On May Day 1997 Riak was joined by another "six Southern Sudanese rebel factions" who acknowledged his leadership to fulfil, ironically, their

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"yearning for unity", if not their survival, by the Government of National Salvation.[41] Militarily, Machar was to launch an offensive against the SPLA in the eastern Upper Nile around the Baro Salient while Kerubino would continue his banditry further west in the Bahr al-Ghazal where his followers had regularly harassed the international humanitarian organizations. Bashir also increased arms shipments to his surrogates on the Sudan-Ugandan frontier accompanied by the occasional aerial bombardment during which foreign pilots seldom distinguished Ugandan from Sudanese villages and towns.

The NDA and Garang counter-attacked. Rag-tag regiments of the Beja Congress and the Sudan Allied Forces skirmished on the eastern frontier from camps in Eritrea inflicting casualties on the PDF, while the New Sudan Brigade led by the SPLA overwhelmed garrison-towns along the Ethiopian frontier culminating in the capture of the border crossing point at Kurmuk on 13 January 1997. Garang had previously penetrated into the Northern Sudan from Kurmuk ten years before, precipitating hysteria in Khartoum, national mobilization, and the spectre of Southern troops swaggering down El Nil Boulevard past the Palace. Muhammad 'Uthman al-Mirghani, now leader of the NDA, had then rushed to the front at Damazin; Sadiq al-Mahdi, then the prime minister, had declared a state of emergency. In 1997 the response by the government of National Salvation was more subdued. Within a week it became apparent that Garang did not have the military capability to reach Damazin and the Roseires Dam, situated on the Blue Nile sixty miles from Kurmuk and providing 80% of the electricity for "the Three Towns" at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles. The military weakness of Garang, or rather the NDA of which he was the "supreme" commander, enabled Bashir to limit his response to rhetoric, duly delivered by Vice-President al-Zubayr to a cool reception in the capitals of the Arab world. It was also an excuse for Bashir not to launch an army whose loyalty was uncertain nor to throw the ill-prepared Islamist militia into a conflict from which they would suffer even greater casualties than in the Southern Sudan. The armed demonstration by the SPLA from Kurmuk did not inspire a popular uprising in Khartoum, and consequently Garang returned to his heartland in order to reduce and perhaps eliminate with the assistance of the Ugandan army Bashir's surrogates who have long harassed both him and his former school chum President Yoweni Museveni.

After fifteen years of war the Sudan People's Liberation Army has yet to win a major victory or even a symbolic one such as the capture of Juba or Wau. After ten years the National Democratic alliance has only managed to patch together a united coalition at Asmara which has yet to demonstrate its capability to overthrow the Government of National Salvation in Khartoum. Moreover, the years of negotiations to seek a solution at the conference tables

[41] "Southern Sudanese Factions Sign Accord". *The Kenya Times*, 1 May 1997.

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have only served to define the incompatible goals of the contestants and to temper the resolve of the opposition to the Khartoum regime with whom there appears no longer a willingness nor necessity to compromise. The participants in the unholy alliance between the Northern and the Southern Sudanese, Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Africans, are under no illusion that each will seek their own self-interest in the pursuit of the common good and cheerfully exploit the strengths of each to do so. Perhaps, however, each in the defense of his own interests may perversely achieve, from the aggregate of their collective self-indulgence, the demise of the Islamists, without calling upon the ghosts of Kitchener and Churchill to secure by foreign intervention their birthright at Khartoum.

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# MEMOIRS OF A FREEDOM FIGHTER: JOSEPH H. ODUHO OF THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

In 1982, Joseph Oduho decided to write his autobiography. At the time I was Librarian of the University of Juba and Joseph asked if I would assist him. We discussed a possible outline and I made a number of notes at his dictation. In 1984, he left Sudan to join the SPLA. In the early 1990s he was killed in Southern Sudan whilst attempting to mediate between opposing factions of the SPLA. Some say he fell in crossfire, but others claim that the circumstances were suspicious and murder is more likely.

*The notes remain as he left them in 1983. Rather than let them be forgotten and eventually destroyed, I have decided it best if they be published and made more widely available. Joseph Oduho was at the heart of Southern Sudanese politics from before Independence until he died. Much of the details of the sort of man he was and what he fought for and accomplished died with him. He felt strongly that most of what had been written about the first Civil War (1956 to 1972) and the years after Addis Ababa Agreement failed to reveal the truth as he saw it. His only publication - the book he wrote with William Deng during the first Civil War*[42] *- did not address his own life story.*

*Brief though the notes are, they do provide the framework for the biography of a man who gave his life to the cause of winning freedom for the peoples of the Southern Sudan and highlight the most important events in that life as seen by himself. They also bring some new insights to the history of the first Struggle and the signing of the Addis Ababa Accord.*

**Diana Rosenberg**

(June 1997)

Autobiographies, and political ones in particular, are written for many reasons - some for self-glorification, others for money and yet others are for nobler causes.

In an attempt to write my own, I am most motivated by my belief that the story of my life is worth telling to the world and in particular to the unsubdued youth of Africa and those of other oppressed parts of the world, who are imbued with the spirit of sacrificing their entire lives for the freedom of humanity anywhere on this planet. Also I feel strongly that the story must be told to that generation of the youth of the Southern Sudan, born between 1950 and 1970. And finally I shall, for a much less serious reason and yet necessary, tell the story of my life for the fun of it.

I shall break down the story as follows:

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[42] ***The Problem of the Southern Sudan*** Oxford University Press, 1963

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**Early life and education (?-1951)**

- Background of people and land of my birth (Latuka)
- Lobira, the village of my birth
- My parents
- My birth and early childhood
- Early death of my mother

Education

- Elementary: Isoke, 1936-1940
- Intermediate: Okaru, 1941-1946
- Secondary: Nyapea, Uganda, 1947-1948
  Rumbek, 1949-1951.

**Civil Service (1952-1958)**

- I choose the teaching profession and begin teaching.
- Cairo Agreement, February 1953. I lead a demonstration against the agreement in Torit.
- Teacher in training, Bakht-er-Ruda, 1953-54.
- Self-government and Sudanization in 1954 has a negative impact on the South. The Equatorial Corps mutiny, followed by mass arrests, trials, condemnations and mass executions in 1955. I am arrested, tried and condemned to death. I undergo a fake execution before being acquitted on appeal.
- I contest successfully the first Parliamentary elections after Independence, 1957-58.

**My public life begins (1958-1960)**

- Parliamentary life in Khartoum, 1958.
- Umma Party hands over power to General Abboud in November 1958. I return to the classroom and begin teaching again.
- The fragile security situation in Equatoria under Ali Baldo, 1959-1960.
- My strategic retreat into exile, December 1960.

**My public life as a refugee (1961-1962)**

- Life as a refugee: After the death of my first wife, 4 March 1961, I take a decision to abandon my young children for the sake of the freedom of Southern Sudan; the reality of statelessness.

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- We flee Kampala for Dar, July 1961; from Dar to Lagos without a passport, September 1961, via Kenya, Uganda and Congo.
- First arrest in the Congo at Paullis and subsequent trial and release, October 1961; from a criminal to a VIP and the trip to Stanleyville; a passenger on a special plane of the Chief of the Congolese Army, General Londoula, from Stanleyville to Leopoldville, November 1961; guest of Abe Foulbert Youlou, December 1961/January 1962.
- *Rendezvous* at Hotel Le Beach, Brazzaville with President David Dacko of Central African Republic, February 1962.
- At the Monrovia Group Conference in Lagos, February 1962.
- Return to Brazzaville, which is no longer friendly.
- I leave for CAR, March 1962, to present the case of the Southern Sudan to David Dacko, the President, and to the OCAM Heads of States in Bangui; I am attacked by Arab Sudanese agents in a busy Bangui street.
- Back to a hostile Leopoldville, where I am arrested on disembarkation, but subsequently released.

**A rebel leader *(part one)* (1962-1963)**

- William Deng joins us and we form SACDNU in April 1962. I become its president.
- I am arrested and detained in Makala Central Prison, awaiting deportation back to Sudan, April 1962; William Deng takes refuge in the University of Lovanium and Fr. Saturnino is allowed to remain at large, because the Congolese are superstitious about arresting priests.
- An attempt to kidnap me back to Sudan fails and I escape to freedom, 14 April 1962. I make a hazardous journey to Brazzaville, during which I am at the mercy of a Tchadian Arab and his family, who entertain me on a picnic 50 miles up the Congo, and a friend turns enemy because of diamonds.
- I give a press conference at Hotel Le Beach and stay in Brazzaville until July 1962.
- I travel to Rome and then to London in December 1962. The Congolese Ambassador in London, Thomas Kanse, advises me to attend the PAFMESCA Conference, due to take place in Leopoldville in January 1963.
- SACDNU is accorded full delegate's status at the PAFMESCA Conference.
- I return to Arua, Uganda via Stanleyville, Bunia and Aru; I meet my children for the first time since I left them after the death of their mother in 1961.

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- I am arrested in Arua and escorted to Kampala; I am released after accepting to meet the conditions for asylum.

**A rebel leader *(part 2)* (1963-1965)**

- I make Kampala my unofficial headquarters; I reorganize SACDNU and change its name to SANU (Sudan African National Union).
- Formation of the Anya-nya military wing of SANU; I invite 2nd Lt. Joseph Lagu to head the Anya-nya in May 1963. 19 September 1963 is Anya-nya 'D'Day'.
- I am arrested in October 1963 and in February 1964 I am tried, convicted and sentenced to 9 months hard labour. I spend until August 1964 in Luzzira Prison.
- SANU presents the Southern Problem to the OAU Committee on Refugees in Kampala, November 1994.
- SANU holds its first convention and I am ousted from the presidency, November 1964.
- I fail to dissuade William Deng from defecting to the Sudan in December 1964. There is a meeting with delegates from the Southern Front in Kampala in January 1965. SANU accepts to participate in the Round Table Conference in Khartoum, March 1965, but I refuse to lead its delegation; the Round Table Conference fails but succeeds in splitting SANU.

**A rebel leader (*part 3* Conflicts within the Movement)**

**(1965-1971)**

- Movement splits between SANU (William) and SANU (Aggrey); I support formation of ALF (Azania Liberation Front) in July 1965, as the only way to save the liberation struggle from collapse.
- Visit to Europe, September 1965.
- Southern Sudanese intellectuals in Uganda express their concern about the chaos in the movement and urge unity; SANU (Aggrey) changes its name to SALF (Sudan African Liberation Front); merger efforts succeed and ALF and SALF unite under the name of ALF, under my presidency, in January 1966.
- I visit a number of Anya-nya camps in Torit District, February 1966; I meet General Moshe Dayan in Nairobi in the company of Fr. Saturnino Lohure and three Anya-nya commanders; we compile a document on the type of military assistance Israel would offer the Southern Sudan Movement.
- ALF doomed to failure from the start
    - Ezibon Mondiri rejects an unified military H.Q.

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  - Kenya advises Southern Sudanese refugees to disappear from
  - Nairobi
  - ALF becomes the target for destruction by Sudan government with the help of the Southern Front
  - Uganda Government clamps down on ALF activities and begins arresting its leaders and prominent Southern Sudanese refugees;
  - Fr. Saturnino dies at the hand of joint Uganda and Sudanese Army operations, January 1967.

- I flee Uganda in November 1966 for the Dito H.Q. of 'A' Company of the Anya-nya, commanded by Lazzaro Mutek, where I remain until September 1967.
- 1966-67: A proliferation of organizations and governments-in-exile dog the Southern Struggle:
  - First Provisional Government under Aggrey Jaden, September 1967
  - Nile Provisional Government under Gordon Muortat
  - Anyidi Government under General Emidio Tageng Lodongi: Who was behind Tafeng and why?
- I leave for France in December 1967, but return in May 1968 to try to save the Movement from total collapse. But all efforts to keep the Movement one fail. The Kitgum Conference of East Bank leaders in Equatoria in May 1968 decides to hand power to Anya-nya and this saves the Movement from actual collapse. Gordon refuses to sign the unity pact in June 1969 and the last attempts to unify the Movement fail. The East Bank goes it alone.
- I accompany an Israeli military mission to Anya-nya camps on the East Bank in June 1969; first officers are sent for training in August.
- I get married again, to Agnes, in May 1970.
- First air drop of weapons at Owing-Kibul, November 1970.
- On a visit to Owing-Kibul in April 1971, I encounter an Israeli commander, code-named John, who is advising that Anya-nya be a military movement only, without any political wing. A student from the Hebrew University backs me in the opposite view. The Anya-nya abandon tribal leaders. I become convinced the Israelis are not serious and hence not committed to the idea of the complete independence of the Southern Sudan. I decide to quit the Movement in August, 1971.

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**Addis Ababa Agreement (1971-1972)**

- Events that led to the negotiations and subsequent initialing of the Agreement in 1971.
- Southern Sudanese exiles reject the Agreement. Politicians in Kampala set up a committee under my chairmanship to study, review and amend the Addis Agreement. The Uganda Government is also unhappy about the Agreement and Amin advised against its ratification in January 1972.
- Lagu comes to Kampala and agrees to accept our amended version as a basis for the re-negotiation of the entire Agreement as requested by the Committee, March 1972.
- On the basis that the Agreement will be re-negotiated, I accept to accompany Lagu to Addis for the ratification of the Agreement. Other politicians refuse to go.
- We leave Kampala for Nairobi on 25 March 1972 and meet the Kenyan Permanent Secretary for Defence, Jeremiah Kyerini. He advises against signing the Agreement, on the grounds that it was not in the best interest of the people of Southern Sudan.
- We arrive Addis on the morning of 26 March 1972. At a meeting with Lewa Baghir, first Vice-President of the Sudan and Vice-President and Minister of Southern Affairs, Abel Alier, on the one hand, on the other Joseph Lagu and his adjutant, I explained the amended version of the Agreement. Lewa Baghir, understanding the implications, told Abel that 'we', i.e. the Sudanese side, must be prepared for a re-negotiation of the Agreement and the he would inform the President accordingly. But during the night, separate secret meetings between Lagu, Sudanese officials and the Ethiopians took place. As a result Lagu changed his mind and accepted to sign the Agreement as it was.
- Addis was flooded with Southern Front supporters, headed by Gordon Abyei. It is they who take over the re-negotiation of the amended version on 27 March 1972 with us. The outcome of these talks resulted in the 6 points, which were accepted by Lewa Baghir.
- I fly to Khartoum and meet Nimeiri in his office. He assures us that he accepts the 6 points and that they will be included in the forthcoming Permanent Constitution of the Sudan as part and parcel of the Self-Government Act, which will be embodied in the Constitution as an organic law.
- I lead an Anya-nya Committee of Enlightenment to the three provincial capitals of the Southern Sudan, to explain the end of the war and the Agreement.
- I am appointed a member of the Political Bureau of the Sudanese Socialist Union and Regional Minister of Housing and Public Utilities in the Interim Regional Government of South Sudan.

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- I return to Kampala in April 1972 and then finally to the Sudan.

**Politics and government in the Southern Sudan (1972-1982)**

- The establishment of the Regional Government in Juba in April 1972. The major programme is that of the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees and the reconstruction of the country. I also serve briefly as Minister of Education.
- In December 1973, there are elections for the first Regional Government. I am returned for Torit South East and re-appointed Minister of Housing.
- Tribal politics set in, 1973 to 1975. In July 1975, I am dismissed from the Government and Political Bureau positions. In February 1976 I am arrested and detained until October 1977.
- In the elections of 1978, a predominantly Anya-nya Government gets elected. I am returned and appointed Minister of Co-operatives and Rural Development and later, in the 1979 reshuffle, Minister of Public Service and Manpower.
- Khartoum starts the game of the destabilization of the South, with the intention of doing away with the Addis Ababa Agreement. The 1978 Government is illegally dissolved in 1980.
- In the 1980 elections, I am returned again and appointed Minister of Public Service and Manpower. But in October 1981, the Regional Assembly is once more dissolved; the issues are borders, oil and the re-division of the South into three separate regions, all aiming at the abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement.
- Elections to the National Assembly take place; I am arrested together with other opponents of division in December 1981 and taken to prison in Khartoum.
- Nimeiri backs down on re-division; elections to the Regional Assembly are announced and we are released from prison on 22 February 1982.
- The unionists in Equatoria lose the elections and the divisionists form the Government.
- Conclusion and a guess at the future.

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# INSTALLING A FLOOD IRRIGATION SCHEME AT THE KHOR ABU HUBL

Arthur A. Staniforth

For some years an outline plan had existed for irrigating and bringing into agricultural production a broad belt of hitherto uncultivated fertile soil in Kordofan, to the south-east of El Obeid. Andrew de Vajda, a Hungarian engineer of world-wide repute, working for the Sudan government, had more recently devised a scheme for using water from the Khor Abu Hubl ("*khor*" means seasonal water course) to irrigate some 10,000 feddans of this land. Now, at the end of 1945, the threat of a grain famine, caused partly by locusts, spurred the government into urgent action. They had the money for it, too, after some years of high cotton prices.

Having finished locust work, I found myself being sent to a place called Semeih, which was to be the base for the Abu Hubl project. Semeih in arabic means a pretty little place and it turned out to be a village of round grass huts among acacia scrub and sand hills some 60 miles up the railway from El Obeid. It was very close to the battle field of Shaykan where the Mahdi's dervish force had annihilated Colonel Hicks' 10,000 strong Egyptian army - an event which was still within the memory of some of the oldest local inhabitants.

I went there with Alec Graves, the senior inspector at El Obeid, and we set up a tented camp - stores, offices and living quarters and prepared to construct the scheme. Many features of its design resembled those of the other flood irrigation schemes in the northern Sudan, so it is worth devoting some space to a description of the project.

The Khor Abu Hubl is a stream which flows seasonally, from June to November, being fed from the heavy rains in the Nuba Mountains watershed. At Simeih the khor is some eight metres wide and, when in full spate, may be three metres deep. However, the stream does not remain at this high level for more than a few hours and there may be periods of as much as a week during the rainy season when the flow decreases to a trickle or even stops. A black, cotton soil plain has been built up by the khor and there was an extensive area of gently sloping land along its course. The sketch map and diagram will help to explain the project.

A dam, or regulator, was to be built across the khor, making it possible to raise the water and maintain it at its highest level for a considerable period. A canal dug from behind the regulator would run obliquely to the line of the contours and water would be led off into this canal until it "*commanded*" the surrounding plain - that is, until the water in the canal was

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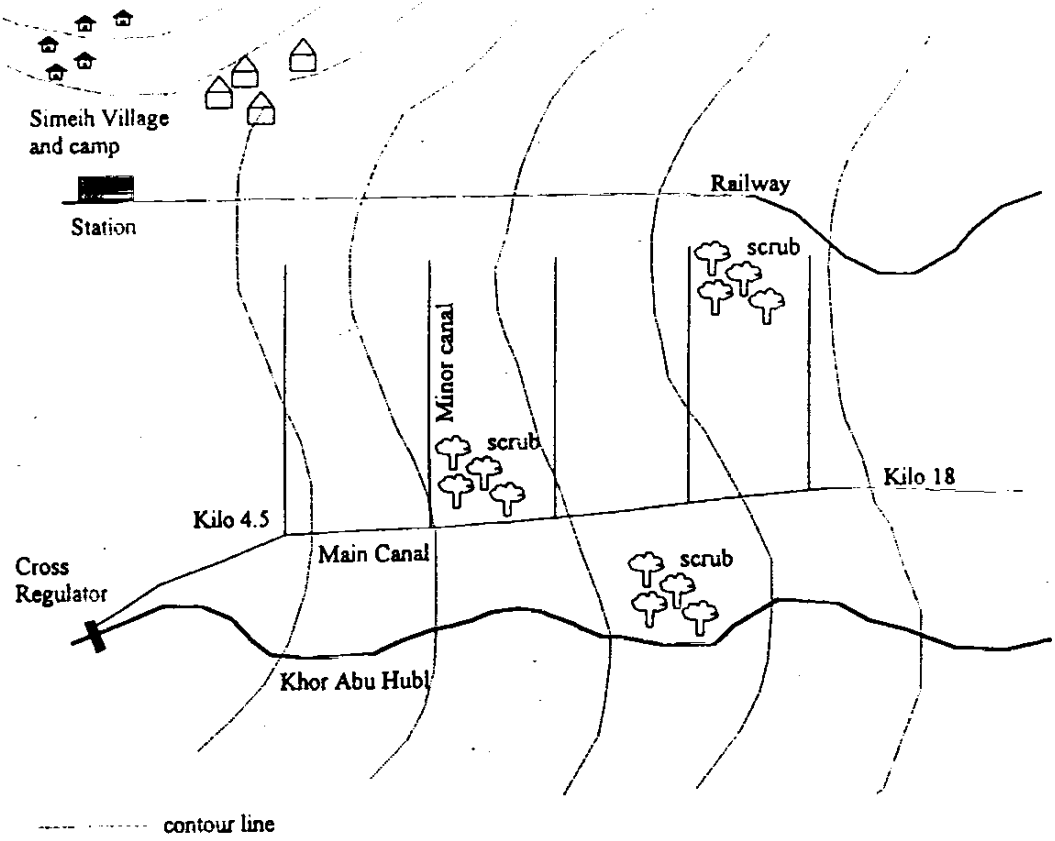
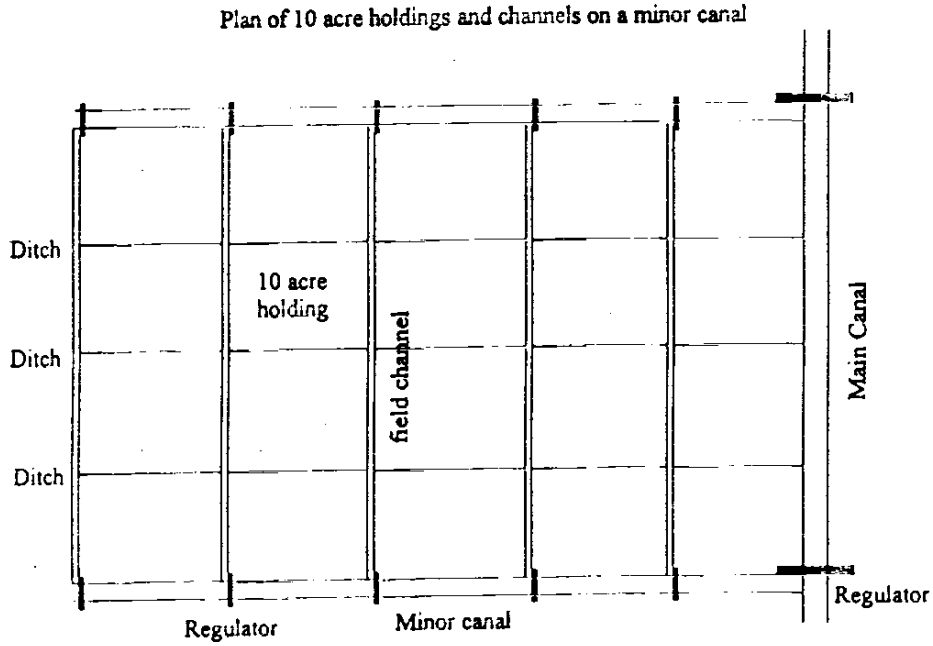
General Plan of Abu Hubl Scheme




Plan of 10 acre holdings and channels on a minor canal



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higher than the land and could be let out through openings in the bank to water that land. (A 20 centimetre "*command*" is considered necessary for good irrigation). Regulators would also be built in the main canal so that water might be held up and led into minor canals, and similarly from minors into field channels onto the holdings. This is the basis of all free flow irrigation, but the Abu Hubl scheme differed from others in that the regulator across the khor did not store water but merely raised the level of the fluctuating seasonal flow.

The proposed scheme area at Semeih had already been surveyed from the air and levelled at 80 metre intervals by the Surveys Department. The designing engineer had to design a regulator of sufficient strength to control the rush of water in the Abu Hubl in spate and a canal system capable of watering an area of 10,000 acres at a rate of 100 cubic metres of water per acre within the shortest possible time. The regulator was to be a large granite and concrete structure with three huge wooden doors mounted on rollers and raised or lowered by worm-geared pulleys. The main canal had a designed slope of 60 centimetres per kilometre and a cross section designed to pass a very large volume of water. Mr. Telford, the engineer in charge of construction, was assisted by three Sudanese engineers and a Yugoslav foreman builder. The excavation of canals was carried out by a fleet of five D7 Caterpillar tractors operating graders, carryalls, a Killifer plough, a scarifier and road scraper, backed up by plentiful hand labour. The construction of all stone regulators, including the digging of foundations, quarrying and dressing of stone (from a nearby hill) and transport of all stone and sand, as well as the actual building, was done by a contractor, Abdul Muta'al Mohamed Abdullah. He was a remarkable personality - a light-skinned Dongolawi from the northern Sudan, strongly built with rather long arms and slightly bow-legged, seemingly always cheerful and in charge of events and a wonderful man to work with. He had recruited around 1000 workers, mostly hardy saidis from upper Egypt. I was concerned with the housing, feeding, watering, paying and general welfare of all workers; with the maintenance of a proper supply of materials such as cement, tractor fuel and spare parts.

Alec Graves came over from time to time, but I was mostly left on my own as a "*general factotum*". I had a "*hospital*" type tent with, as soon as it could be laid, a concrete floor - much more commodious than my locust hunting tent.

Looking back on the experience, and re-reading my old letters, I am reminded that life at Semeih was not a bed of roses.

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*The flies are dreadful and the dogs bark all night. I have a swatter which is now falling into shreds and with which I kill an average of about thirty a meal... we should get some mosquito netting down from Khartoum soon... that should help a bit... in the last few minutes I have been interrupted five times - to write a telegram for a new grader belt, to order materials for the builder, to arrange for water to be brought from the tanks, to fix up for a lorry to go to the stone quarry and to sign a pay sheet. This scheme building is a pretty hectic business and I don't have half an hour in the day to myself. I've got wages accounts and water accounts and ration accounts and motor transport accounts and petrol and fuel oil and tents and many other things to control before ever I get out to see how the tractors are working and the dam foundations being dug and the roads levelled. Today I was about four hours checking the safe...*

And I had to get the accounts right. I was on my first home leave when I received the following letter.

NO. : A&F/50.A.1/38. KHARTOUM, 29th. April, 1946.

A.R. Staniforth Esq.,
Ashford Mill House Ilton,
Ilminster Somerset,
ENGLAND.

A wire was received on 22.4.46 from Ziraa Rahad reporting that a registered letter, containing orders for payments collected by you at Rahad, could not be traced.

These orders for payment were sent from this office at your request for signature.

I have asked Rahad Office to forward true copies of the orders for payment together with the supporting vouchers pending further enquiry and submission of the originals on your return from leave.

In the meanwhile can you indicate the whereabouts of the missing payment orders and vouchers.

H.A.L.Tunley.
for Director,
AGRICULTURE & FORESTS.

TO: Inspector of Agriculture Rahad.

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There is no record of my reply, but I am sure that the outcome was satisfactory. The Sudan Government ran a tight ship, financially, in those days.

There were a few personal problems, too...

> *up came the tractor mechanic with a terrific complaint about his box car driver, and I had to calm them down... the two of them calling each other all the bad names... Anyway, they've gone away, appeased... we've been able to keep everyone here in pretty good humour, which is half the battle in a job like this.*

Two other little episodes...

> *Just now one of the effendis brought in one of a gang of 200 which we've brought in from Egypt. He is said to be a dangerous thief and I'll have to take his finger prints and send them up. The other day I was stopped by a lot of yelling women, shouting, "Murder!" They brought in a chap tied up with rope. Apparently they'd noticed a bad smell and the earth heaving up in the middle of one of the holdings. The man had murdered his partner three days before and buried him. But with only nine inches of soil over him!*

During this time at Semeih I also had to prepare for the March Arabic exam. I got some old exam papers from head office and worked on them in the evenings whenever I could. On the 24th of February I actually had a day off - the first since Christmas and, with Alec Graves, saw "Arabian Nights" in the El Obeid cinema.

There was a halt on the railway line at Semeih and this had its advantages. I made friends with the cook and he would bring me down some fruit and other tit bits from Khartoum most weeks, so that I had a better diet than I had had either at Umm Gerr or at Bir N'gaa. Of course, I always took my atabrine and slept under a mosquito net and kept surprisingly fit.

There were several visitors to the scheme and I had to keep a supply of drinks for them. I listed these in one of my letters but added,

> *You would think I had taken to drink, but, set your mind at rest, they are there to revive the spirits of visitors. There are very few British government officials who do not take their whisky or gin, but heavy drinkers are extremely rare.* [There was a rule in the Sudan, which seemed to me to be universally accepted, that alcoholic drinks should be taken only after sun-down].

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> *We had the Governor-General here the other day for a flying visit. We took him round to see the foundation of the new dam and he expressed surprise at the progress we had made. He turned up in a very frayed jacket and open-necked shirt and was not at all got up to represent their majesties Farouk and George.*

This was Sir Robert Howe, recently appointed by the new Labour government. He came to the Sudan at a difficult time and has never had much recognition. I saw him and Lady Howe again when they toured Equatoria in 1947 and stayed at my house in Meridi, and I will say some more about him in a later chapter.

The work on the scheme did, in fact, go ahead remarkably quickly. The saidi workers were a hardy bunch and seemed to live on little more than "*aish*" - dura bread - and water. By the time I went on my first leave in April, the main regulator and the canals were well advanced, the scrub and small trees had been cleared and most of the land to be irrigated had been levelled and the smaller irrigation channels installed. I handed over the supervisory work to a newly appointed man, Peter Broad, and expected on returning from leave to go to Talodi, which was my official station in the Nuba mountains. As it turned out, Peter had a great deal of ill health at Semeih and I had to go back there till he recovered.

> *I got Broad away to El Obeid where he is now having a fortnight in hospital - his blood must be in a bad state as he has nasty ulcers on his legs. Fortunately, while I was away, they had built a rest-house at Semeih much better than the one at Umm Gerr, stone-built and with a proper bath and a paraffin frig., on hire from an El Obeid merchant.*

In fact, it was several weeks before Peter came back and I had to supervise the early attempts at irrigation.

> *This morning there was a huge break in one of the canals and that kept me out for several hours before breakfast supervising the gang which I got to fill the break with sacks of earth... We are irrigating at least 200 acres a day here now and it's a difficult job as it's the first time the water channels have been used and the water won't run in a lot of them, while the tenants haven't the foggiest of how to irrigate... We did some experimental night watering last night as there was a bright moon.*

The Abu Hubl scheme in its first year was not a great success.

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> *Of the 10,000 feddans originally planned there will be no more than 4,000 good this year and some of this is still under a forest of grass. The water channels are all pretty bad, too. Added to this there is a lot of malaria about so that, at the moment, I haven't got a single car driver on his feet.*

It was ironic that 1946 turned out to be a very wet year. The crops in the goz (sand hill) areas grew exceptionally well, while the black soils of the Abu Hubl plain were inundated and became a breeding ground for mosquitoes. It was not surprising that the local people showed little enthusiasm for cultivating the scheme area.

> *The weather*, I reported, *is still pretty terrible, very hot and sticky in the afternoons. We had a real storm on Wednesday night with plenty of thunder and lightning. I had to go down to the train with Broad and it started to come down just as the train pulled out. I had about a hundred yards of clay soil to cross to get back to the rest house and only just made it.*

The scheme, which we had rushed to complete to provide much-needed grain after some years of drought and locust attack, yielded no more than 3,000 tons of dura - a poor return on the estimated £75,000 cost of installing the scheme. (The government took one-fifth of the sale value of the dura crop as rent). However, in the event, the output was not required to help to avert famine.

There were some useful lessons to be learned. Technically, surveying land levels at 80 metre intervals had not given sufficiently detailed information - the Kordofan black soil plain was not so uniformly flat as the Gezira or the White Nile irrigated areas. This meant that some of the holdings would need further levelling before they could be properly watered.

On the human side, too, there had been mis-calculation. The local people, used to a different type of rain cultivation, were not immediately able to master flood irrigation of the Khor Abu Hubl type. If 1946 had been another dry year, they might have been encouraged to work harder at it; as it was, they saw only the disadvantages. It is too easy to forget, when planning development schemes, that their success or failure depends on people. Curiously enough, it was in this same part of the Sudan that another scheme, which looked so logical on paper, came to grief some years after I had left the country. This scheme was planned to provide much-needed diversification in Sudanese exports by canning the supposed large surplus of beef produced by the Baggara, cattle owning people of Kordofan. The Liebig canning company put up a factory at Kosti. However, in spite of much exhortation, the Baggara

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people could not be persuaded to bring in enough cattle to supply the factory at the prices offered. They preferred to hoard their wealth as they always had done and to sell animals only when conditions forced them to. The Liebig factory had to close down through lack of a reliable supply of meat to can[43] .

Before moving on to describe life in the Nuba mountains, this is the place to bring in another mention of Colonel Gordon who was trying to control the slave trade in south-west Kordofan during the 1870s. He was between Dara and Shaka in September 1877 and wrote, "A very hot march. En route I have complaints on all sides of the pillage committed by the slavers' people. I cannot help it. The heat and flies on these marches are terrible... I am running a great risk in going into the slavers' nest (at Shaka) with only four companies, but I will trust to God to help me... There are some 6000 more slave dealers in the interior... You can imagine what a difficulty there is in dealing with all these armed men... Would you shoot them all? Have they no rights?... Had the planters no rights? Did not our government once allow the slave trade? Do you know that cargoes of slaves came into Bristol Harbour in the time of our fathers?"

The editor's footnote to this passage adds, "The Quakers took the lead among the emancipationalists. Yet, in the year 1772, John Woolman, the Quaker, wrote, "Great is the trade to Africa for slaves! and in loading these ships, abundance of people are employed in the factories; amongst whom are many of our society".

[43] See ***Agricultural Processing for Development*** John C. Abbot, Gower, 1988

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# EVLIYA CELEBI - ENVOY OR SHAM?

John Oliver Udal

Evliya Celebi is one of the more renowned travellers of the seventeenth century - compiling no fewer than ten chronicles of his travels as an official of the Ottoman Empire. They included that related to the journey of a pilgrimage caravan to Mecca (*c*.1649) - Book 9, to which Evliya was appointed Imam Mahmil; and to a transit of the Sudan (*c*.1671) - Book 10. Collectively the chronicles are known as the *Seyahatname*.

He was born in Istanbul in 1611, the son of Mohammed Zilli Ibn Derwish - chief jeweller to the Court and a standard bearer to the Sultan Sulieman Kanuni. His mother, from the Caucasus, was presented as a gift to Sultan Ahmed I who, in turn, gave her in marriage to Evliya's father, so Evliya started life with good friends at Court - not least his maternal uncle, in the Sultan's entourage, who became Grand Vizir 1650-51. His handsome features and agreeable voice led to Evliya's appointment first as a page in the seraglio and then as an imperial chaplain, until the rapid promotion of his uncle to the rank of pasha brought employment on the latter's behalf on a number of international missions, commercial and governmental, extending from Persia to Austro-Hungary.

Only at the age of 60 did he undertake the visit to the pashalik of Egypt and it is his participation in this one last major journey, in forty-one years of travel, that excites our direct interest. Book 10 - the final chronicle covering Egypt, Sennar and Habes (Abyssinia), together with Book 9 - the Haj caravan, each a part of Volume 5, both became lost in the original text in the mid-eighteenth century. Most fortunately they had been copied in Istanbul, but still await reconstitution. A less reliable version of the text, published by the Turkish Government in 1938, exists in Latin characters and it is this which forms the basis for the only attempt to date at an annotated synopsis of Book 10 in a European language. The work was undertaken by Maria Teresa Petti Suma and published in the Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli in 1964 - a serious endeavour though handicapped by her evident personal unfamiliarity with the geography of Nubia and the Sudan[44].

Turkish scholars have studied the 1938 text but most have become exasperated by the exaggeration which permeates Evliya's descriptions of places and events, not least his own role in the latter. Unreliability of the 1938 text, as against the archetype text, may well however be partially to blame. The geographical setting described, allowing for the supersession

[44] ***Il Viaggio in Sudan di Evliya Celebi 1671-2***

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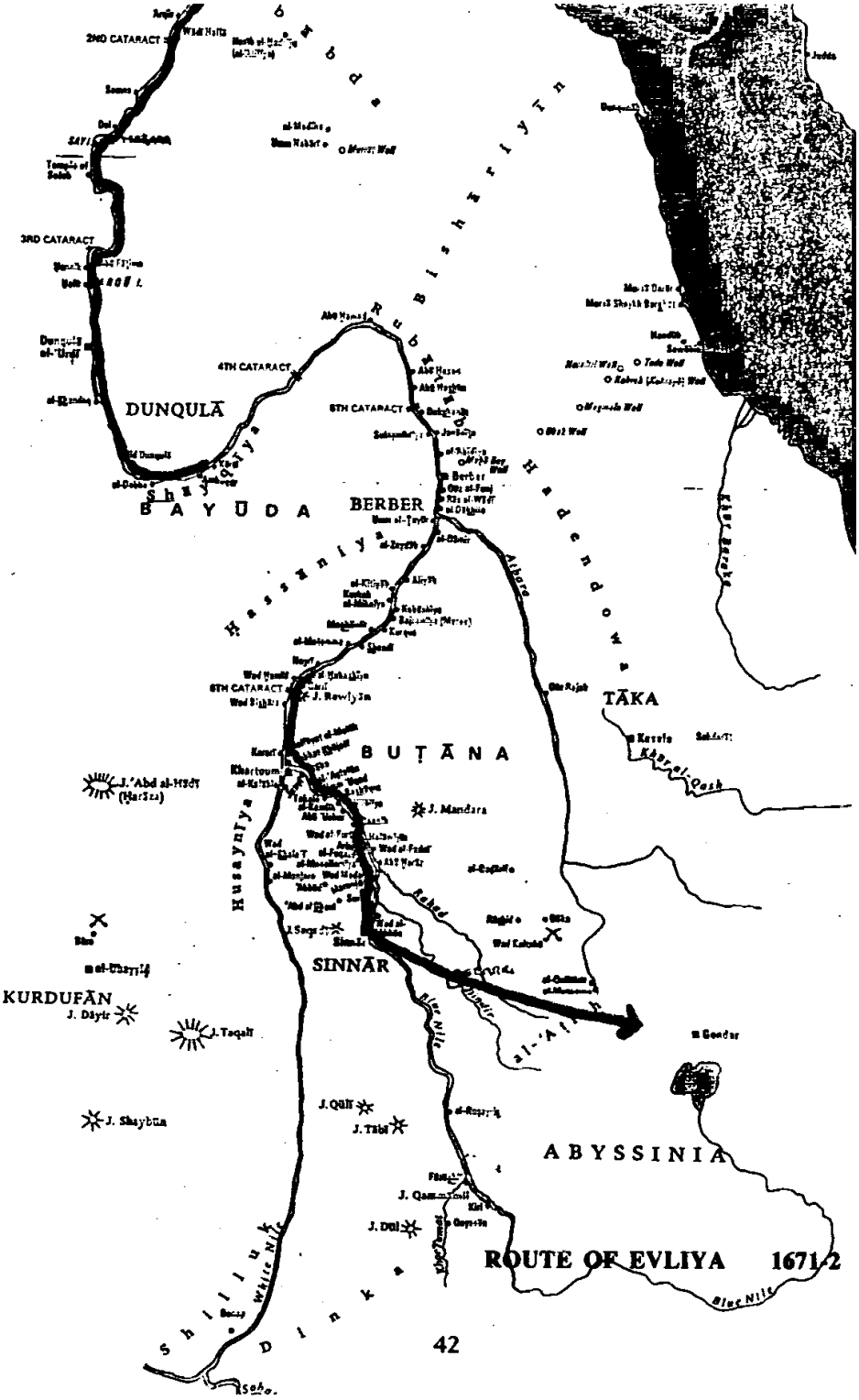


**ROUTE OF EVLIYA 1671-2**

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of place names in the intervening passage of time, is frequently irreconcilable with the reality. This shortcoming seems to beset Evliya's books of earlier travels and his biographer[45] for the Encyclopaedia of Islam, is blunt in his comments:

"He occasionally describes journeys which he himself manifestly cannot have undertaken. His literary ambition drives him to record things and occurrences as though he had seen and experienced them himself, whereas a close examination reveals that he knows of them only from hearsay or that he is indebted to literary sources which he does not cite."

This proclivity - exciting the greater incredulity in the case of Book 10 in that this was the record of a man entering his seventh decade of age travelling, initially, through a really harsh climate in the midst of summer - has doubtless discouraged scholars from undertaking an exhaustive critique of the 1938 text. Yet, to dismiss Book 10's offering of written knowledge of Nubia and the Fung Kingdom in the mid-seventeenth century, other documentary evidence being so scarce, would be mistaken without careful analysis: Something of a snapshot it may be, but seemingly it covers half a year of journeying.

I understand that there is a project now afoot to scrutinise the earlier texts - as yet untranslated - and, perhaps, not before time. The British Museum originally commissioned such an endeavour in 1934, funded by the Oriental Translations Fund, but Ritter von Hammer only completed two Books, 1635-40 and 1640-55. Books 9 and 10 were not among them. Indeed, if a definitive study of them is to be undertaken, in the opinion of Dr. Pierre Mackay, an essential preliminary will be the reconstitution of the archetype manuscript. Accordingly fuller illumination remains some years off.

Meanwhile, a closer look at the 1938 version of Book 10 may yield more light on the credibility of Evliya's claim to have performed this remarkable journey. To test his credibility there are two preliminary directions of research which should prove profitable in the short run. First, the detail of Evliya's travelogue, especially through Nubia, can be carefully compared with the journals of later European travellers of the same route - notably of Father Theodore Krump 1700-2[46] and of John Lewis Burkhardt in 1813[47]. As to Lower Nubia, the potential interest of such an analysis can only be heightened by the fact that today so much of the earlier part of Evliya's route lies beyond fresh investigation under Lake Nasser, although Dr. John Alexander has recently returned from a survey of the ruins of the Turkish fortress of Say. Secondly, there exists a remarkable map of the Nile Valley - painstakingly drawn, with legends, by an unidentified Turk who may have been a member of

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45 ***Encyclopaedia of Islam*** H.W. Duda. 2nd Edition, Vol. II, pp. 717-8

46 ***The High and Fruitful Palm Tree of the Holy Evangelist*** 1710

47 ***Travels in Nubia*** 1819

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Evliya's entourage - of which to date Ettore Rossi is the only person to record a preliminary opinion.

To consider the map first, we know that it was not compiled before 1685 and therefore after Evliya's death, aged 74. Evliya left Egypt for Sennar mid-summer of 1671 and Petti Suma says that, while at Ibrim, he proposed to produce a map of the Nile and the Fung Kingdom on his return, with the help of a cartographer - Hikemizade Ali Bey. The map in question was personally acquired in the 18th Century by the Vatican Librarian who left it as a bequest to the Library where it was first examined by Ettore Rossi in 1949. He concluded:

"The correspondence between the map and the Tenth Book of Evliya Celebi's Travels is so strict in substance and in text that coincidence is not possible and one must admit that the map was drawn in connection with Evliya Celebi's book by one of his readers, perhaps by a person of the author's suite."

Rossi announced his intention to publish a fuller examination of the map, but he was unable to fulfil this objective. With the kind cooperation of the Prefect of the Vatican Library I have been able to obtain, on behalf of the Sudan Archive in Durham University Library, a facsimile photograph of this map (over 4 metres in length) covering the Sudan, and of its Turkish script legends. Professor Victor Ménage, to whom I have shown it, has been so good as to share with me some of his impressions from a preliminary reading of these legends. While Rossi may be right in his assertion that the correspondence of the map and legends with Book 10 is no coincidence, that can only be made confidently in respect of the Nile north of Mahas - in fact territory which was under Turkish occupation in 1671, although the map legend asserts that Kor Hussein, the Fung vassal whom Evliya met, had seized the Turkish fortress island of Say (between 1671 and 1685?). Hafir, Kor Hussein's headquarters in 1671, appears prominently; but to the south of the latter's boundary with Fonjistan (Sennar) place names are scarce. Sennar is not mentioned nor Dongola located, while the great northern loop of the Nile via Abu Hamad, encircling the Bayuda, is absent - indeed as is any reference in Book 10. In short, once Fonjistan is entered the correspondence between Book 10 and map becomes very sketchy.

Simultaneously, in Fonjistan the character of the map has changed to a schematic Ptolemaic style. The Nile sluices northwards from the Mount of the Moon through eleven arches - the central arch commemorating Alexander the Great. Mediaeval confusion as to the relationship of the Niger and the Nile is apparently reflected in adoption of Idrisi's twelfth century theory that the former flowed west from the Nile, perhaps through the Bahr el Ghazal. The Blue Nile is on the Vatican map and Fazughli gold mines, but not recognisably the Sobat or the Atbara. The Great Lake collection reservoir below the source could be the Sudd, rather than

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Nyanza or N'zige, but was patently unvisited by the cartographer. None of this owes anything to Book 10.

There is plainly scope for further detailed study of the map and its legends, preferably in the context of the reconstituted archetypal manuscript of Book 10. While, however, the corroboration for Evliya's chronicle through Upper Nubia is presently strong, for the Fung (Fonjistan) sector of the journey it is unhelpful.

To return then to the detail of Evliya's narrative and the evidence of later travellers. His initial progress up the Nile commenced from Girga in Upper Egypt through Aswan, Wadi Halfa, Sukkot and the Island of Say, which marked the approximate end of Ottoman territory, to the beginning of the northernmost vassaldom of the Fung Kingdom of Sennar - Mahas - ruled by Kor Hussein (Hussein the Blind). The section from the Second Cataract at Wadi Halfa to Say, Sukkot, took Evliya six days through the harsh Batn el Hajar - *the belly of the rocks* - where strangely he registers a forest - presumably of date palms.

Evliya was a notable of the occupying Ottoman State with a firman from the Viceroy, Ibrahim Pasha Kara, and accompanied by an escort. He carried a letter of introduction and presents to King Badi II of Sennar. No European was to attempt that route to Sennar, fraught with risk to the ordinary traveller of interception and arrest by the local kashif rulers, until Captain Frederick Norden, the Danish sea captain who was turned back at Derr in 1738; and then J.L. Burckhardt whose epic journey was accomplished in 1813. Burckhardt travelled alone with a single guide and amazingly covered the 900 mile round trip - from Esna, past Derr to Tinareh, just north of New Dongola, and back - in 35 days by camel, averaging ten hours per day; and this within two years of the expulsion of the Mamlouks from Upper Egypt by Mohammed Ali Pasha. Burckhardt's account is admirable in its detail.

In the narrative of this first leg of Evliya's journey we encounter the first serious problem to his credibility as an eyewitness of events, in that he seems to relate a movement from Say to Maqraq southwards from Ottoman territory, whereas Maqraq is north of Say. Yet the account is accurate in its detail for the reverse north-south direction from Maqraq to Say and matches that of Burckhardt - which suggests that this part of the Turkish text has got out of order. This, and other contradictions, I consider more fully in *The Nile in Darkness*. It is, of course, not only contradictions which challenge Evliya's credibility. The numbers given for composition of contending military forces and of the inhabitants of localities are unacceptably large, but the multiplication of Turkish noughts - 'Sifars' as in Arabic - is more pardonable when the original written digit is a ٠. The featuring of war elephants in Kor

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Hussein's domain, one of which Evliya claims to ride - an evident status symbol - in mid-summer is further ground for disbelief.

Perhaps the most difficult narrative to accept concerns Evliya's personal participation in the expedition of the Fung army - which he claims to join under Kor Hussein's generalship - to put down a rebellion led by a tribal chief (Hardokan) in the desert to the west of the Nile. Could Evliya, aged 60, in the heat of the Nubian summer have undertaken such an enterprise - the duration of which seems to have extended possibly three months? The answer would seem to be an emphatic negative. The obstacle is compounded in Petti Suma's translation of the 1938 text in her mistaken direction of march and distance (7 hours westwards from Lake Feyle, itself west of Moshu).

This, however, is a straight error, for the Turkish (I am much indebted to Professor Ménage) states unequivocally that the Fung expedition marched two days and three nights before moving, at the following dawn, four hours to the battle. I argue that the battle is most likely to have taken place at Shemsi, west of El Sawani, but the location of the rebel Hardokan's fortress - Firdaniye - and the identification of his infidel fire-worshipping followers - the Mugar - offer further challenges. Nevertheless, a credible explanation of the account with all its incompatibilities is not entirely unfeasible.

Central, I suspect, to the resolution of such local difficulties is the acceptance that in fact Evliya was not present with the expedition west of the Nile but was resting - in comparative comfort, if somewhat unheroically - at Moshu whence the expedition set forth. Hither returned the expedition, in early November 1671, for Evliya to welcome the participants and, doubtless, to debrief their leaders - the second-hand source of the material of this section of Book 10.

Sennar, however, remained Evliya's principal objective before Habes[48] and now, taking leave of Kor Hussein, he was quickly on his way to Old Dongola in his capacity - he relates - as the personal guest of the Viceroy of Egypt and the first white man to enter Berberistan (Barabra). Old Dongola was probably still under the Abdullab Sheikh of Gerri, as opposed to Shaiqi rule, and this historic, if ruined, fortified city merits the attention of Evliya - with its square brick fortress and seven mosques. Here, Friday prayers were offered on behalf both of the Fung King of Sennar and of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet III - the latter strictly in his capacity as Guardian of the Holy cities. Again, Evliya forges south - this time with the Qadi of Dongola as companion - passing a ruined church "Taller than Santa Sophia" (an example

[48] Habes: This New Ottoman province based on Suakin (captured 1522) was seized on behalf of the Sultan by Ozdemir Pasha 1555-8, including Massawa and the Abyssinian coastal lowlands as well as Debarwa in Tigre. There he died in 1560, to be succeeded by his son Osman.

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perhaps of Evliya's uninhibited capacity for exaggeration, since Santa Sophia was well known to his readers), the southernmost point of this stretch of the Nile before its course bends to the north at Duffar.

Another major problem presents itself here. After Duffar the 1938 text describes a fortress of the Mek Idris - sixteen hours to the east of the Nile - with seven hundred dwellings. Thereafter, in nine hours, Evliya reached Gerri, the Abdullab northern capital, near the sixth cataract - the southern side of the Bayuda desert - with a transit time of at least eight days. It would seem inconceivable that either Evliya or the Dongola Qadi, journeying to meet the Fung King at Sennar, would have followed the northern loop of the Nile through Shaiqi territory past Napata and Merowe without mentioning these antiquities; but, equally, there is no mention of the demanding crossing of the Bayuda, even if it was now November, nor of Shendi and ancient Meroe. Some part of the chronicle seems here to have gone astray. Nor is the description of Gerri, as a little ruined round mud fort, easily reconcilable with that of the Catholic missionary - Father Theodore Krump - thirty years later, who has the Abdullab Sheikh presiding impressively in his palace. Bruce, a hundred years later, counted 140 dwellings. Was, at this stage at least, Evliya still leading his legation?

The account of the final stretch of the route from Gerri to Sennar - notably of Soba the ruined capital of the old Christian kingdom of Alwa; of the alternative southern Abdullab capital of Arbagi, on the Blue Nile, where he had a not very cordial meeting with the Manjil - probably Sheikh Agib Ibn Ereigi; and, finally, of Sennar itself - is detailed and impressive even if, taking the path to Soba, Evliya appears unaware that he missed the confluence of the Blue and White Niles at present day Khartoum. Elephants (even a rhinoceros) gain further mention - with perhaps greater probability granted the latitude.

Evliya, accompanied by the King's kamfin, headed the procession into Sennar, with the Qadi from Dongola, on 12 December 1671 and dispatched the presents and the letter of introduction from the Viceroy of Egypt to King Badi abu Dukn. He was now in the Fung (Fonjistan) capital, described by Krump on his visit (without too much knowledge) as

"... by far the most important centre of all Moorish countries in Africa. Caravans visit it regularly from Cairo, Dongola, Nubia, beyond Red Sea, India, Ethiopia, Darfur, Bornu, Fezzan and other countries. It is a free town... and it is one of the most densely populated towns after Cairo."

Evliya does justice to Sennar - devoting to it some twenty per cent of the 1938 text covering Wadi Halfa to Habes. Though he could have gathered much knowledge from others of the detailed lay-out of the town; its moated fortress with cannon and outer wall of 3000 paces,

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and the principal mosque of Kakan Idris with its minaret, nevertheless, the descriptions of its inhabitants, their merchandise, musical instruments, distinctions of dress and, above all, of the formal reception in audience by the King of this representative of the Viceroy - and so of the Sultan whose name was remembered in the Friday prayers - are too vivid and real to excite serious doubt about Evliya's personal participation.

His sojourn in Sennar, which included Ramadan, exceeded two months and enabled him to attend the King not only at the Eid el Kabir but also at a hunting expedition. He was fortunate that a group of Abyssinian merchants arrived seeking to purchase merchandise and especially camels. Evliya obtained the consent of the King to depart with them on their return journey to Habes whence, after some three and a half months, he set out to return to Egypt via Suakim and Ibrim.

There have been fraudulent accounts of travel in the Sudan, the most notorious perhaps being that published in 1854 by Alexandre Dumas Père, a master of historical fiction which included the d'Artagnan novels. The sham traveller in this case was one Charles-Louis du Couret, rascal son of a general; the title: *Voyage au pays des Niams-Niams ou hommes á queue, avec le portrait d'un Niam-Nam et une notice biographique sur l'auteur par A. Dumas* [49]. Was Evliya of this ilk?

The answer is an emphatic no. The involvement of an author of the calibre of Dumas Père in such a spoof is indeed surprising, but he did not conceal his delight in travel tales of imagination and, at the time of du Couret's spoof, moreover, Dumas was seriously in debt. In the case of Evliya it was, perhaps, artistic licence compounded by vanity and enthusiasm for African exploration which led him astray in Book 10 to utter the kind of fictitious claims to personal achievement such as had punctuated his earlier travel journals. David Reubeni and Jacques Charles Poncet were probably similarly guilty of the same indulgence in their narratives - at least when they were without the company of a literate witness. Such errors, however, do not so undermine the credibility of these travellers as to condemn them as shams who were never there.

As to Evliya's chronicle: leaving aside suspected exaggerations of fact, such as the presence in Mahas of elephants and the accuracy of numerical measurements and quantities, the main doubts relate to his alleged personal participation in the campaign against Hardokan - to the west of the Nile; to the orientation of Maqraq and Say; and to the omission of any account of the journey across or round the Bayuda desert. On the other hand, the detail and accuracy of most journey times, the boundaries of provinces, and the identification of Viceroy Ibrahim

[49] ***Europeans in the Sudan 1834-78*** Paul Santi and Richard Hill, 1980

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Pasha Kara and Kor Hussein - whose name appears on the Vatican map, seem convincingly to anchor Book 10 in time and place. As to the Vatican map, Rossi's judgement that, at least in respect of the journey through Upper Nubia, the map was drawn by someone with knowledge of Book 10 not only corroborates Evliya's general narrative but, in particular, his claim to have planned such a map at Ibrim when en route to the Sudan. Further research seems amply justified.

Evliya Celebi spent the remaining ten years of his life writing and editing the *Seyahatname* - representing over forty years of travel. He died in Cairo; or, having passed a final year there, in Istanbul: about 1685.

This paper was presented to the Fourth Triennial Meeting of the

International Sudan Studies Association

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# CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN IN DIALOGUE: A MODEL FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN SUDAN.

Lillian Craig Harris

**SUDAN CHURCH STUDY SEMINAR: THE CHURCH IN SUDAN: ITS IMPACT PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**. Brackenhurst Conference Centre, Limuru, Kenya. 16-22 February 1997.

On 17 June 1996 I read a paper to the Second National Christian Women's Conference, convened by the Sudan Council of Churches in Khartoum, urging dialogue between Christian and Muslim women. My suggestion did not involve theological discussion but rather exploration of individual and group empowerment by forgiving and making peace with one another. Unknown to most people in the audience, such a dialogue had in fact already begun.

Since March a group of about 30 Sudanese women, Christians and Muslims, had been meeting twice monthly. They called themselves "the Women's Action Group" or just the WAG. Last June they were not yet prepared to go public. But as WAG facilitator I already sensed that I was involved in a powerful experiment which seemed to offer a way towards reconciliation between Sudanese individuals, cultures and religious groups.

At that SCC conference last June I advocated, as a first step towards Christian-Muslim dialogue, repentance for our own fear, self-righteousness and anger, which hold us back. This should be followed by acceptance of our own self worth as well as of the self worth of others and of the value of what they have to offer to us. Included in this acceptance ought to be the recognition that we do not need to agree with everything another woman says in order to accept her viewpoint as legitimate for her. The crucial ingredient is the willingness to listen and the end result would be healing and reconciliation.

However, in order to enter into productive dialogue, I suggested that we must at least be willing to forgive and that it would be necessary to recognize that no individual represents "the Muslims" or "the Christians". The recommended way forward was two-fold:

1. Meet together to listen to one another and to exchange information about who we are and what we experience, need and want. A major ingredient in these encounter sessions must be learning to listen to and to accept the pain and anger of other persons in dialogue. We would not be in need of dialogue if we were all in agreement, so disagreements, no matter how painful, would be thoroughly aired. Through listening, followed by acceptance and forgiveness, healing would begin.

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2. With growth of a spirit of understanding and cohesion in the group, an impulse for service would emerge. Some project, no matter how small, would then be selected to allow the group to work together to help the poor and those who suffer. Service to the community would be the path to personal empowerment and to even greater service.

**Initial Responses**

The response to my remarks at the SCC conference was intense and multi-faceted. I learned a great deal and felt that several truths about dialogue had been demonstrated.

* Dialogue, simply put, is listening to and seeking to understand one anothers' viewpoints so as to reduce further conflict by building understanding and trust between individuals and groups. But people often confuse dialogue with debate, negotiation or even with normal social interaction.[50] One Christian woman told me, "We are not willing to dialogue [*sic*] with weak Muslim women; they are as powerless as we are". Clearly she had confused dialogue with negotiation - which can only occur when both sides have a position of authority or power from which they can manoeuvre. Nor does the dialogue to which I refer have anything to do with debate - the effort to win over another by argument.

* There was both agreement and disagreement with the basic proposal. Christians, men in particular, made several heated statements concerning their inability to speak on equal terms with Muslims because of what Muslims were said to believe and the northerners' treatment of southerners as inferior. Such statements underscored the need for dialogue to broaden our understanding both of Islam and the fact that not all Muslims believe the same thing. There seemed a strong temptation to blame religion for problems which may be basically cultural.

* Though religion serves as a rallying point on both sides, it is not essentially theology but politics, cultural differences and historical experiences which divide Sudanese Muslims and Christians. Moreover, the present state of intense emotional negativism in Sudan between Christians and Muslims relates more directly to a power struggle

[50] However, Francis Cardinal Arinze identifies what he calls "dialogue of life" which can occur "at the level of the ordinary relational situations of daily life... When neighbours of differing religions are open to one another, when they share their projects and hopes, concerns and sorrows, they are engaging in dialogue of life. They do not necessarily discuss religion. But they draw on the values of their different beliefs and traditions." ***Meeting Other Believers***. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997. p. 11.

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between men. Women have a role to play in bringing rationality to arenas of physical and political violence. But unless women unite, their strength is diluted.

* I was shocked (though I should not have been) by the depth of the pain and anger unlocked during the Sudan Council of Churches session. There were several Muslim women in attendance who by both their remarks and their presence demonstrated willingness to engage in dialogue with Christian women in the interest of service to the community. However, the goodwill of these Muslim women was virtually ignored. This was not intentional I believe, but rather a spontaneous result of the emotional climate generated by the opportunity to vent pain. However, the visiting Muslim women (as they later verified to me) felt rebuffed and despised as they were in effect lumped in with those of their co-religionists who have actively demonstrated the acute need for Christian and Muslim women of goodwill to sit down together and talk from the heart.

* Some people are not in a position to enter into dialogue because they see no validity in opinions other than their own. Apologists and propagandists are extremely frustrating to speak to as their positions are inflexible and they hope to convert rather than to work towards mutual understanding. Persistent inflexible opinions will hijack the group unless we can hold on to the purpose: sympathetic listening.

* Does this mean that people who are deeply wounded psychologically, especially those who are extremely angry, should be excluded from dialogue? The answer must be "not necessarily" for often such people are those most in need of dialogue's healing benefit. Although their personal wounding may temporarily prevent them from reaching beyond their own feelings and admitting that a woman "on the other side" also hurts, dialogue can be very effective in helping people begin to break out of their psychological pain. Enabling emotionally wounded people to talk is enormously cathartic because by so doing they can work towards their own release. "We emerge into the light not by denying our pain, but by walking out through it".[51]

**How the WAG began**

The WAG was born in early 1996 after women from Al-Manar Consultancy - northern/Muslim women - asked me to identify various southern/Christian women with

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[51] Joan Borysenko. ***Guilt is the Teacher, Love is the Lesson.*** New York: Warner Books Inc., 1990. p. 21.

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whom they could enter into dialogue about "peace and development." However, when subsequently I began to invite various southern women to meet with the northern women it emerged that many of them were already acquainted and had at times even met together in dialogue efforts. What was really needed, it seemed, were a venue, a facilitator and a method.

I have no formal experience or training in dialogue or conflict resolution. Therefore, I was thrown back on the only tools I possess. Fortunately these are tools of enormous power and relevance to dialogue - although I did not clearly understand this at the beginning. In the words of a Chinese proverb, the WAG way forward has been, "Feeling the stones to cross the river."

The powerful tools to which I refer are those of a psychological support service known as Befriending or "listening therapy."[52] Befriending is based on the principle that a supportive, sympathetic listener is often crucial to personal crisis resolution. The person in distress or crisis is encouraged to vent her emotions, thus lowering the psychological temperature so that she feels relieved and can think more clearly about the way forward.

This method of offering psychological support works because the first thing anyone in emotional crisis needs is a sympathetic, non-judgmental listener. And the truth is that most people do not want advice: they want to be understood. By now I hope you see how this method might apply to dialogue. Everyone wants to be listened to, to be understood.

The WAG method in seeking to build bridges between women from various regions of Sudan has been to promote mutual venting of negative emotions: feelings of anger, pain, confusion, aloneness, helplessness which arise from war, displacement, social prejudices, religious dogma and cultural transitions. It was felt that if each side could listen attentively to, accept and begin to understand the agony and disempowerment of the other, then true mutual healing and group reconciliation would begin.

The ultimate aim, of course, is to make such an impact on the community that eventually women can gain a greater voice in the peace and development process. But the WAG recognized that those with their hands on the throttles of power, be they political, religious,

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[52] Befriending, the offer of "listening therapy" to the despairing and suicidal, originated with the Samaritan movement which began in the U.K. in the 1950s. Its early directors and practitioners were Chad Varah and John Eldrid, both Anglican priests. Befrienders International, using the Samaritan principles of "listening therapy", now operates in over 30 countries. The service is free, confidential and non-sectarian and the carefully selected befriending volunteers come from all walks of life. Befrienders Khartoum began service in March 1997.

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family or economic, do not simply turn power over to women. To gain access to power without using force you have to make your leadership desirable and for that to happen you have to empower yourself. Therefore, a core group had to be bonded together.

This occurred in August 1996 at an all-day "Listening Sensitivity Workshop" during which the women told their stories and listened carefully to the painful stories of the other women. There were tears. There was amazement. And in the end there was joy. On that day I came to see how extremely difficult and painful dialogue can be. My respect for the women grew enormously. And on that day I realized as well how privileged I am to be involved in a process which clearly identifies itself as a work of Grace.

Of course, the WAG has not spent all its time listening to pain. To try to do so would overload the senses, lead us away from service, break our hearts. So in our discussions we have concentrated as well on social issues such as health, displacement, identity crisis and education. Within the group we have found considerable expertise in these areas and others. Some of the WAG deliberations are being written for circulation to a larger audience.

Discussion revealed that the WAG women believe identity is related to history, religion, civilization (do you really have to wear clothes to be civilized?), personal and social attitudes, colonizers and politics (how identity is used by those in power). But dialogue about who we are is vitally important for in dialogue we can exchange information, provide mutual support, heal our aloneness, resist hatred and - this became increasingly clear as we moved forward - engage in service to others.

In our discussions, the relationship between identity and conflict resolution became clear. The WAG believes that until we can each feel comfortable with who we are, not only will we continue to suffer personal disempowerment, we will also continue to find it extremely difficult to accept others as they are. Much energy is wasted trying to make "them" be like us, trying to make ourselves be like "them", hating "them" for being against us, etc. War, of course, is the most blatant example of this waste of energy.

One northern woman expressed a feeling of urgency in reaching out to other women in dialogue: "Our liberation as women will not come with the end of the war," she said. "It is dangerous if these women remain bitter." A southerner responded that, "The hatred has gone too deep. Dialogue only begins when ordinary women come together and see what is their problem." Another added that, "Governments have worked to keep the knowledge of what is happening from us. But we are in the same pit together." A second northern woman agreed that "We are a people separated from one another. We, too, as northern woman are harassed. We all need to read Mandela's biography!"

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**Reaching out to other women**

Following the successful listening seminar, it was decided to hold a dialogue workshop to involve women from outside the WAG. This first dialogue workshop was held in October at Ahfad University under the theme "The Differences Which Unite Us," a statement which has since become the WAG motto. Some 50 women attended a half-day programme which included roleplays depicting loss, exercises in defining the words which divide us (*jihad, human rights, peace, kafr, slavery, Arab, mondukuru,* etc.), and group work to identify first what we dislike most about "the other side" and finally what all Sudanese women have in common. When, before leaving, we joined hands and sang "We shall overcome, we shall live in peace," a European observer left the group shaking her head that she had never before seen anything like it.

Neither, of course, had any of the rest of us, but we hoped it would continue! And it has. In November at the preparatory seminar for this conference, held at the Nile Theological College in Khartoum, several women from the WAG participated in a presentation about the work of WAG and Sudanese women's attitudes towards peace and conflict resolution. Inevitably, we were attacked.

In my remarks to that seminar I noted that it seems to take a great amount of both patience and humility to enter successfully into dialogue - and a great deal of grace as well, especially when you are the injured or disadvantaged party. I suggested that women may have a natural advantage over men in entering dialogue because more women than men have been humbled by social, religious and economic disempowerment. Many men, I said, are not yet desperate enough to humble themselves for dialogue. Like the rich man Jesus told to sell all he had and give to the poor before he could follow the Christ, most men will go away in sorrow rather than enter into dialogue. These words seemed to be borne out when some Christian men at the Nile Theological College rebuked Christian women for "Entering into dialogue with these unbelievers."

This time, however, unlike the occasion in June, the WAG was bonded as a group of women who not only strongly believe in what they are doing but know they can count on one another's support. I was deeply moved by the way in which the Muslim women, supported by their southern sisters, told the Christian men that what they want is peace, not war, nor do they believe in *jihad* as it is politically defined or in forcing religion on anyone. The Christian women in the audience seemed more receptive to this message than did the men.

Since that occasion we have received other invitations to help women with dialogue and have set up a special WAG committee to deal with these requests. One request comes from a

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Catholic social worker in Jebel Aulia, a settlement for displaced people near Khartoum. Teresa, who is herself a WAG member, tells us that when she tries to involve a Muslim woman in her self-help projects - and there are many desperately poor Muslim women in the area - the Christian women despise the newcomer and turn her away. Will the WAG conduct a listening sensitivity workshop, Teresa asks, to bond the Christian women and then come back and do a dialogue workshop between Christians and Muslims?

Another WAG member reminds us of the problems caused by tribalism within the Sudanese churches and wonders if the WAG can extend dialogue into this area. A foreign Catholic priest working at Dar es Salaam camp for displaced persons requests that we come and work with the Christian and Muslim women whose children attend the schools he has set up in that area. WAG will, he warns, need to work slowly and carefully as most of the women, though eager to learn, speak no English and very little Arabic. Moreover, the WAG has already returned to the Nile Theological College to conduct a listening sensitivity presentation to male students in a counselling class. Significantly, the request to do that followed a similar programme for students' wives in early December.

Meanwhile, the social service which I knew must come as an expression of unity, but which I feared might come too quickly and overpower the dialogue, is taking shape but in support of dialogue rather than in detraction from it. Some 60 boxes of used children's books, a gift from the children of the Anglican Diocese of Bradford in the U.K., are being used to set up a mobile library. Not only will these books expand the horizons of children, many of whom had virtually no previous access to books, but we hope the library will serve as a magnet to draw more women into dialogue.

**Opposition to dialogue**

I have remained aware all along of the enormous fragility of the WAG. Opposition from powerful quarters - and there are many who do not wish to see women either empowered or reconciled to one another - could bring this work to an end. But one of the most comforting truths to which I cling is that works of healing and reconciliation are never empowered by the individuals who participate. Once genuine dialogue begins, Love itself becomes the source.

There are sizeable groups in all communities which believe that dialogue is at best useless and at worst dangerous. The first attitude grows out of the sin of pride: "Truth is on my side, why bother with those damned and ignorant *kafir*/sinners, etc." The second attitude, that dialogue is dangerous, arises from fear: "Maybe I'll screw up and not defend the faith or the political position properly" or "Maybe those weaker than I will be convinced by the demonic arguments and evil influences of the other side."

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Dialogue is resisted because of weakness, fear and ignorance when in actuality, engaging in dialogue works to remove all three of these negative conditions. But you can't enter into dialogue if your main intention is to convert or convince. You can only enter into dialogue if you are willing to listen and accept. This does not mean you have to agree. But you do have to listen with an open heart.

Moreover, it is a spiritual principle that when you are doing positive work, the negative will attack. The WAG has seen this in criticism of our work by both Muslim and Christian women who are seemingly motivated by fear and jealousy. We have also been criticised by some male Christian leaders who fear "Muslim influence." I can only say that such responses demonstrate very clearly why dialogue is needed.

**Observations about Sudanese women in dialogue**

Several conclusions arise as a result of my one year of association with the Women's Action Group.

* Sudanese women are not very eager and curious to meet women from "the other side", those not of their group. However, strong suspicions are common and each group typically feels culturally and religiously superior.

* Many northern women are deeply ashamed and sorrowful over the plight and suffering of their non-northern sisters and long for means to reach out to them. Feelings of anguish over social, cultural, economic and political injustice are widespread, but sharing experience with other women renews hope and expands resources.

* Sudanese women do not automatically divide themselves into northerners and southerners. We use these words for convenience with the WAG but urgently need a new terminology so as not to exclude women from the Nuba Mountains, the Red Sea Hills and other areas who early on let us know that a simple north/south division makes them feel left out. Nor is it appropriate to divide the WAG into Christians and Muslims as the women feel very strongly that it is not basically religion but fear and ignorance which divide them. When there are strong differences of opinion, the group does not divide north and south or Christian and Muslim, but along more subtle fracture lines of experience, temperament and knowledge.

* It is incorrect to believe that southern women have suffered far more than northern women. Psychological pain can be every bit as acute as the grief and trauma of

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experiencing war and its results first hand. Northerners, moreover, suffer their share of war-related family deaths and economic devastation. Although southern women regret that their cultures do not allow them the privileges which men enjoy, they point to equal if not greater cultural controls over most northern Sudanese women. Two northern women said, "When the war is over and the country rebuilt, the southern women may be free. But we, because of our culture, have lost part of our bodies (a reference to female genital mutilation), a loss which can never be overcome."

* The "differences" between women can actually unite us for although personal experiences differ, emotions and social dilemmas are similar. There is strength in understanding that throughout the world women share the experiences of loss, gender discrimination, emotional pain and disempowerment. War, hatred and ignorance are our common enemies, not other women.

**In praise of dialogue**

According to Scilla Elworthy, there are four things you can do when faced with a dominant power situation. You can:

1) acquiesce - become a victim;

2) try to manipulate or outmanoeuvre your opponent;

3) escalate the conflict by confronting those you disagree with; or you can

4) opt for "honest communication" intended to settle the dispute rather than win points.[53] This fourth option is dialogue.

Dialogue is about group healing. All the divisions within Sudanese society - tribal, political, cultural, regional, theological, economic - are reflected in Sudanese Christianity. Wounded, divided, pushed to the limits of endurance by their own sins and those of others, Sudanese Christians are desperately in need of healing. I do not claim that the WAG has found the only way forward or that dialogue will work with everyone. But I do know that we cannot listen unless we accept the humanity of the other person. This acceptance requires forgiveness and leads to reconciliation. When this occurs healing has begun.

There is much to be gained if we accept the grace to look into the mirror held up to us by compassionate partners in dialogue. According to one northern woman, "the southerners tend to see themselves as victims. They need to work to overcome that." In fact, suspicion, fear

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[53] Scilla Elworthy in ***Power and Sex***.

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and failure to take responsibility for the self are three major areas where most Christians need to heal. Dialogue with "the other side" helps to empower Christians in all these areas while working as well to break down the generalizations which divide the world into "them" and "us".

A side product of dialogue is that those who share their pain often end up deeply sympathetic to one another and willing to cooperate to prevent further pain to the woman who was once a stranger but has now become a friend. Dialogue can be an amazingly powerful aid to personal and social healing and a way to prepare the ground for negotiation where that is needed.

Pope John Paul II in his message for celebration of the World Day of Peace spoke of, "The liberating encounter with forgiveness". He added that, "the intense joy of forgiveness, offered and received, heals seemingly incurable wounds, restores relationships..." [54] There is still a very long way to go, but in working with the Women's Action Group, I have seen this "liberating encounter," this "joy of forgiveness" between Muslim and Christian Sudanese women.

*Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* by Henri J.M. Nouwen describes the movement from hostility to hospitality as "the creation of a free and friendly space where we can reach out to strangers and invite them to become our friends."[55] This movement, empowered by Love and blessed by forgiveness, grows out of dialogue.

A Christian woman describes how the atmosphere in the WAG has changed from our early meetings. "There is less anger now," she says, "and I feel less compelled to speak. Now I feel comfortable and accepted." This is Nouwen's movement from hostility to hospitality. And that, I believe, is what we would all call spiritual growth.

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[54] "Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace," 1 January 1997. The Vatican, 8 December 1996.

[55] Henri J.M. Nouwen. ***Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life***. London: Harper Collins Fontana Paperbacks, 1976. p. 74.

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