NOMADIC-SEDENTARY RELATIONS AND FAILING STATE INSTITUTIONS IN DARFUR AND KORDOFAN (SUDAN)

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ORIENTWISSENSCHAFTLICHE HEFTE

Herausgegeben vom

Orientwissenschaftlichen Zentrum
der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Heft 26/2008

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AND FAILING STATE INSTITUTIONS IN
DARFUR AND KORDOFAN (SUDAN)

Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration" 12

Herausgeber im Auftrag des SFB

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Die OWH erscheinen unregelmäßig.

Umschlag unter Verwendung des Wappens der Stadt Halle
mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Stadtverwaltung

Inhalt

Introduction

Richard Rottenburg

Where are the modern Sudanese institutions for the reconciliation of interests and for the prediction of future threats to the well-being of the population?

Even on the basis of limited historical documentation, most scholars agree that herders and farmers of the sub-Saharan belt have always emerged simultaneously and built common socio-economic systems in which their different forms of livelihood stand in a complementary relationship to one another. In principal, this coexistence is no more prone to conflict than various other forms of socio-economic complementarity. Empirically speaking, however, there has been a dramatic rise in conflict across the sub-Saharan belt since the early 1980s, and there is a tendency to represent the diverging economic interests of farmers and herders as the main cause for this deplorable development. Often, changing ecological conditions, especially declining average rates of precipitation and the processes of desertification that have made themselves noticeable since the early 1980s, are said to trigger the increasing divergence of the socio-economic interests of farmers and herders.

Since 2003, when the situation escalated in Darfur, the debate on farmer-herder conflicts has been dominated by this most dramatic and catastrophic case. In this context, one can often detect a specific pattern of argumentation, which may be summarized as follows:

The conflict began during the mid-1980s, when a ferocious drought and famine plagued the Sudan and the whole Horn of Africa. It killed more than a million people and innumerable livestock. Since then, the pastoralists of Darfur have clashed repeatedly with the farmers of the region. Both sides began to arm themselves, which presented no difficulties in those years and in that part of Africa. The ongoing violence and fighting began when some Darfurians launched an attack on government military facilities near El-Fasher in March 2003.

As in most comparable cases, other tensions and conflicts in the respective area and in the world at large were linked to this burning issue. The factor that has contributed most significantly to escalation in Darfur is the callous divide-and-rule policy by the Khartoum government of Omar al-Bashir. By 2003, Sudan's army was exhausted from twenty years of war in the south. Perhaps more importantly, the army had suffered a number of strategic blows at the hands of the parties forming the national government, first, the National Islamic Front and, then, the National Congress Party, which distributed the state's monopoly on violence

not only to the regular army but also to special Security Forces and so-called People's Defense Forces. Under these circumstances there was no Sudanese army left to control Darfur, nor was it the intention of the Khartoum government to exercise such control. Rather than start a new war in the west of the country or embark on separate power-sharing negotiations with those claiming to represent the people of Darfur, Bashir continued with a strategy that the previous government under Sadiq al-Mahdi had chosen in 1985, when the war in the South began to spread to South Kordofan: it tried to suppress the Darfur rebellion by subcontracting the military task to the Janjawid. The Bashir government armed the militias, reinforced them with convicts, and strengthened their Arab supremacist ideology. This ideology was first introduced to the region in the late 1980s, when Gaddafi tried to realize his vision of an "Arab belt" across Chad and Sudan. When the Dafur conflict erupted, many of Gaddafi's well-trained legionnaires were still in the area. Armed and espousing ideas of Arab supremacism, many of them became Janjawid commanders.

At that point, all parties began to describe the conflict in racial terms: Arabs against Africans. This fit well into a Western discourse about Islamic threats to democracy in Africa and about the global terrorism that was attributed to Islamic fundamentalists and the Arab world. The racial rhetoric also fit well into a global discourse concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and the need to intervene in national affairs if indigenous peoples were victimized by dominant groups. The second US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the US presidential election of November 2004 lent further international significance to the Darfur crisis and reinforced the interpretation that evil Islamic Arab intruders were abusing innocent, indigenous Africans (who, in this case, were also Muslims). The fact that in April 2004 the United Nations commemorated the 10th anniversary of the genocide of Rwanda and regretted its abstinence in that situation – with Bill Clinton apologizing to the people of Rwanda – also helped to turn Darfur into the case that attracted the most media attention ever given to such a catastrophe. The classification of the humanitarian disaster as genocide by Colin Powell in September 2004, and – much more importantly – the non-occurrence of an intervention that would be necessary according to UN regulations in case of genocide further heated the public debate and made Darfur into one of the main test-cases of the "New World Order" after the end of the "Cold War." Last but not least, the discovery of oil in Southern Darfur offered a strong incentive for those fighting for power-sharing with Khartoum.

Much of the current debate about Darfur's status as a paradigmatic example of the herder-farmer conflict is about the relative importance of and the interrelationship among these various factors. Few analysts would insist on a mono-causal explanation. Yet within the broad agreement on multi-causality there is still ample space for disagreement. Different accentuations have far reaching implications. The four papers of this special volume try to determine the specific weight

to be given to the various factors causing the dramatic shift from cooperation to conflict between farmers and herders in Darfur and Kordofan. It seems particularly illuminating to deal with Darfur and Kordofan in one and the same volume, because this directs our attention to one common feature that is less visible when focusing on either of the two cases separately: the post-colonial Sudanese governments, from the first to the most recent, have not been able to preserve, develop and improve those modern state institutions which are indispensable for the peaceful negotiation of diverging interests pursued by different parts of the population.

In other words, empirical research indicates that the causes for the escalation of local low-scale conflicts between farmers and herders into national and even regional conflicts, with uninhibited violence and gross human rights violations, are not related to the distinction between nomadic and sedentary life forms and their respective interests. Rather, they are, to a large extent, related to the failure of modern state institutions, to misguided national policies, and to the state's distorted development strategies that disregard the interests and priorities of both the farmer and herder communities. This "failing", though, is at least partly brought about intentionally by the ruling minority in Khartoum in order to preserve its power and to obscure its appropriation of revenues from oil exports, which have been unaccounted for since 1999 and which were based on production levels of 520,000 barrels per day in 2007. In Sudan, the leaders of the ruling minority have manipulated and damaged fundamental institutional structures of the state, and they have done so intentionally, as the previously mentioned example of the security forces indicates. The resulting situation is now completely out of control, and it is certainly not shaped by the rational interests of any of the parties involved.

If the complex reasons for the escalation of conflicts between farmers and herders in South Kordofan between 1985 and 2002 and in Darfur since 2003 need a label, the authors of these papers seem to suggest that such conflicts should not be called "resource conflicts", "oil conflicts", "ethnic conflicts", "racial conflicts", "conflicts of interests between farming and herding", or "climate conflicts". The label should rather be "conflicts caused by institutional failure".

Nomad-sedentary relations and the question of land rights in Darfur: From complementarity to conflict

Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil

Introduction

The relationship between pastoral nomads and sedentary farmers in the savannah dry-lands of Africa has often been depicted as one of 'polarized opposition' between typical 'herders' and typical 'farmers'. However, in reality one seldom finds communities representing such ideal types. The interaction between pastoralists and farmers is so complex that it cannot be adequately understood by using a simple herder/farmer dichotomy. Depending on varying situations such interaction can involve cooperation and complementarities or competition and conflict.

Writing about nomad-sedentary relations in the Middle East Fredrik Barth has suggested three alternative models to analyze such relations which are worth mentioning here:

1. Depiction of nomadic society in its relation to its total environment. Sedentary people are considered part of that environment, and the nomads' relations to them are revealed as part of an ecologic, economic, or political analysis.

2. Taking a more explicitly symbiotic view that seeks to analyze the interconnections of nomads and sedentary as prerequisites for the persistence of each in their present form.

3. Focusing on the total activities of a region (not on two kinds of society). If we think instead of types of activity, we can then disaggregate the sub-systems which are systems of production, or 'productive regimes'.

Clearly favoring the third model, he then states: "What I am proposing, then, so as to bring nomadic and sedentary populations into a common analytic framework and understand the forms and variations in the relationships between them is (a) to look at them as participants in a common regional economy, (b) to understand the character of the productive regimes that each is associated with, and (c) to analyze the class relationship between them" (Barth 1973: 11–17).

Following Barth, Babiker (2001) has correctly argued that the focus on the herder/farmer distinction would render the comprehension of complexity and the dynamics of resource competition rather inadequate. He gives two important reasons for objecting to the dichotomous approach: The first one relates to ignor-

ing the importance of scale and multiplicity of levels of analysis where claims of access and control of resources are usually contested, negotiated and settled at different levels (e.g. household, village, region, and nation). The second reason regards the importance of the processes of social differentiation in understanding the dynamics of resource competition and conflict. I would agree that this is a more sensible approach to understanding the dynamics of resource based conflicts in African dry-land savannah of which Sudan's central regions are the best example.

The issue of nomad-sedentary relations has recently moved to the center stage in Darfur in the aftermath of the civil war there. Typical media representation succeeded in packaging the crises as resulting from conflict between pastoral nomads and sedentary farmers. Furthermore, the first are identified as Arabs and the second as Africans. Hence the Darfur civil war is being portrayed by many as an opposition between two ethnic groups pursuing different ways of life.

In this paper I shall try to demonstrate that the two ways of life depicted for Arabs and Africans in Darfur are not inherently polarized. Although certain conditions have lead to such recent manifestations of a negative nature, careful consideration of past experiences show that the two ways of life (that of nomadic pastoralism and sedentary cultivation) tend to interact favorably at other times. The paper depends on secondary material (both published and unpublished) as well as on personal long-term association with Darfur as my homeland. More recently, I had a chance to visit Darfur in the capacity of a land tenure adviser with the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission which is managed by UNDP and aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signed in Abuja, Nigeria in May 2006. Although the data collected for the mission is not included in this review I have certainly benefited from the gained insight.

The savannah occupies the middle part of the Sudan from west to east. It is bound by the semi-desert sandy stretches in the north and by the swampy high grass and woodland in the south. Between these there are variations of savannah vegetation with different soil configurations. The northern and southern boundaries of the dry-land savannah are not fixed but shifts according to prevalent environmental conditions. Desert encroachment (or desertification) has become an observed fact. Experts believe that desertification is caused by two interacting factors: drought and excessive land use – be it cultivation, grazing or forest cropping (Ibrahim 1984).

There are two major economic activities in the savannah both of which depend on land as a crucial resource (a) rain-fed cultivation (sorghum, millet, sesame, groundnuts) and (b) livestock breading (camels, cattle, sheep, and goats). Between them there are other activities like craft and trading. Although the main logic behind the two types of activities is the maximization of returns for resources users they have been represented by many as distinct/dichotomous activities. Conse-

quently the population living in the savannah is also classified into herders and cultivators and their ways of life as nomad and sedentary respectively. However, when the real world of the savannah population is observed more closely, various configurations are found that point to less dichotomous patterns and more fluidity. As such, being a nomad or a sedentary refers only to the overwhelming economic practice that a given individual or group normally engages in.

Thus from a livelihood point of view both camel and cattle owning groups are considered nomadic pastoralists; as exemplified by the Baggara of South Kordofan and South Darfur (called as such because of their cattle rearing activities). On the other hand, groups depending mostly on agricultural activities are considered sedentary cultivators as exemplified by the Nuba in South Kordofan and the Fur living in Jebel Marra and its surroundings in Darfur. While such a classification might be supported by direct observation, nevertheless, it simplifies or conceals many dynamic processes that are going on to the extent that our understanding of the interaction between the two types of activities is misguided.

According to Barth's point of view stated above, it pays more to see the two activities not as dichotomous but as an open continuum of interaction and management of resources that takes into consideration not only the natural elements of the environment but also the surrounding socio-economic and political factors. In the words of one researcher: "Sedentary and nomadic people in the Sudan have been interacting since time immemorial. Their interaction has been characterized by ups and downs, depending on the prevalent circumstances that vary according to differences in modes of livelihood, culture and ecological conditions of the environment that supports their subsistence base" (Assal 2006: 6).

Another researcher (Haaland 1969) has found that nomad-sedentary interactions may sometimes lead to crucial changes in activities and life style. He noticed that some successful sedentary farmers have turned into pastoral nomads (Fur in western Darfur) and in other instances nomads who lost all of their animals during the 1970s drought have taken to cultivation and become settled (e.g. Zaghawa resettled in southern Darfur). In Gedaref region in eastern Sudan where mechanized farming was introduced about half a century ago many wealthy nomads have become 'farmers'; reversing the Darfur example. In order to fully appreciate the complexity of nomad-sedentary relations in Darfur, the ecological context of the region must be reviewed first.

Ecological endowment and livelihood strategies in Darfur

Darfur region occupies the westernmost part of Sudan and shares international boundaries with Chad, Central African Republic and Libya. It is characterized by gently undulating to nearly level uplands and plateaus between 600 to 900 m

above sea level. However, the topography of the region is interspersed with various hills and mountains. Jebel Marra (approx. 3000 m) constitutes a volcanic mountain range of about 115 km long and 45 km wide dominating the mid-western part of the region, while Jebel Meidob constitutes a distinct volcanic mountain in the northeast.

The climate is characterized by long hot and dry summers and short mild and dry winters and a rainy season of three to four months (June–October). The rainfall varies between almost zero in the northern parts of the region, to 800 mm in the high rainfall woodland savannah in the southern parts of Darfur. Hence, the region includes a number of climatic zones ranging from desert in the north to rich savannah in the south. Furthermore, rainfall is not only patchy, erratic and variable, but meteorological data shows an alarming trend towards dry conditions. For example, El Geneina town had a total rainfall of 528 mm in 1980, which dropped to 107 mm in 1984 indicating a leap towards desert conditions. The risk of receiving inadequate rainfall, mostly leading to crop failure, is high amounting to one in three years in the central parts of Darfur and two in three years in the northern parts of Darfur. Only in Jebel Marra area and in the savannah zones is the risk of both rainfall failure and rainfall variability rather low leading to stable crop production.

The drainage lines in Darfur region are numerous, all evolving from Jebel Marra plateau. The drainage system is either to the southeast to Bahr El Arab, to the south into Central Africa Republic and/or to the west into Chad. Most wadis[1] in North Darfur originate from the eastern side of Jebel Marra and drain towards the Nile basin. On the other hand Wadi Hawar which originates from the highlands on the Chadian border runs towards the Nile, but due to sand accumulation and aridity, the wadi hardly flows beyond North Darfur.

Ecologically, Darfur reflects diverse features ranging from a typical desert environment in the north to rich savannah marshland in the south. Environmental experts have not agreed on a unified classification of ecological zones in Darfur. However, for the purpose of appreciating the type of natural resources and associated land utilization patterns, Darfur could be divided into seven ecological zones as I have stated elsewhere (Abdul-Jalil 2004). The ecological zones represent the physical attributes of the area and natural resources that created conditions for particular land use patterns and livelihood options. They can be identified as follows:

1) The desert zone covers the northern part of the region and makes about 28 per cent of its area. It consists mainly of sandy stretches and dunes with very little vegetative cover, extreme heat and very low precipitation (0–100 mm). The only

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[1] Wadi is an Arabic word for a seasonal watercourse. Arabic transliteration follows the system adopted by the editors of "Sudan Notes and Records".

worthwhile economic activity performed in this zone is the raising of camels and sheep. Even though, animals can be kept here only for a part of the year.

2) The semi-desert zone lies south of the desert and is constituted of sandy stretches that are covered by low grass and bushes of small trees. It receives an average annual rainfall of 100–225 mm. Although the main economic activity in this zone is livestock breeding, there is limited cultivation of millet in years of good rain, especially along wadis (watercourses) where the soil is mixed with clay – hence more fertile. Some of the large wadis provide chances for practicing irrigated horticulture through digging surface wells of about 5–10 meters deep (like in Kebkabiya, Kutum and Melleit). Other wadis are amenable for the use of water spreading techniques to cultivate crops (like in Wadi Al-Kuo). Horticultural crops include fruits and vegetables in addition to tobacco which is solely produced in this part of Sudan.

3) The Jebel Marra plateau occupies the central parts of Darfur with a volcanic mountain on its top that reaches about 10,000 feet above sea level. Most of the watercourses that provide Darfur with water originate from this zone. Because of the better soil quality and the plentiful and more stable rainfall (up to 1000 mm per annum in some places), this zone witnesses some of the most intensive agricultural activity in Darfur. In addition to stable crops of wheat, durra, and millet, various types of vegetables and fruits are also grown. Citrus fruits (mainly oranges and grapefruits) and potatoes grown in Jebel Marra are marketed in large urban centers as far away as Khartoum.

4) The central goz extends east of Jebel Marra into the neighboring region of Kordofan. It consists mainly of sandy plains covered with bushes and short grass reflecting the rainfall that it enjoys (225–400 mm per annum). This marginally allows cultivation of millet, which is best suited for growing on sandy soil. Economic activities in the sandy soils include traditional crop production (millet), Gum Arabic and village-based livestock raising of sheep, goats and cattle. Since the 1970s this area witnessed increased activity of oil seed cultivation (peanuts, sesame and water melon) as cash crops. Conditions are also suitable for sheep rearing in this zone.

5) The western alluvial plains with clay soil are the most fertile and suitable part of Darfur for diverse economic activities. Falling to the west of Jebel Marra, it receives adequate rainfall (400–600 mm per annum) that supports stable agriculture. Furthermore, large wadis originating from Jebel Marra (Baare, Azoom, Kaja, and Aribu) pass through different parts of this zone, enabling its population to practice perennial horticulture in addition to rain-fed cultivation. Because of the extensive agriculture that leaves enough fodder and the presence of stretches of green trees along wadi beds, this zone is visited by camel nomads from the north as well as cattle nomads from the south during the dry season.

6) The southern plains consist of stretches of sand intermingling with clay soil, otherwise termed 'Baggara repeating pattern' by ecologists. Rainfall ranges between 600–650 mm. In the rainy season the area is used for grazing by the Baggara tribes and crop production by sedentary population. Expansion of oil seeds cultivation has been going on for the last two decades. Nevertheless, this zone is part of the famous cattle rearing zone in the Sudan which is termed the 'Baggara belt' in recognition of its rich savannah pastures preferred by Arab cattle nomads roaming central Sudan.

7) Lastly, the mixed soils, *ragaba* (scattered pools) and high rainfall are characterized by cracking clays and ironstone soils. It is occupied by cattle nomadic groups in the dry season. Rainfall is plentiful (600–750 mm per annum) here and soil is suitable for large-scale agricultural activities. But due to lack of roads and other infrastructural inputs, only limited mechanized commercial agriculture has been introduced.

The ecological conditions described above have the potential of being easily modified and disturbed by a combination of rainfall variability and human interventions. The magnitude and extent of the disturbance depends on the type of land use and level of activities. The level of land utilization differs from rational to exploitative. However, despite local adaptations based on traditional knowledge and experiences, environmental degradation has become so intense that it became a triggering factor of conflict between various land users (notably pastoralists and farmers).

Land rights under the customary tenure system

The history of Darfur before the ascendancy of the Keira dynasty to the leadership of the sultanate in mid 16th century is largely unknown. Therefore, any information on land tenure for that period is scanty unreliable. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that the developmental stage under which communities in Darfur were existing was one in which the tribe represented the overarching organizing principle. Membership in tribal groups and their lower components was essential for the formation of local communities. As it is generally known about similar communities in Africa, groups living in a given territory own the surrounding land communally in the pre-estate period. That would have meant the allocation of land to each extended family (not to individuals) according to its need within the territory that belongs to a lineage or clan. Families had usufruct rights on their farm-land as long as it was continuously utilized. When a family stops cultivating the land for any reason, it reverts back to the community and can be utilized by another family. Normally a community leader, who would

probably also be the village headman, was responsible for land allocation or re-cognition of new occupancy.

Uncultivated land was simultaneously utilized by all members of the community for various purposes, ranging from wood-cutting to collection of forest products and hunting. Non-members i.e. visitors had to be accepted first in the community then given access to natural resources as a result. As security was an important concern for these communities, they only accepted visitors that they trusted. In the pre-state period there were vast stretches of unoccupied and hence unclaimed land which was available for newcomers. Historians of Darfur have not recorded any large-scale skirmishes between the then indigenous groups and the arriving Arab nomads a few centuries ago. There is enough evidence to show that the in-filtration of these groups was gradual and peaceful. The fact that the majority of Arab tribes have their own recognized *dar*s (homelands) is a further proof to this point.

According to Shuqayr (quoted in O'Fahey 1980) Sultan Musa Ibn Suleiman who was the second ruler in the Keira dynasty (1680–1700) is said to have introduced a new system of granting land titles i.e. estates, called *hakura* (plural *hawakir*), even though the earliest found documents dated to the time of Sultan Ahmad Bakur the third sultan in the Keira dynasty. The granting of *hawakir* by sultans was initially associated with the encouragement of Muslim religious teachers to settle in Darfur and preach Islam. Merchants from the Nile Valley were also given estates in recognition for their valuable service to the state, which was mainly related to promotion of trade with Egypt and Riverian Sudan. Despite its connec-tion with the process of the Islamization of Darfur, in later stages the *hakura* sys-tem developed into a powerful tool for the consolidation of state power.

The *hawakir* (estates) granted by Keira sultans fall into two types; an administra-tive *hakura* which gives limited rights of taxation over people occupying a certain territory, and a more exclusive *hakura* of privilege that gives the title holder all rights for taxes and religious dues. The first type was usually granted to tribal leaders and later came to be known as *dar*s (literally meaning homeland). Effec-tively, administrative *hakura* confirmed communal ownership of land for a given group of people who usually make up a tribe or a division of it under a recog-nized leader. Originally the group had obtained such rights as a result of earlier occupation from the pre-state period. The sultan in this case merely recognized that fact and reconfirmed the position of the group's leader. On the other hand, the *hakura* of privilege (which was relatively smaller) rewarded individuals for services rendered to the state and had limited administrative implications. Both types of estates were managed through stewards acting on behalf of the title-holder (O'Fahey 1980: 51).

Sultans were able to ensure the loyalty and support of tribal leaders by issuing seal bearing charters written in Arabic confirming the authority of a chief over his

people and his right to manage the land that falls within the territory of the tribe. Usually such charters also describe the boundaries of the estate being granted. Army leaders and state officials were also granted land titles from the return of which they had to meet their expenses, since no regular salary system was in existence. Title holders were able to extract *ushur* (customary dues) equal to one tenth of farm yield from those who cultivated their land through a steward/ manager called *sid-al-fas* (master of the axe). The latter would manage the state by allocating pieces of land for settlement or cultivation. Customary dues collected from land were shared by various officials in the administrative hierarchy, which makes a *hakura* less than a freehold.

It seems that Keira sultans succeeded to a great extent to make land tenure a part of the administrative setup of the sultanate. Since not all lands were granted as estates, it meant that the older system of communal tenure continued to exist side by side with the *hakura* system in various places around Darfur. As far as tribal groups are concerned, the land they occupied effectively became synonymous with an administrative *hakura*. In other words, what used to be communal land has now come to be considered as an administrative *hakura* or *dar*. Tribal home-lands were named after the tribe e.g. *Dar Zaghawa* (land of the Zaghawa people) and *Dar Rizeigat* (land of the Rizeigat people). This development introduced new function to the land other than its economic potential; it became a symbol of group identity. Since the region is open to hosting immigrants from neighboring areas it follows that newcomers have to access land through transactions with indigenous land-holding tribal groups only. That is exactly what nomadic camel pastoralist groups have been doing for the last two hundred years or so.

Because nomadic land use rights are group-based and less individual-specific, they show close resemblance to the early form of (pre-*hakura*) communal rights. An individual nomad does not need to manage his own particular piece of grazing land because he does not stay in one place anyway. Moreover, the nomadic mode of life requires that pastoralists be given passing rights through special corridors in the tribal lands of sedentary groups. This was done through special arrangements between the traditional leaders of each party and according to which the customary rights of each side were observed. Such relations even developed into a form of interdependence between the two communities. Many nomads used to keep animals for their sedentary friends. Their friends on the other hand would reciprocate through gifts and giving access to the remains of agricultural produce which makes good fodder. It is worth mentioning here that while cattle herding Arab groups occupying most of southern Darfur estate (Rizeigat, Habbaniya, Ta'aisha, Beni Halba, and Fellata) traditionally have their own *dar*s, the Arab camel nomads of North Darfur (collectively referred to as northern Rizeigat) do not have *dar*s of their own. The Ziyadiya who live around Koma and Melleit are an exceptional case.

When Darfur was finally annexed to Sudan in 1916 the colonial authorities introduced little changes to the then existing system of land administration. Under their policy of indirect rule they confirmed tribal leaders as part of a native administration system and custodians of land belonging to their tribes. Tribal homelands (*dar*s) came to be recognized by the government on the basis of expediency as they helped in controlling the rural population more efficiently. From the perspective of association with a homeland Darfurian tribes may be classified into land-holding and non-land-holding groups. The first category includes all the sedentary groups plus cattle-herding tribes of southern Darfur. The second one includes the Arab camel nomads of the north plus newcomers from neighboring Chad who were driven by drought and/or political instability or both to seek permanent residence in Darfur. The relationship of this type of access to land on the current civil war cannot be overemphasized.

State intervention and the contestation of land rights

The intervention of the state has transformed some of the land relations paving the way for contestation where previously fixed and stable relations existed. The government of Jaafar Numeiri enacted a law in 1970 called the Unregistered Land Act (ULA) according to which all unofficially registered land in all parts of the Sudan are to be considered government owned land, hence accessible to all citizens. To make it even worse, it followed that with the abolition of upper level native administration in 1971 and the enactment of the Peoples' Local Courts' Act in 1973. The cumulative effect of these acts drastically reduced the capacity of traditional land managers even when they were later reinstalled after the overthrow of the Numeiri regime in 1985.

Although the government did not have any means to either map or directly manage all unregistered land in the Sudan, the new law effectively paved the way for later developments to take place regarding land tenure in most parts of the country. As a matter of fact the ULA was primarily aimed at providing the legal base for the expropriation of more land to expand the activities of the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) which was established by a special act in 1968. Mechanized farming has been introduced in some parts of the Sudan by British colonial authorities in order to feed soldiers during First World War (mainly in eastern Sudan). In many parts of the Sudan the expansion of MFC has lead to the alienation of indigenous populations from their land which has been expropriated by the state for the interest of rich merchant elites from the large urban centers in Riverian Sudan. The Nuba Mountains Mechanized Farming Corporation is a typical example of that development in land relations which became the backdrop for resource based conflict ultimately culminating in civil war in the mid 1980s (see Suliman 1999).

In Darfur the effect of the ULA has been rather different. The remoteness of the region made it less attractive for the mechanized farming entrepreneurs who basically practice soil mining and are therefore not ready to make any sacrifices for the future. However, dynamic land relations in Darfur have been dictated by the movement from the arid drought stricken northern part to the southern and western parts of the region. Although the customary land tenure system is based on the recognition of the fundamental rights of a major tribe in a given territory, nevertheless, tribal authorities are expected – as they usually do – to accommodate newcomers. As a general rule the *hakura* system allows for settlement of newcomers whether they are individuals or groups provided that they adhere to stipulated customary regulations in these matters; the most important of which is to remain subject to the administrative authorities of the host tribe. Grazing, hunting, water, and forest use are all considered by these regulations as universal rights to be enjoyed by everyone in the community including temporary visitors. Nomadic people did not have any problem with the system in the past because the migratory system they practiced gave them the advantage of exploiting a variety of resources in different ecological zones to all of which they had access.

A newcomer usually acquires the right to stay in an area and join the community first then he can ask to be allotted farmland. If a person is not accepted in a community a farmland cannot be given to him. The village headman first informs his senior native administrator of the arrival of newcomers irrespective whether they are temporary visitors or have the intention to settle permanently. When the newcomer is considered harmless to the security of the *dar* the village headman is allowed to allocate land accordingly. This clearly emphasizes the primacy of community membership over private *hakura* rights, which is only logical since communal land rights have historically preceded the advent of the *hakura* system itself.

It is noticeable that although they have been allotted land in the new territories according to customary tenure, migrants from northern Darfur who settled in other places (notably the goz and the southern plains zones) were ready to claim – after a while – rights for establishing their own native administration structures in their new homes since the land they occupy belongs to the government. Such claims would have been unthinkable in the past when newcomers were expected to remain as 'guests' of the host tribe and abide by its customary rules regarding land tenure and native administration. The many conflicts that the resettled Zaghawa in the goz were part of in the areas south of El-Fasher in the mid 1980s attest to the negative effects of the 1970 act (see Abdul-Jalil 1988). However, despite all the developments that added further complexity to the system, customary land tenure continued to function because it was flexible enough, up to a point, to adapt to new situations.

One may add here that the 1970 ULA affects mainly uncultivated land since the government can only redistribute unclaimed land. As a partial recognition for the time-tested customary acquisition of land, the government issued a Civil Transac-

tions Act (CTA) in 1984, which states that local communities have usufruct rights over land they occupy although legal ownership still remains with the government. The net result is that different land tenure systems coexist in the same area. Nonetheless, many factors have affected land use patterns in Darfur for the last three decades, which in turn affected customary land tenure itself and put its adaptive capabilities to a serious test. One of the most important challenges for the system of land management in Darfur in the last two decades has been the failure to regulate the relationship between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary cultivators in a manner that inhibits the frequent occurrence of violent conflicts. Pastoralists have also begun to contest the rights of the original *dar* owners. This is not to say that the pastoralists are alone responsible of the change in nature of the relationship with their neighbors and hosts. In a way this reflects new developments taking place in the practices of the cultivators as well. It is an interactive situation which I shall try to explain shortly.

Two distinct but complementary ways of life

Nomadic pastoralism and sedentary cultivation have often been perceived as cultural polar opposites not only by researchers but often by the actors themselves who openly admire their way of life while expressing feelings of discontent regarding 'the Other'. Village dwellers in Darfur express their own stereotypical views of 'herders' while the latter also have their own perceptions about 'cultivators'. Sedentary people consider village life as more comfortable, more sociable and it is associated with good food, cleanliness and religious worthiness. At the same time, they attach opposite values to nomadic life. By the same token, nomadic people praise their lives as more comfortable, more healthy, and involving more freedom. They don't hesitate to despise village life for its association with laborious agricultural tasks, bad health and less freedom.

Such views should be understood as expressions of ideological preference for certain cultural values and its associated life style. In no way does it correctly reflect the realities of everyday life that are less polarized. Ideological base perceptions about opposed life styles develop into communal group reference of 'We' and 'They' and subsequently become the basis for ethnic classification of livelihood patterns. Certain ethnic groups are considered cultivators while others are classified as pastoralists. The former category includes the Fur, Berti, Masalit, Tunjur and Dajo and the latter includes camel nomads of the north (northern Rizeigat) as well as various Baggara cattle nomads of South Darfur (mainly Rizeigat, Habbaniya, Ta'aisha, Beni Halba, and Fellata).

Each of the above mentioned life styles is supported by a set of cultural codes dealing with how to conduct oneself or perform certain activities according to

established routines. Such things are important for socializing the new generation into the appropriate cultural ways of the group. For example, a young nomad should know how to handle animals and use weapons that are important for guarding against possible threats to his animal wealth. On the other hand, a young Fur boy is expected to learn about agricultural practices at an early age (usually from five) and join a Quranic school when he reaches about ten years of age. Young girls, women, and elderly men on both sides have all expected roles and ways of conduct that represent the standards according to which their behavior is judged in their communities.

If normative values are generated by collective consciousness of the group, economic activities are dictated by more practical considerations for the individual interests of actors. For this reason it is difficult to find many villagers or nomads who fulfill the expected stereotypical pattern of economic activity appropriate to his group status. In fact most people in Darfur carry out mixed economic activities. Animals are not only kept by nomads. Sedentary people do keep all sorts of animals (camels, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and donkeys). In this regard, three types of pastoralism can be distinguished:

1) *Nomadic pastoralism*, where people are always on the move with their animals, wandering throughout the year fetching water and pastures. Herding and watering are the major activities. They usually inhabit drier areas and raise camel as the main animal and live in tents in temporary locations and camps. The tents are made of cloths, plastic material or straw. Groups of extended families of the same kin usually move together to secure themselves against raiding. An example of such a group is the northern Rizeigat of Northern Darfur State.

2) *Transhumance*, where people stay in villages during the rainy season and engage in small-scale subsistence cultivation and maintain their herds around the area. During the dry season, they migrate to seek water and pasture following definite and well-recognized routes. Cattle and sheep are usually herded far away from the villages by members of the family or by paid laborers who usually receive payments in kind, e.g. a small animal every year. The Baggara tribes of South Darfur (as well as the Hawazma and the Messeiriya of South Kordofan) constitute a typical example.

3) *Agro-pastoralism*, where people are permanently settled and engaged in agriculture as the major economic activity but are also involved in limited activities of livestock breeding. Animals are maintained around their villages and movements outside the settlement domain are very limited. The Tunjur and Berti tribes of North Darfur State provide an example of such practice.

The relationship between the three types of economic activities in the past was generally characterized by complementarity. Gunnar Haaland (1969, 1972, and 1977) has documented extensively the patterns of activities and relationships between various economic sectors in Darfur and their intersection with ethnic

group identity. Depending mainly on economic analysis he argued that a given life style is not maintained because of ideological preference but rather as a result of value management of alternative strategies made possible by ecological conditions. Relationships between groups also follow the same logic of interaction and cultural preference is mainly used as ideological justification for otherwise pure rational actions. Thus, to explain how the pastoral system evolves in relation to the surrounding environment Haaland argues: "This context is constituted by constraints imposed by the natural habitat, by available technology, and by the relationships between economic units. In the actions and reactions of such units to the natural environment and to each other, systematic interdependencies emerge. The nature of these interdependencies is significantly structured by cultural values and social commitments" (1977: 179).

When Haaland looked at the life of the Fur and their Baggara neighbors he found that they do not only depict distinctive livelihood patterns, each of which is supported by a clear rationale of value management, but also they complement each other in some respects. Referring to this relationship he observed: "Fur-Baggara contact is regulated by shared codification of the reciprocal statuses that were appropriate for members of the two groups respectively. Both the Fur and the Baggara are Muslims and may thus interact on ritual occasions. A Baggara may camp in the Fur area in the dry season, but is then subject to the jurisdiction of the Fur local chief (*sheikh* or *omda*). In the market place they provide complementary goods: the Baggara supply milk and livestock, and the Fur supply agricultural products of which millet is of major importance to the Baggara. The herding contract is another basis for Fur-Baggara transactions. Persons in Fur villages may own cattle, but ecological conditions make it risky to keep them in the villages in the Fur area in the rainy season. Cattle-owning Fur farmers may avoid this problem by handing their cows over to Baggara nomads. The Baggara keeps the cows in his own herd and drives them to his *dar* in the rainy season. He gets the milk from the cows while the owner gets the calves. The Baggara is not responsible if predatory animals or disease kill the cows" (Haaland 1972: 59).

The above lengthy quotation shows the complementary nature of relations between typical pastoral nomads and sedentary cultivators in Darfur up to early 1970s especially in the Jebel Marra area and the western plains which represent the home of the Fur people. Since then conditions have steadily changed and in the course the nature of that relationship has transformed from complementarity to conflict. The same nomads that the sedentary used to invite to camp on their farms so that the soil benefits from animal manure are now barred from passing by the village. On their part, nomads trek through with their animals devastating crops and gardens causing great economic damages for farmers and if resisted they don't hesitate to use the semi-automatic firearms they are carrying and kill whoever dares to defend himself against them.

The root causes of conflict: within and without

From the mid 1980s Darfur witnessed a gradual increase of violent interaction between various groups. Some of these conflicts took place between nomads and nomads and others between sedentaries but the most vicious has been that involving the largest sedentary group – the Fur – against the largest nomadic group – the Arabs. This has put an end to a pattern of complementary interaction and peaceful coexistence that characterized the relationship between the two sides for decades. Access to land and natural resources has been directly associated with the majority of violent confrontations between various ethnic groups in Darfur so far. The following table gives a rough indication of the issues and groups involved in violent confrontations with each other from 1932 to 2000, just before the outbreak of the current war (in 2003). The table indicates very clearly that camel herders of North Darfur (Northern Rizeigat, Zaghawa and Ziyadiya) are the most involved in violent conflicts.

Major conflicts reported in Darfur, 1932–2000

No.	Tribal groups involved	Year	Major cause of conflict
1	Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob	1932	Grazing and water rights
2	Kababish, Meidob and Ziyadiya	1957	Grazing and water rights
3	Rizeigat and Maalia	1968	Local politics of administration
4	Rizeigat and Dinka	1975	Grazing and water rights
5	Beni Halba and Mahariya	1976	Grazing and water rights
6	N Rizeigat (*abbala*) and Dajo	1976	Grazing and water rights
7	N Rizeigat (*abbala*) and Bargo	1978	Grazing and water rights
8	N Rizeigat and Gimir	1978	Grazing and water rights
9	N Rizeigat and Fur	1980	Grazing and water rights
10	N Rizeigat and Bargo	1980	Grazing and water rights
11	Ta'aisha and Salamat	1980	Local politics of administration
12	Kababish, Berti and Ziyadiya	1981	Grazing and water rights
13	Rizeigat and Dinka	1981	Grazing and water rights
14	N Rizeigat and Beni Halba	1982	Grazing and water rights

15	Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob	1982	Grazing and water rights
16	Rizeigat and Messeiriya	1983	Grazing and water rights
17	Kababish, Berti and Meidob	1984	Grazing and water rights
18	Rizeigat and Messeiriya	1984	Grazing and water rights
19	Gimir and Fellata (Fulani)	1987	Administrative boundaries
20	Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob	1987	Grazing and water rights
21	Fur and Zaghawa	1989	Armed robberies
22	Arab and Fur	1989	Grazing rights
23	Zaghawa and Gimir	1990	Administrative boundaries
24	Zaghawa and Gimir	1990	Administrative boundaries
25	Ta'aisha and Gimir	1990	Land rights
26	Bargo and Rizeigat	1990	Grazing and water rights
27	Zaghawa and Maalia	1991	Land rights
28	Zaghawa and Marareit	1991	Grazing and water rights
29	Zaghawa and Beni Hussein	1991	Grazing and water rights
30	Zaghawa v. Mima and Birgid	1991	Grazing and water rights
31	Zaghawa and Birgid	1991	Grazing and water rights
32	Zaghawa and Birgid	1991	Grazing and water rights
33	Fur and Tarjam	1991	Land rights
34	Zaghawa and Arab	1994	Grazing and water rights
35	Zaghawa (Sudan) v. Zaghawa (Chad)	1994	Tribal politics
36	Masalit and Arabs	1996	Grazing, administration
37	Zaghawa and Rizeigat	1997	Local politics
38	Kababish Arabs and Meidob	1997	Grazing and water rights
39	Masalit and Arabs	1996	Grazing, administration
40	Zaghawa and Gimir	1999	Grazing, administration
41	Fur and Arabs	2000	Grazing, politics, armed robberies

Although it is possible to enumerate so many factors that variably influenced conflict regarding land rights in Darfur, it is more fruitful in the present context to concentrate on the most crucial ones. It is important to notice that not all factors are of equal value regarding their promotion of conflict. Moreover some factors are of a structural nature pertaining to class relations within the country at large other factors are more directly related to the events leading up to violent confrontations between groups. For this reason, it is worthwhile to classify factors associated with the escalation of conflict in Darfur into two main categories: Root causes and direct factors. A brief description of each is given below.

(a) Root causes:

1- *Underdevelopment* (indicated by poor infrastructure, lack of development projects, unemployment, poor basic services).

2- *Marginalization* (indicated by poor representation in decision making, little influence on national policies, unbalanced regional policies).

3- *Lack of democratic governance* (indicated by ineffective public administration and rule of law institutions, totalitarian politics and ethnic polarization).

4- *Poverty* (indicated by the dominance of a subsistence economy, dependence on natural resources, recurring food shortages, comparative low income).

(b) Direct factors (or triggers)

1- Drought and desertification

Drought is an inherent feature of the arid regions of western Sudan, north Darfur and Kordofan. There have been five drought disasters over the last hundred years. Two of these, however, have occurred in the last twenty years alone. In these regions – lying between the isohyets 100 mm and 600 mm – a mere 100 mm decline in the mean annual precipitation could bring people and livestock to the brink of disaster. Rainfall data covering the period 1950–1990 reveal three major spans of drought, a relatively mild one in the mid 1960s, and two severe droughts in 1972–1974 and 1982–1984. In all three cases the drought was accompanied by flaring of skirmishes, the worst of which took place in mid 1980s and assumed the form of regular war. The correlation of rainfall data to conflict intensity over a 30 year period (1957–1987) reveals two interesting patterns: an increase in incidents of conflict with the corresponding decrease in rainfall and a lag between minimum rainfall and maximum conflict intensity of roughly one year, a relaxation period for the impact of the drought to take full effect (Suliman 1999).

The natural population increase has meant that each year new farmland has to be secured for newly starting families. Darfur's population has multiplied nearly five

times since 1973 (from 1,350.000 to 6,480.000) according to the 1973 census and 2003 estimates from the central bureau of statistics. This has resulted in decreased wasteland and disregard for the practice of fallowing. Not only that, but even some nomad migratory routes and rest places have also been turned into farmlands. Out of eleven migratory routes in the 1950s only three are functioning today in addition to a few newly found ones.

2- Increased animal population

Animal population has likewise increased drastically in the same period for different reasons. Because Sudan started exporting meat and life animals to Arab Gulf countries livestock breeders invested more in animal health care. Sedentary farmers were also lured to increase their stocks since farming can no longer satisfy their growing need for cash.

3- Population migration (internal and external)

Darfur witnessed two types of migration trends that directly affected land use patterns. A decade of mostly dry years (mid 1970s to mid 1980s) triggered internal migration from northern Darfur. The displaced sought refuge in the eastern goz to the south of El-Fasher as well as in the southern zone. These places sooner began to show signs of saturation. As mentioned earlier pastoralists from Chad were tempted to cross the borders and seek permanent settlement in Darfur. The fact that many tribes have extensions across the borders made such migrations difficult to monitor by Sudanese authorities.

4- Increased commercialized farming

With the spread of education and urbanization people in the rural areas became acquainted with new consumption patterns. As their need for cash increased their strategies in agriculture gradually became market-oriented. Oil seeds production (peanuts, sesame and water melon seeds) on the eastern goz has been greatly expanded to meet a growing export market. Vegetables and fruits cultivation is increasingly practiced where conditions permit. Small urban centers provided excellent marketing opportunities for such ventures. As result animal migration routes have been blocked in many places to provide more farmland or vegetable gardens.

5- Increased market-oriented livestock breeding

Because the expanding Sudanese livestock export market favors sheep razing, many nomadic pastoralists in northern Darfur started changing the structure of their herds by concentrating more on sheep and less on camels. Accordingly, migratory routes and patterns have been altered as an adaptive mechanism to the new trend. Moreover, sedentary farmers also took to sheep raising to the extent that they were actually competing with pastoralists. Some of them have even become pastoral transhumants. Accurate figures have yet to be produced by reliable authorities in order to substantiate such observations.

6- Increase of cultivated areas and fodder enclosures

Millet is the stable food crop in Darfur. Farmers are obliged to put more land under millet cultivation for two main reasons. The first one relates to decreased productivity because a farmer cannot expect the same amount of grain from the same area each year, therefore increases of the area cultivated becomes an important coping strategy. The second one relates to the increased number of new families that need to have their own farms, hence new land has to be cleared even if it is marginal and unproductive. Extended families cannot continue to secure the needs of their members from the same land as before. Such expansion becomes at the expense of land previously available for grazing animals. Pastoralists therefore continue to be disadvantaged by new developments.

7- Blocking of livestock migration routes

Blocking of *marahil* (animal migration routes) became more frequent. Some researchers have noticed that nomads often complain about such a practice which is against customary land tenure arrangements (Fadul 2004). The better pieces of land that lie around watercourses are utilized by farmers to grow fruits and vegetables resulting in the blockage of livestock routes. Blocking of routes has become a permanent item in the agenda of tribal reconciliation conferences convened for the last two decades to solve inter-ethnic disputes in Darfur. It is one of the common causes of resource based grass-root conflicts.

8- Spread of small arms

The last two decades witnessed a huge increase in the number of small arms in the hands of civilians in Darfur although no statistical estimates are available to proof it. Supplies flow from army stores (corruptive practices) and neighboring countries (mainly Libya and Chad). The availability of arms does not in itself represent a conflict factor but rather a catalyst which in the presence of hostilities contribute to rapid escalation of violent confrontations. Small arms help spread armed robbery in Darfur which lead to inter-ethnic violence.

9- Overspill of cross-boundary conflicts

One of the most important factors of conflict in Darfur relates to the fact that the region borders two neighboring countries (Libya and Chad) that have either been at war with each other or supported insurgent groups working across its borders. Since the 1960s Chad has constantly experienced various episodes of its long-lasting civil war. Most of the actors involved in the Chadian civil war share common ethnic identity with groups existing in Darfur. Both Zaghawa and nomadic Arab groups have kindred in Chad. The phenomenon of arbitrary boundaries that divides ethnic groups across international boundaries is a part of colonial legacy in most African countries. In the current war, Darfurian armed movements depend on Libya and Chad for their critical supplies. Sudan government retaliated by hosting Chadian rebels hoping to change the regime that backs the insur-

gency in Darfur. In addition to the political issue, many Chadian nomads actually have direct interest in the natural resources of Darfur which is relatively more hospitable than their country. Some of them have exploited the current situation and joined the government backed Arab militias (commonly known as Janjawid). This tendency resulted in the occupation of vast areas in West Darfur state where the sedentary indigenous population (mainly from Fur and Masalit ethnic groups) have been displaced and are currently living in camps.

A related critical issue in this regard is the position of those groups without *dar*s (practically landless) who have been exposed to the above factors more than others. The northern Rizeigat *abbala* (camel pastoralists) have no *dar* of their own. This was in part because the granting of tribal *dar*s favored larger tribes, and second because at that time land was not an issue; there were no shortages and the prosperity of Arab tribes depended on nomadic pastoralism and trade, not land ownership. Recently in Western Darfur, there were additional pressures from the influx of Arab groups from Chad many of whom have close ties with Sudanese nomadic groups. The issue of '*dar*' became more critical following the pressures on the natural resources as a result of the ecological degradation combined with expanding rain-fed and wadi cultivation. One researcher has put it clearly: "With the pressure of the drought and in their quest for pasture and water, pastoralists violated customary arrangements that organize access to pasture and their passage during seasonal movements. While peasant and commercial farming expansion (both goz and wadi cultivation) encroached on pastoralist and transhumant grazing rights, pastoralists also have tended to deviate from defined and agreed upon seasonal movements routes, grazed on farms and damaged crops. Competition over resources created conflict among pastoralists on the one hand and between farming communities and pastoralists on the other, with negative implications for the environment and social peace within and between communities" (Al-Amin 1999: 82).

From complementarity to conflict: The oscillating nature of nomad-sedentary interactions

In the past two decades Sudan's export of livestock (mainly sheep) and meat has increased. This resulted in a tendency for sedentary cultivators to invest more in livestock breeding for commercial purposes; hence the competition with nomads. Moreover the increase in population of small urban centers has lead to the increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables, leading to another trend of investment in horticultural activities by utilizing land near watercourses. It can therefore be assumed that in the present time/phase relations between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary cultivators in the savannah dry-lands of the Sudan gen-

erally tend to reflect more competition than complementarity because of emerging new factors.

Ecological diversity has profound impact on livelihoods in Darfur. Fundamental activities are based on agricultural production, livestock raising, trade, and migrant labor. A key feature in Darfur is the mix of cultivation and herding strategies for most households. In fact, most sedentary families combine livestock keeping with cultivation and at the same time, nearly all herders, except some camel owners, also practice crop cultivation. Whereas in the past most of these activities have operated in a more or less complementary fashion, new factors (or a special configuration of old and new) have lead to a complete crisis in the relationship between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers.

But this situation is neither new nor unique to Darfur. History tells us that during the heydays of the Keira sultanate in Darfur there has been uneasy relationship between the Fur rulers and various Baggara tribes that ended in violent confrontation with the state several times. The camel nomads of the north had their animals confiscated by the Sultan more than once. It seems that whenever options for livelihood strategies have been reduced there is a tendency for nomad-sedentary relations to move towards more competition. The reverse is actually true. What has happened in the past is being replicated again in the current crisis although the particularities are different. Moreover, there are new factors that make the current situation more complex. Conflict factors are no longer emerging from Darfur as they used to be in the past. Factors from outside the region now have a leading part in the ongoing crisis. The role of the central government remains crucial in this respect.

In the face of such evidence it is tempting to conclude that the nature of relations between the two dominant livelihood patterns (nomadic pastoralism and sedentary cultivation) cannot be considered either permanently opposed to or permanently complementary with each other. It can therefore be said that such relationship tends to be oscillating between the two poles of complementarity and conflict. Factors that affect the environment (in a broad sociological sense) tend to cause such relationship to tilt towards one pole or the other. For this reason it is of great importance to identify the most relevant and crucial factors and classify them into root causes and direct factors (triggers). This can facilitate a better understanding of the nature of the crises that Darfur is witnessing at the moment. According to such a scheme, it becomes clear that factors related to the role of the state are mostly responsible of the escalation of conflict. Discussing the 1980s Fur-Arab conflict, Harir has eloquently summarized the general argument pertaining to the explanation of ethnic conflicts when he concluded: "Environmental conditions, such as those which were dominant in Dar Fur and the Sudan, in general, created suitable preconditions for ethnic conflicts. However, were it not for the prevalent local, regional, and national political situation, in addition to the geopolitics of the area which made the continuous supply of 'cheap' arms possi-

ble, this conflict might not have been so brutal a war as it became in Dar Fur"
(Harir 1994: 184).

Concluding remarks

Users of natural resources in the savannah belt of the Sudan have a long time ex-
perience of complementary relations with each other in the various sectors of
economic activities. What determines the relationship between pastoralists and
cultivators is not only the immediate ecological conditions but also a host of
other factors such as population increase, expansion of agriculture, inadequate
national policies and insecurity arising from conflict and civil wars and failure of
governance in general.

Since the Sahelian drought of 1970 more pressure was put on the savannah dry-
lands of the Sudan. The cultivators from North Darfur resettled in South Darfur.
Camel nomads of the semi desert ventured more into the savannah to the extent
of competing with cattle nomads for pastures. The carrying capacity of pasture
degraded as animal numbers increased. Land productivity also degraded leaving
farmers with no option but to put more land under cultivation. In other words
the accumulated effect of human activity resulted in desertification. These condi-
tions resulted in more grassroots (local) conflict regarding rights of use over natu-
ral resources (mainly land and water). It is true to say that minor skirmishes be-
tween groups with regards to natural resources always existed. But there were
traditional mechanisms for settling such conflicts amicably in the past. The
heightened conflicts of the last two decades are rather extra-ordinary in that ex-
ternal factors have come to interfere more strongly transforming these local con-
flicts into wide-scale communal antagonisms ending up in war (Suliman 1999).

The current situation of interlocking conflict between pastoralist and farmers in
many hot spots (like Darfur) in the savannah belt in Sudan is not insurmountable
but it takes more than the application of traditional mechanism for conflict reso-
lution (which are incapable of handling these conflicts at the moment). Instead,
efficient and effective governance at the national and state levels need to be rein-
stalled in a proper manner. There is a need for a responsible accountable and effi-
cient system of governance in Sudan that can deliver better management of the
public domain.

It is important to highlight the fact that pastoral nomadism does not exist as an
independent economic system, but as an economic activity interacting with sed-
entary agriculture. The history of relations between the people pursuing these
alternative lifestyles is characterized by dynamic tensions and mutually beneficial
interactions. Actual herder/cultivator interactions can be quite varied based on
contextual factors such as local government, environmental differences, migra-

tions, etc. Access to land is an issue according to which much of these conflicts are perceived. When these rights are contested it should not be considered simply as a matter of legal rights of land ownership. Contestation of land rights is not only an expression of a much complex history of relationships between groups but also a register of shifts regarding coping strategies and involvement of external forces. The Darfur case illustrates all these complexities.

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Neither nomads versus settlers nor ethnic conflicts – The long history of changing alliances and politicized groups on the Chad/Sudan border

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Abstract

The border region between Chad and Sudan affects and is affected by a wide international field, from neighboring Sudan and Libya, to Egypt, France, and the United States. As of March 2007, the war in Sudan's western Darfur region on the border with Chad has been raging for more than four years with over 200,000 Sudanese citizens living in Chadian refugee camps and more than two million displaced in Darfur. This article discusses the often proclaimed notion of the conflict being rooted either in recurrent disputes between nomads and settlers or in ethnic racism between so-called 'Arabs' and 'Black Africans'. Instead of following these notions, a historical pattern of allying and re-allying border groups is brought forward. This pattern will be shown to have been instrumentalized by different actors, aggravating the conflict and causing yet unprecedented forms of 'tribal hatred' in the region. The paper begins by giving an account of different voices concerning the relations between nomads and settlers in Darfur and the wider border region. It will, then, attempt to disentangle the complex historical connections as well as the intertwined relations between the present governments of Chad, Sudan, and others, in order to develop a frame for understanding the actors' perspectives in recent violent developments in the border region. The second part will focus on the local border groups mired in a cycle of violence that keeps returning the forefront of the regional conflict.

Introduction

The current Darfur conflict, which by now has caused further instability expanding into the larger region, has most recently regained center stage in early 2006, after it had first been reported in the world press throughout much of 2004. Since then, the media has continued to cover the conflict and the current debate over sending UN troops to Darfur and about the worsening security situation in Chad, making it clear that things are still deteriorating at rapid speed. Actually, fighting has spread over into Chad, aggravating both the frequency of attacks and the destitution of over 200,000 refugees in Chad and more than 2.7 million internally displaced people in Sudan. The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was tabled in late April 2006 by African Union mediators in Abuja and signed on May 5, 2006 by the government of Sudan and one faction of one of the rebel groups (see below). However, alliances between rebel groups are still continuously changing, causing the situation to deteriorate with splinter rebel groups breaking away from the control of larger units and banditry taking hold of the region.

The reasons for the Darfur conflict have been widely discussed. There have been different strands of explanation. In Sudan, the statement given most often in government circles and pro-government newspapers is that of persistent land and water conflicts between nomads and settlers, both living in the area for hundreds of years. Political reasons are left out in this discourse, and other reasons for increasing tensions, like droughts and desert expansion, have been persistently denied by government agents, so that now they cannot be declared as major causes for the present violence. International academia and informed journalism, on the other hand, mainly take up the Darfurian rebels' own perspective, which focuses on the Sudanese government's longstanding neglect of the region, its denial to include peripheral areas like Darfur or eastern Sudan into the power and wealth-sharing arrangements (negotiated for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the country's southern provinces, signed in January 2005), and its continuous use of militia groups as armed and violent opposition against Sudanese populations perceived as political enemies to the government. Concerning the often quoted 'Arab vs. African' explanation for the conflict in Darfur, the most ambiguous character of these crude distinctions of racial origin has also been extensively commented upon. It has repeatedly been highlighted that this region's entire population has been Muslim for a long time. Thus, because the 'Muslim-Christian-divide' – attributed in a similarly unconvincing way for the north-south-conflict – did not suit this case, and since ethnic divisions did not hold for much explication either, a racial explanation seemed to make most sense to the media representing the conflict.

A more critical analysis of the conflict's origins, however, would emphasize the argument that regional alliances and rivalries have often changed, and that, at least in the past, they rarely divided along 'racial' or strictly ethnic lines. In point of

fact, intermarriage and economic interdependence between nomadic and sedentary people has historically resulted in cultural assimilations to the point of adopting new identities (Abdul-Jalil 1984, Babiker 2006: 44). Thus, this process of 'becoming' Zaghawa, Fur, Masalit or Arab helped to neutralize the underlying potential for ethnic conflict and violence. The question why certain groups in Darfur – who all have in similar ways been neglected by colonial and governmental planning and political decision making over the past hundred years – tend to ally with the present government while others chose to rebel against it and look for allies elsewhere has to be linked to socio-political development in the larger region and to governmental policies since independence.
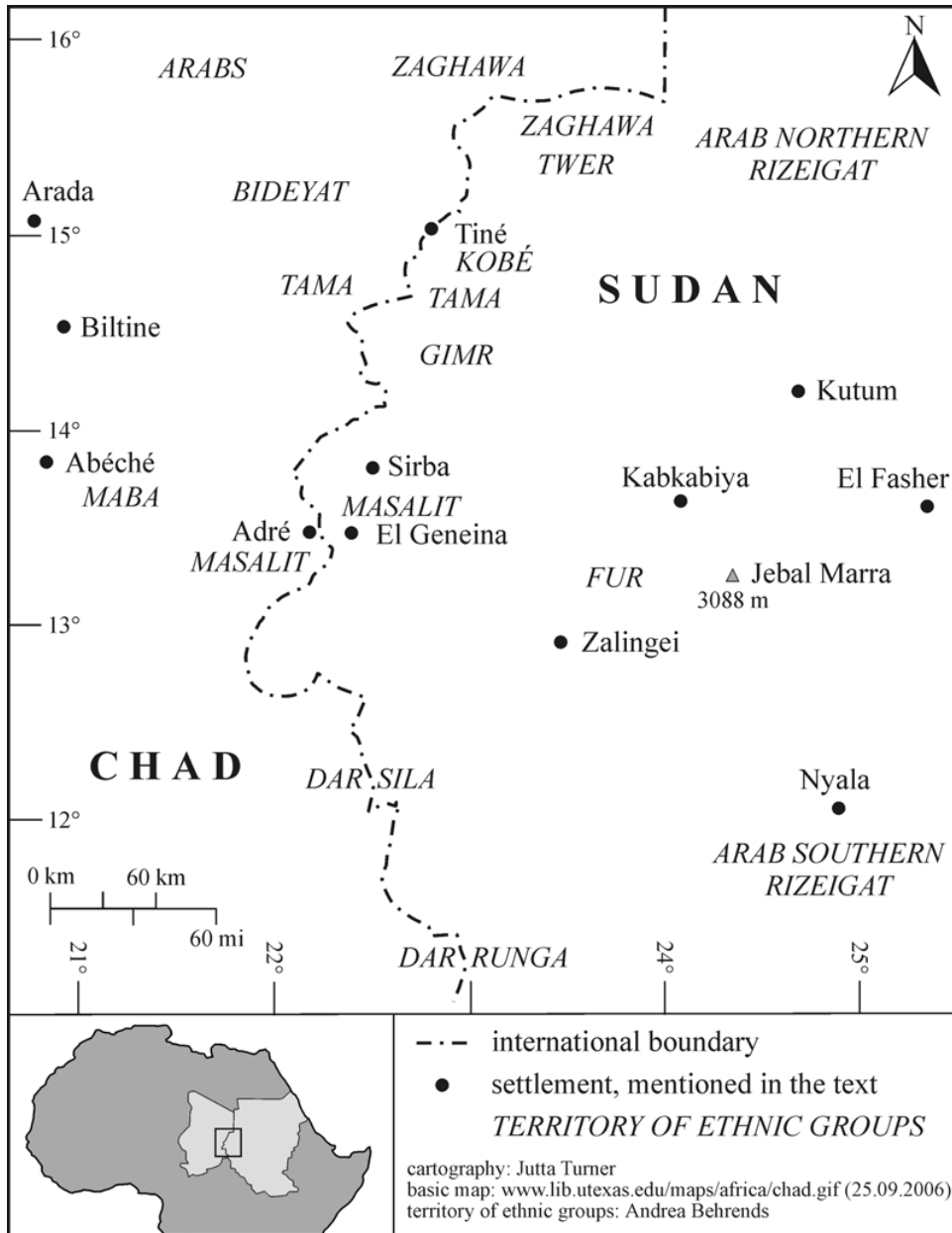
With a first focus on differing opinions regarding the relations between nomads and settlers in the Chad/Sudan border region, this article begins with a discussion of the relevant recent Sudanese literature concerning this issue. To illustrate the 'changing alliances' approach (cf. Schlee 2004) mentioned in this article, a historical perspective on the processes that link (and separate) the neighboring regions of Wadai and Darfur[2] will then be brought forward. The historical positions of the two once powerful sultanates – and of the smaller sultanates and kingdoms between them – are presented in order to show patterns of local alliance building and how activities of forming and breaking alliances are intensified with external involvement. Furthermore, these historical developments will be compared to subsequent changes in this region instigated by the regimes of Chad, Sudan and Libya as well as international politics. The focus will then turn to the region of the present conflict itself, to the various actors that evolved out of or influenced events of war and reconciliation. Although there is, most certainly, no clear-cut 'group membership', the categorizations serve to clarify how people have come to identify themselves and others along certain lines – like the now prominent 'African vs. Arab' or 'nomads vs. settlers' explanations for the Darfur conflict – as opposed to others. The critical point to be made is that the radius of action for people in Darfur and on the other side of the border in Wadai and Biltine has emerged out of a long and intertwined history, and the changing nature of the neighboring regimes – including far-reaching cross-border movements, political resistance and alliances, support of and counter-insurgencies against international involvement, or natural disasters – further intensifies and aggravates the situation. To conclude, I will discuss how contemporary agency of individuals or groups relates to the historical and socio-political frames in the border region. The point

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[2]   The spelling of the names of these regions has altered over time according to the political landscape and to the language used. Thus Wadai is normally spelled Ouaddaï in French texts, particularly when referring to the times of the sultanate from the sixteenth century up to 1912. Darfur is spelled as Dar Fur when referring to the sultanate that existed from the sixteenth century until 1916 (with an interruption from 1874–1898). In order not to add confusion to the complicated processes outlined here, I will not change spelling for Darfur and Wadai during this text, and stick to those forms most often used in English.

will be made that although historical and current situations of conflict and war share structural similarities, they differ substantially in their causes and dynamics.

Brief insertion on the relations between nomads and settlers in the border region

In the Chad-Sudan border area, there is a tendency to attribute the origins of the current conflict as well as most previous conflicts to tensions between nomads and settlers. This view needs critical assessment. As mentioned above, much of the rest of this paper will focus on another argument, namely that this particular region has been characterized by the shifting alliances between many different groups as the result of conflicts and external interventions. By focusing on changing alliances, however, relations between nomads and settlers – and their inherent potential for conflict – are somewhat marginalized. This part of the paper will try to make up for that shortcoming, and provide a brief review of opinions on this particular relationship and its connection to present and past conflicts in the border region. To be sure, essentializing perceptions of these two groups as standing in 'age-old' conflict with each other can well be relegated to those unconvincing voices that explain the Darfur conflict as one originating in localized problems without regard for any external involvement (from, for instance, the government's side). More interesting in the present context are the voices of concerned Sudanese scientists, recently brought together in a volume published by Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed and Leif Manger (2006) as well as earlier studies on this issue. To begin, what follows is a brief introduction (based on Lidwien Kapteijns' seminal work on *Mahdist faith and Sudanic tradition* in the Masalit sultanate (Kapteijns 1985: 15ff.)) on the border region and the people straddling the border to help clarify further considerations on the topic.

cartography: Jutta Turner
basic map: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/chad.gif (25.09.2006)
territory of ethnic groups: Andrea Behrends

The border between Chad and Sudan stretches 1,360 km. The diverse peoples living in this area trace their history back to chiefdoms and smaller sultanates that existed long before the present day nation-states came into being. They are mainly sedentary groups, although over time some took up semi-nomadic liveli-

hoods. All of the groups, earlier incorporated in changing constellations within the Darfur and Wadai empires, still exist today and designate the area that they occupy as their official homeland, or *dar* (Arabic), even though this designation might not conform to administrative borders. Among those communities along the northern border area are the Bideyat and Zaghawa, who share a common language and unite a number of smaller, clan-based communities under their name.[3] Dar Zaghawa ('the homeland of the Zaghawa') covers parts of the border area in Biltine, Chad, and northern Darfur in Sudan. Dar Qimr[4] lies further to the southeast of Dar Zaghawa and, although incorporated into the former Darfur sultanate early on, managed to remain a sultanate with its historical customs and titles. Dar Tama was a mountainous kingdom southwest of Dar Zaghawa that was once a tributary of Darfur until it was conquered by Wadai in the early nineteenth century, but which, due to its geography, always retained a high degree of independence and made it a strong ally for other groups – who united against the French, for example, during their conquest of the region.[5] Furthermore, the region of Dar Jabal, to the south of Dar Qimr, was once governed as a district of Darfur's western province.

The sultanate of Dar Masalit, situated centrally among the others, came into being with the rise of Mahdism[6] during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The sultans of Dar Masalit always balanced their alliances with historical Wadai and Darfur, shifting their political weight from one side to the other. Today, Masalit live on both sides of the border, but the larger number as well as the seat of the Masalit sultan remains in Sudan. Between Dar Jabal and Dar Masalit, a number of diverse peoples live together in an area called Dar Erenga, most of whom have probably migrated from Wadai and Dar Tama; they are Awra, Asungor, Mararit, Girga, Dula, Erenga, etc., with each group being ruled by a chief or sultan who historically was part of the administrative hierarchy of western Darfur. Straddling the southern border lays Dar Sila, which was once a full-fledged frontier state during the nineteenth century. It maintained its position of semi-independence from the former Wadai and Darfur empires, but paid tribute to both. Dar Sinyar,

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[3] The Zaghawa are divided by different families and sultanates in the two countries, which results in mutual competition over posts and power while at the same time providing fertile ground for alliances and oppositions within the group. While the Chadian president Déby originates from the Chadian Zaghawa Bideyat, the Zaghawa Kobe who straddle the border and the Zaghawa Twer, living mainly in Sudan, partly side with and partly oppose Déby. Today, it is mainly the Kobe and Twer who take part in the Darfur rebellion within the different movements referred to below (Marchal 2004: 53, for further reference on the Zaghawa see the seminal work by the Tubianas 1977).

[4] *Qimr* is also sometimes transcribed as *Gimr* or *Gimir*.

[5] The Tama, as will be made more explicit below, also play a prominent part in the recent upcoming of Chadian rebel groups against President Déby.

[6] See footnote 19.

the other southern kingdom, was part of Darfur until Dar Sila annexed it in the late nineteenth century. Even in former times, the territories of these different *dur* (pl. of *dar*) were never clear-cut, nor were their populations ethnically separated. Different groups spoke and still speak distinct languages – apart from Arabic – and maintain their own cultural traits, although individual switching between occupational as well as linguistic groups has always occurred (Abdul-Jalil 1984, Babiker 2006: 48). The further southward one moves along the border however, the more one encounters the "violent face" (Flint/de Waal 2005: 10) of the region; in former times, Dar Fongoro and Dar Runga constituted the slaving grounds of Darfur for domestic purposes and for export to Egypt and beyond (ibid.).

The history of the originally nomadic Arab populations in Darfur and Wadai has different phases, spanning from the distant past until rather recent immigrations. The first Arabs to arrive between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries – including the Ziyadiya, Ta'aisha, Habbaniya and Rizeigat – originated most probably from Bedouin groups that poured into the larger region from Arabia across the Sinai Peninsula in the northeast.[7] Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, subsequent migrant groups from West Africa aggregated in part with earlier Arab migrants to form the cattle herding *baggara* population of southern Darfur.[8] The *baggara* were separated from the camel herding Bedouin (*abbala*) nomads by the Jebel Marra massive and the sedentary groups clustered there. The *abbala* nomads moved into the northern part of Darfur and Wadai to live alongside the northern camel herding and semi-nomadic non-Arab groups such as the Zaghawa, Berti and Meidob. The Fur sultans distributed land[9] to the arriving Arab groups in different configurations. In the sparsely settled south of Jebel Marra, they distributed large parcels of land to Arabs from the four main *baggara* groups – the Ta'aisha, Beni Halba, Habbaniya and Rizeigat. Whereas in contrast to that, the northern Arab groups – the Rizeigat sections of the Mahariya, Mahamid, Eteifat and Ereigat – never received more than small estates and for limited periods of time.[10]

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[7] This migration of Arabs from the east should not be confused with the first introduction of Islam to the region, which also happened during that period. Islamic influences and, in the end, conversion came from West Africa with traveling Muslim teachers and pilgrims to Mecca. Darfur, thus, was the first Islamic stronghold in what is Sudan today (Cunnison 1972: 105, Yusuf Fadl Hassan 1973, Macmichael 1967, O'Fahey/Spaulding 1974).

[8] See Braukämper (1992) for population movements forming the *baggara* group in that region.

[9] The system of granting land to foreigners was called *hakura*. Titles to *hakura* land never turned into land ownership, but the chieftaincy that developed around *hakura* often became hereditary and the tribe of the *hakura* chief became the dominant group (Flint/de Waal 2005: 8).

[10] This fact, to a number of observers, greatly contributed to their later willingness to take part in the current escalation of the conflict in combination with the proliferation of firearms, the im-

If, in relation to sedentary and nomadic groups, we now take a closer look at the different explanations for the origins of conflict in the border region, we find two overriding propositions: the first concerns the quest of landless groups like the *abbala* Arabs for their own territory; the second, particularly after the droughts of the 1980s, concerns increasing land scarcity, mounting national and international interventions, and the aligning of different political regimes with groups within Darfur and Wadai in an effort to manipulate historical tensions between those groups. There has been no knowledgeable explanation that ascribes the reasons for the dramatic intensification of the recent conflict in this border region to ethnic or occupational factors alone. To the contrary, both the ethnic and the occupational structure of the region have been described as highly fluid and adjustable to the situation.

As an example of how ethnic identifications vary, Abdul-Jalil (1984), in his study of the village area of Dor in northern Darfur, observed that the Zaghawa sub-clans of the Dar Tuar would support each other if and when one of them was involved in a conflict with the Zaghawa sub group of the Kobé, and yet both sides would unite under the larger 'Zaghawa' umbrella in the face of external threats (ibid.: 69). On the other hand, he showed that marriages in Dor regularly crossed ethnic lines; and in the marketplace, descent, territory, and occupation mattered less than the language spoken with or by the trader. When using wells to water animals, or dealing with the district tax collector, what counted most was the community and neighborhood where one lived. Similarly, the occupational identification could change if a sedentary Fur accumulated animals, for he might then chose to call himself 'Zaghawa' or 'Arab', in line with his livelihood (Flint/de Waal 2005: 5). In the case of conflict, as Abdul-Jalil also indicated, ethnic lines tended to tighten again, a fact also observed by Klute about the Tuareg nomads of Niger and Mali (Klute 1996: 61).

De Waal (2004a) and Abdul-Jalil (1984, 2006) seem to agree that land is the factor causing most tensions between nomadic and sedentary groups in the Chad-Sudan border region. The same result is given by Mohamed Suliman (1992) and Adam Azzain Mohamed (2002), who endeavored to list all inter-group conflicts in Darfur between 1968 and 1998. Given the fact that some of these conflicts happened also between sedentary groups or even within the same group over, for example, leadership positions, most of the minor and short term tensions developed over the question of land use rights and access to water and other natural resources. These tensions are fuelled by the prominent belief among nomadic groups that all land belongs to Allah and therefore no single group has the right to claim a territory outright. However, this opinion also holds possibilities for peaceful usage and exchange, which was made most explicit in a drawing given to de Waal in

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pact of ecological crisis, and involuntary population movements (Abdul-Jalil 2006: 30, Babiker 2006: 44, Flint/de Waal 2005: 9).

1985 by an old Arab sheikh, showing a chessboard pattern of fields and pastures, some belonging to the sedentary farmers and some to the nomadic herders (de Waal 2004a[11]). Here, both groups gain from the other's presence. Although this economic perspective might sound convincing, the close political correlation of land ownership and administrative rights proves to be a hindering factor to such seemingly well-functioning cooperation.[12]

In Mohamed's (2002) account of inter-group conflicts and customary mediation in Darfur, nomadic claims to land do not hinge on religious beliefs, but rather to the authority over land held by the state. In this highly controversial debate, sedentary groups claim autochthony and therefore ownership of all land in their *dar*, as opposed to (former) nomads, who maintain that unregistered land is owned by the state and can therefore be allocated to those who need or make use of it. During the 1980s, after the Sudanese government had passed the 1970 'Unregistered Land Act',[13] several landless groups in Darfur started claiming land, and with that, political seats in the regional administration (see Harir 1994 and Al-Battahani 2006 for a quest by the Arab Alliance in the 1980s). After 1985, under the presidency of Sadiq al-Mahdi, whose followers in Darfur mainly came from the Arab population, this quest reinforced a backing of Arab interests by the national government. In Babiker's reasoning, local wars, which were originally fought over resources and land, started to be transformed by what he calls "local 'legitimation crises', brought about by the re-organisation of the Native Administration[14] and the creation of the so-called emirates for tribal groups that until recently had been under the political authority of the Fur" (2006: 48ff.).

It would not be correct, however, in regard to local conflicts to create the impression that only the Arab groups in the larger border region have found a strong partner in the central government. In another way of grouping, northern camel herding Arabs and Zaghawa have stood in opposition to the Fur and Masalit (and other sedentary cultivators living in the central parts of Darfur), regarding the northern groups' tendency to resort to the central governments of Chad and Sudan for political or military support as a way to legitimize their needs. In a re-

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[11] This and other texts by Alex de Waal on Darfur are accessible at http://conconflicts.ssrc.org/-hornofafrica/dewaal/.

[12] This perception has been extensively asserted in a good number of studies on autochthony and land conflicts. For a recent edition and overview see, for instance, Kuba and Lentz (eds.) (2006).

[13] "Before 1970 all other land (unregistered) belonged to the state, which held ownership in trust for the people, who had customary rights to it. In 1970 the Unregistered Land Act declared that all waste, forest, and unregistered lands were government land. Before the act's passage, the government had avoided interfering with individual customary rights to unregistered land, and in the late 1980s it again adhered to this policy." (http://www.photius.com/countries/sudan/-economy/sudan_economy_land_tenure.html)

[14] See below under the sub-heading *Colonial times and beyond: different conditions for the independent states.*

gional comparison, the Zaghawa today stand out in their efforts in international networking and central political involvement in both countries – in Chad, because of their ethnic and familial relations to the president who rules through nepotism, and in Sudan, due to the Zaghawa's backing by the present regime, which facilitates their access to political positions. This has resulted in the Zaghawa's support of pro-fundamentalist politics in the Sudan. The Fur, Masalit, Berti and others, who do not have these relations in the political arena, have taken a slower route through higher education, and consequently are still visibly underrepresented in political offices (Marchal 2004: 50). Thus, on the central political level, the sedentary Fur people are underrepresented but at the same time maintain their posture of supremacy concerning land and political positions in their region of origin, whereas the semi-nomadic Zaghawa have achieved a certain central political presence while being deprived locally of their land. And so, to conclude this interjection on the relations between nomads and settlers in the Chad/Sudan border region, it is the political backing of some groups as opposed to others by the central government rather than the nomad-settlers opposition, which is prone to produce inter-group conflict.

The historical Chad/Sudan border region as a field shaped by external influences

Today's frontier between Chad and Sudan existed long before the 1921 delimitation of national borders between the French who had conquered Wadai in 1909, and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the colonial power in the Sudan from 1898 to 1956. Up until that point, however, it was never clear-cut or static in any way. All historical accounts explicitly mention the border region's history as one of continuing conflict both on a smaller and larger scale (Nachtigal 1971, Carbou 1912, Slatin 1997); integration occurred mainly through mutual imitation of hierarchical and military structures built upon Sudanic tradition and during brief and changing alliances in the face of a common enemy. The following will demonstrate how external influences shaped this region into the borderland, still afflicted by tensions and open conflict that it is today.

The sultanates of Wadai and Darfur were similar in strength and size[15] and, for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they fought each other over allegiance, land, slaves or control of trade routes. Invasions into each other's terri-

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[15] Kapteijns (1985: 13) dates the separation of the larger pre-Islamic Tunjur state, which comprised both Wadai and Darfur to some time briefly after the rise of the Keira dynasty in Darfur, between 1600 and 1650. In this time, the overarching power of the Keira sultans was overthrown in the west by the Maba who became the ethnic core of the sultanate of Wadai. Both sultanates were Islamized as a result of the important role which the sultans and the central political institutions played in spreading Islam (see also Meier 1995: 32).

tory were the rule until the late nineteenth century. Until the Turco-Egyptian invasion of Darfur in 1874, the people living between Wadai and Darfur had no choice but to side with one of these two most influential regional powers. But siding with either one did not represent a permanent choice; loyalty was always contested whenever one of the two powers was weakened. Shifts in alliances were most often brought about if a faction of a group was dissatisfied with or competed against their leaders. In this situation the splinter group could be most successful if it looked for support from the enemies of their leaders. Thus the key point is not that alliances and oppositions frequently changed in a setting marked by imminent rivalry, but rather that an historical view on the region reveals the most striking parallel between the present Darfur conflict and the historical development of the area: that the continually changing decision to ally or oppose regional or supra-regional powers becomes particularly evident in times of social ruptures brought about, for instance, by the death of powerful rulers or by strong external interferences.

Impositions of foreign rule: Turco-Egyptian, Mahdist, Anglo-Egyptian and French (re-)conquests

Foreign rule was imposed on Darfur in 1874 by the Turco-Egyptian Empire. Some thirty years later, in 1906, Wadai was invaded by French colonial troops. As the following will show, however, the events starting with the Turco-Egyptian conquest of the area were of central concern to the socio-political balance of the greater region.

In the late eighteenth century, Darfur was at the peak of its power, holding its tributary kingdoms on the western fringes as well as expanding further east into Kordofan.[16] By 1821 the Turco-Egyptian Empire had established rule over the Nile Valley and re-conquered Kordofan, forcing the sultan of Darfur to retreat to his former territories. By then what is known today as the Sudan had no political existence whatsoever. With the exception of the powerful sultanates of Sennar to the east and Darfur to the west, the area south of Khartoum was stateless and only of limited interest to the Turco-Egyptian rulers. From the 1850s onwards, trade companies with slave armies well equipped with modern firearms started far reaching raids for slaves and ivory from Khartoum into the south. The Turco-Egyptian armies as well as the trade companies initially circumvented the sultan's forces, thus avoiding further confrontation with Darfur. But their existence soon was noticed in Darfur as well. It was at this point that a new phenomenon was introduced to the Darfur area, as to all other areas where the central government

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[16] During this time, the capital of Darfur was moved from several locations west of Jebel Marra to El-Fasher, a choice that might not seem convincing when considering Darfur's later delimitations again, where El-Fasher became "strangely off centre" (Prunier 2005: 15).

of the Turco-Egyptian regime had little or no control: by assembling the foundation of the Sudanese state, Khartoum was linked to the south, east and west through a structure of organized raids and the distribution of firearms, thus creating an overall 'culture of banditry', which – with different characteristics – is still active today.[17] In this form of quasi rule, control over volatile areas is maintained by providing weapons to local groups, which then act as agents for the central regime. At the same time, the weapons find their way to all other groups through trade or theft, thus providing the grounds for new forms of conflict, apart from a general increase in all forms of banditry.

In 1874 one of the king-like traders and slave raiders, Zubayr Rahman Mansur, caused a major rupture in Darfurian power and instigated what was later called the 'Times of Troubles' or 'Time of the Bandits'[18] in Darfur's history. After a quarrel between Zubayr and Sultan Ibrahim of Darfur, Zubayr's army killed the sultan and easily overwhelmed the outmoded Darfurian forces. With Darfur considerably weakened, the Turco-Egyptian army followed on the heels of Zubayr's army, taking over administration and imposing heavy taxation. The followers of Sultan Ibrahim went into hiding in the mountains of Jebel Marra to resist the new regime. Darfur's subjugation lasted through the reigns of several 'shadow sultans', and in 1883, the Mahdiyya[19] reached Darfur after the Turco-Egyptian Empire was overthrown. Many of Darfur's former allies surrendered at this point to the Mahdi, while others changed alliance and joined their former enemy, the sultan of Wadai.

During the 'Times of Troubles', disorder was caused not only by the repeated attempts of the Mahdist forces to end the continuous resistance of the Fur. Kapteijns (1985) characterized the instability and turmoil of that period on one hand as physical, with soldiers of either side plundering villages and disrupting trade, and on the other hand as political, "because the local rulers who had submitted to the new regime still had to reckon with a possible restoration of the sultanate, and kept considering and reconsidering their attitudes" (ibid.: 63). The Wadaian sultanate during this time became stronger and expanded further to the east. Wadai resisted expansion of the Mahdist regime into its territory with support of the

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[17] See de Waal (2004) and Beck (2005) for accounts of how consecutive governments of Sudan used banditry structures to cause unrest and insecurity in an area or to counter insurgencies.

[18] As Prunier notes, "*Umm Kwakiyya* (lit. 'the mother of banditry') was the name given in Darfur to the period going from the conquest of Zubeyr Rahman Mansur in 1874 to the fall of the Mahdiyya and the restoration of the Sultanate in 1898" (2005: 168, footnote 37).

[19] The Mahdiyya was "a millenarian movement for the revival of Islam, or more particularly, for the restoration of the true Islamic community of the Prophet's days, at the end of time. It took the form of a *jihad* or holy war of independence against the Turco-Egyptian occupation and led to the establishment of an independent 'Sudanese' state" (Kapteijns 1985: 73). Kapteijns maintains that the Mahdist Sudan was in many ways a successor state to the Turkiyya.

Sanusi brotherhood,[20] a Sufi order, with which the sultanate had established strong bonds since the extension of trade connections to Central Africa and the Mediterranean after the mid nineteenth century (Meier 1995: 33).

The increased overall instability and readiness to go to war caused the development of new socio-political structures. Large numbers of the Fur population sought refuge in the east, where most of them were enslaved either by the border sultanates or Wadai. But even to those leaders who had first embraced the ideology of the Mahdiyya, the presence of the Mahdist armies became more and more unbearable. Wherever the soldiers came through the countryside, they pillaged, and confiscated anything that came their way. In 1888, Abu Jummayza, a foreigner in his thirties who apparently came from Libya, proclaimed himself as a 'Son of Sanusi' and managed to build up a large western front against the *ansar*, the followers and armies of the Mahdiyya. This particular movement was described by Kapteijns, who showed in minute detail the existing possibilities and limits of alliance and opposition in the frontier zone during this phase of rapid change. Bearing certain distinctive similarities to the present situation in Darfur, the rebellion of Abu Jummayza, in the phase of its initial success, was able to re-activate old loyalties and mobilize cooperative alliances, overcoming traditional fears and feuds. Abu Jummayza apparently had seven sultanates on his side that had previously been fighting against and enslaving each other, among them the Tama, Qimr, Masalit, Zaghawa and Fur. Although Abu Jummayza and his followers did not resist the religious ideals introduced by the Mahdi, they revolted against what they perceived as foreign rule imposed on them by the Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi. The later failure of the movement and split of Abu Jummayza's alliance shows "how the old competition and mutual distrust proved too persistent to be more than temporarily suppressed" (Kapteijns 1985: 83f.).

Before the Mahdist armies could react to the revolt in Darfur, the Mahdist movement was overthrown in 1898 during the re-conquest of the Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian troops.[21] The defeat took place in the Mahdist capital of Omdurman, a city newly erected in the vicinity to Khartoum. The British re-installed the Darfur sultanate with Sultan 'Ali Dinar,[22] who regained some of Darfur's former strength and power. At the same time, due to the death of the Wadaian Sultan

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[20] The Sanusi order retained close control of trade routes by building *zawiya*, which Prunier depicts as a "combination of religious school, traveler's hostel, monastery and fortress. The *zawiya* of the Senussiyya brotherhood drew a network of strongpoints extending from Libya down to the northern part of today's Central African Republic, constituting a kind of quasi-state across the Sahara" (2005: 170).

[21] For the Anglo-Egyptian era in the Sudan that started in the mid nineteenth century, was interrupted by the Mahdiyya and regained power in 1898, see Daly (1986 and 1991) regarding the period after 1898.

[22] See Theobald (1965) for an account of 'Ali Dinar's years as sultan of Darfur from 1898–1916 and O'Fahey and Spalding (1974) for the history of Sudanic kingdoms.

Yusuf in 1898, Wadai fell into civil war over the question of who would be the rightful successor. Not until Sultan Dud Murra gained the Wadaian throne in 1902 was peace partially restored. But Dud Murra would become preoccupied with the French conquest proceeding rapidly from the western Lake Chad area. Continuing internal power struggles and the battles against the French – who were concerned with fighting the economically overpowering Sanusiyya, chasing away political leaders who did not cooperate and installing puppet leaders – finally forced Dud Murra to withdraw east into Dar Masalit.

To many outside observers, as Meier (1995: 142ff.) notes, the defeat of Wadai symbolized the last brick in the construction of a French Africa from Dakar and Algeria to the Congo. The French '*œuvre de civilisation*' was completed with the fall of this 'last barbaric bastion', but the area proved difficult to control. With Dud Murra fighting the French together with the Masalit and the Tama from the east, many of the border sultanates like Zaghawa, Tama, Masalit, Sila and Runga went back under Darfur's authority. To the French military in Wadai who were interested in further expanding their area of influence, Darfurian opposition was a problem not to be solved by military force alone, because by the early twentieth century, the delimitation of a border between the French colony and the Sudan of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium had become an issue in London, Paris and Cairo. On top of that, a large part of the French army was unexpectedly beaten by the united followers of Dud Murra and the Masalit Sultan Taj al-Din during an 'inspection' into Dar Masalit in 1910, causing another peak of overall resistance. But by 1912, an overwhelming response by the French military ended resistance along the border and Dud Murra was exiled.

Colonial times and beyond: different conditions for the independent states

During colonial rule the border between the former sultanates became much more of a dividing line as compared to the 'in-between-zone' it had been before. Although the people living in the area were still freely crossing the border in both directions, they adapted to thinking in terms of belonging to national states in addition to their various regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious affiliations. Colonial policies of the French and Anglo-Egyptian administrations differed considerably in the ways power structures were imposed, but not in their overall principles of rule. While the French, for instance, drew the lines between their administrative areas or *subdivisions* rather arbitrarily, the British system of indirect rule[23]

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[23] The British colonial policy of indirect rule is based on the ideas developed by Frederick Lugard at the beginning of the twentieth century. Prunier's comments grasp the positive and negative side of this policy: "'Indirect Rule' could be considered either as a prime example of racism or alternatively as the most culturally respectful of possible colonial policies. In summary, the British should exercise their power only through the agency of local traditional authorities which would respect native culture, avoid affronting local sensibilities, and introduce changes gently

was based on the traditional system of the *dur*, that is, the lands belonging to larger ethnic entities, which the British perceived as being well separated from other entities. Neglecting the above mentioned mixture of populations in the various *dur* of the border region, the British awarded territories to single groups, thereby forcing the people to accept British views of territorial authority.[24] They introduced the 'native administration'[25] system, which allowed newly installed 'paramount chiefs' to perform certain judicial functions and to allocate land to residents and newcomers, although this did not include land ownership rights. The problems with this system became clearer when arable land became scarce due to ecological changes. Under the original division, for instance, most of the nomadic Arab population[26] of the region had not been assigned *dur*. In the early to mid 1980s, after several periods of severe Sahelian droughts, this lack of land became one of the origins of the current violent escalations in Darfur, as will be elaborated below.

French colonial rule was based on structurally reforming the sultanates, mainly by depriving the former elites of their power and setting up local structures with *chefs de village* and *chefs de canton* at the lowest administrative levels. At this level, the local chiefs held judicial and police functions, collected taxes and supervised public works. As Meier (1995) holds, they were "men for everything in the administration" (ibid.: 151). Many of them felt subordinated to the French regime, their power barely extending beyond the local level. Whereas Wadai thus constitutes one of the 'heaviest' impositions of foreign rule in French colonial history, Darfur, on the other side of the border, remained under 'very light' British control. But although they did not enforce rule as much as their French neighbors, the British policy could, at the same time, justifiably be criticized as gravely neglectful. Prunier noted that "economic and social underdevelopment contained the seeds of future conflicts which would eventually be much worse than the simple criminal cases or problems of pasture and well management that

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and in harmony with the local order. Opponents of this philosophy called it a recipe for stagnation and for building a two-tiered society in which the natives, on the pretext of cultural integrity, were marginalized from the benefits of the modern world which the colonialists could monopolize for their own advantage" (2005: 29).

[24] Al-Battahani (2005: 12) highlights the fact that during British indirect rule, land was allocated in favor of the "larger tribes", often incorporating smaller groups into larger units against their will, and thereby causing new forms of conflict over independence between groups along minority / majority lines.

[25] See Azzain (2004) for indigenous and colonial practices of administration and conflict management.

[26] As shown above, some of today's Arab populations in Darfur can reasonably be considered as 'early settlers'. The southern Darfurian Rizeigat, for instance, gained their own claim to a land or *dar* from the times of their first settlement, while others, like the northern Rizeigat were never allocated a *dar* of their own, which created enormous tensions over the centuries (Flint / de Waal 2005: 41f.).

the tribal administration sponsored by the Condominium authorities had had to deal with" (2005: 32). Thus both colonial regimes imposed substantial changes in the administrative structures concerning rules, justice, land tenure and other issues; and differences between the two regimes have to be referred to as gradual in their methods as well as their outcomes.

Thus, the independent states of Sudan and Chad – the Sudan became independent in 1956 and Chad in 1960 – differed in their internal structures, but had comparable problems. Today people in both countries tend to be nostalgic about colonial times because inherent conflicts between groups seemed to be more under control.[27] When transmitting their power and ruling positions to African officials, both colonial regimes, however, tended to concentrate only on a small part of the population of each country.

As has been previously observed regarding colonial rule in the regions, the British, when transferring governmental power to Sudanese rulers, continued to follow existing patterns of authority and conferred all powerful positions to the northern Muslim elites, thereby solidifying Muslim domination in the country. After the British left Khartoum, it was these elites that stayed in power – in changing regimes until today. In Chad, the French policy of assimilation relied on the people from the country's south, mainly from the Sara sedentary farming community, who accepted Christian faith and teaching and the French curricula more readily than the northern Chadian Muslims, who not only resisted Christian education but also closer cooperation with the colonial regime in general. With all formerly powerful Muslim empires considerably weakened if not ended by the French, the first Chadian president Tombalbaye emerged from the Sara group, whose people took over most positions in the government, administration, private sector and military during the first decade of Chadian independence.

This first independent Chadian government lasted fifteen years, although there was already considerable resistance against him by 1966.[28] Felix Malloum, another southerner, toppled Tombalbaye in 1975, and in 1979 the first member of the northern Chadian guerrillas, Goukouni Weddeye, who received strong support from Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, took over the presidency. Since then, the presidency as well as all senior government and military positions have remained in the hands of northern and Muslim Chadians from different ethnic origins. Although southern Chadians still hold most positions in the public sector, including banking, education, and non-governmental and international organizations, this

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[27] See also Beck (2003) for an account of how the colonial Sudan maintained a certain control of its peripheral areas while consecutive post-colonial governments increasingly relied on a system of supporting local militias for lack of control. In Chad, people reminisced about the order French rule had brought about, which afterwards never was achieved again to that extent.

[28] See Buijtenhuijs (1978, 1987) for detailed accounts of the FROLINAT (Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad, see below) rebellions in Chad.

change of power from southern to northern Chad altered the face of the country and excluded the south from the political decision-making processes.

In both countries, revenues from natural resources[29] as well as key positions are distributed amongst the small clique of the ruling elite, and development throughout the countries is gravely neglected. With all this being the case, it must be said that the Sudanese civil wars, particularly after the renewed outbreak in 1983, bear an overall cruelty and terror not experienced in the Chadian case, at least not since the time of Hissein Habré.[30] In the end, when looking at all factors that divide the north and the south in the neighboring states, religion and economics play the most critical role[31] – with oil, as the most profitable resource, being found in the southern parts of both countries, but exploited by the ruling northern groups. The British transfer of power to the already powerful northern elite in Sudan helped to enforce this group's already long existing perception that the non-Muslim southern Sudanese as well as the Muslim sedentary populations of parts of northern Sudan were "*zurqa*" – black – and thus potential slaves, to be excluded from participation in the exclusive circles of national rule (Duffield 2001, El-Tom 2005).

To sum up the current state of affairs in both countries, the characteristic features of the Sudan are its intensified turn towards fundamentalist Islam with the ascendancy of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's NIF (National Islamic Front, since 1998 'National Congress Party') government in 1989, and the government's continuing manipulation of ethnic differences and the underlying conflict potential

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[29] Sudan produces oil since 1999 in cooperation mainly with Malaysia, China and India; Chad since 2003 with a consortium of American and Malaysian companies. See, among many others, Kok (1992), Verney (1999), Human Rights Watch (2003), Gagnon and Ryle (2001), Gary and Karl (2003), Gary and Reisch (2005) and Pegg (2005) for detailed information on oil in Chad and Sudan.

[30] The times before and during Hissein Habré's rule signify the most violent part of post-independence Chadian history. With frequent changing of sides first as premier minister under the three year rule of the southern General Malloum, then together with Goukouni Weddeye and Libyan help against Malloum, later against Weddeye and Libya with the help of Egypt, the Sudan, the US and later France, his rule and the war against Libya tore the country into almost fifteen years of constant military operations and gravest insecurity. Thousands of people fled the country, but many thousands were also killed and tortured by his regime. In 1990 he was overthrown by one of his former army commanders, the present president of Chad, Idriss Déby. Today Habré lives in exile in Senegal and a final decision to try him before an international court is still pending.

[31] Although oil constitutes the most profitable resource in both countries, the southern parts also hold the potential for higher revenues in agricultural and cotton cultivation. While in Chad, all cultivation is concentrated in the south – an inheritance from French colonial rule, where the southern part has even been named "*le Tchad utile*" compared to the northern "*Tchad inutile*" – the Sudanese regime only developed commercial cultivation schemes in the northern and central part of the country for fear of giving the south too much of an asset at hand (see Duffield 2001: 205).

for proxy warfare – that is, arming one group against its direct neighbor – in order to maintain political office by weakening resistance and preventing alliances, and thus keeping control over oil fields and other economic factors. Chad's most striking features are its extreme poverty (the country ranks fifth worldwide), and its lack of infrastructure, in spite of a relatively calm phase after Idriss Déby's overthrow of Hissein Habré in his 1990 coup d'état. With the change of power from a southern to a northern elite group in Chad, today's subjugation of the south takes on a different character than in the Sudan, where the south until now, apart from rebellion, has hardly had the possibility of influencing national politics or public and institutional life.

Southern Chadian rebellion never had the impact that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (henceforth SPLM) had in the Sudan. Still, Chad remains strongly affected by the severe civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s. The extreme fractiousness and internal fighting of the FROLINAT (Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad) guerrilla movement, and Libyan claims to the northern Aouzou Strip[32] – coupled with Muammar Gaddafi's political interests in Chad and the involvement of the US and France in the Chadian civil war – leave the impression that the state has completely neglected the population and left the administration of public services to local warlords and rebel armies. Today, the state in Chad has managed to establish military control over much of its territory. And while an Arab vs. African 'racial' divide is not significant in Chad, it is the fact that the national military consists exclusively of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group that not only seems to be at the heart of the population's grievances, but which also accounts for the recent power struggles within this ethnic group over the national presidency.

The Chad/Sudan border region today as a site of integration and conflict

Although the Chad/Sudan border has become a clear-cut dividing line – as has been demonstrated above – it continues to display distinctive traits of both, cross-border integration and cross-border conflict. A characteristic feature of integration in this region is the longstanding orientation towards the Sudan by people living in both countries related to the colonial disempowerment of Wadaian elites. After Wadaian influence was largely drawn out of the frontier zone, Wadai's former tributaries and dependent sultanates were left in want of a larger

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[32] Gaddafi's revolutionary thoughts were not only centered around his idea of an Arab corridor into 'Black Africa' based on feelings of cultural Arab supremacy, but he was also fighting to control the Aouzou Strip, a piece of supposedly uranium-rich land bordering Chad, which Mussolini had claimed during the Italian occupation of Libya in 1938 against the border treaty signed by France and Italy in 1935 (see Burr and Collins 1999).

ally. Neither the colonial state nor the post-colonial southern Chadian regime nor the subsequent rebel fractions and warlords that ruled Wadai until 1990 provided to the population a trustworthy successor to the former sultanate. As a result, by the late 1920s, people from the Chadian side east of the former Wadai sultanate were moving into British ruled territory because of "a tightening up of administration in general and a drastic tax collection campaign in Wadai" (Kapteijns 1985: 238).

During this time, western Sudanese labor migration to the Nile Valley started on a larger scale. Safer roads and desire for tea, sugar, and factory-made cloth, created demand for hard currency, which could be earned in the agricultural schemes of maize cultivation in regions like Gadarif or Gezira. Another motive for migration from the west to the Nile Valley was religion. Since the British and post-colonial Chadian governors were Christians, many local Muslims sought the 'neo-Mahdist' residence of the late Mahdi's son, Sayid Abd-er-Rahman al-Mahdi, one of the biggest cotton lords of the Gezira scheme and founder of the *Umma* party.[33] The ensuing Chadian regimes left the population on the Chad/Sudan border feeling less and less well governed; the people preferred migration to the Sudanese side. Whereas the local elites' influence was reduced in Chad, the former elites in colonial Darfur upheld their primacy, controlling landownership rights and governance in their areas.[34] However, the claims to land and leadership of the Fur – the largest ethnic group in the area – over the most fertile area of central Darfur was increasingly contested by other parts of the population.

The 1980s mark a major rupture after independence in Chad and Sudan. Overall insecurity led up to civil war, caused by the triple catastrophe: firstly, severe droughts coupled with the failure of both national governments to manage the emerging water and food shortage; secondly, by the Chadian civil war that spread across the border; and thirdly, the Libyan sponsored invasion into the border

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[33] The 1986 elections where Sayid Abd-er-Rahman al-Mahdi's grandson Sadiq al-Mahdi was elected President of Sudan marked the coming-up of the *Umma* Party in Darfur. As Marchal comments the high percentage of voters for this party in Darfur, these results translate a profound historic continuity: "since the participation in the Mahdist uprising against the Ottomans until today, the *Umma* functioned as a total institution because of its quasi religious brotherhood, the *Ansar* (…). [The Party] was in charge of religious life, the traditional leaders and local administration, the public sphere" (Marchal 2004: 51, my translation). Apart from the above mentioned Sanusiyya and the Neomahdist groupings mentioned here, other brotherhoods or *tariqa*s maintain an important political influence in the larger region of Chad and Sudan, like the Tijaniyya, which has also been influential in the Darfur peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria, or the Mirghaniyya, a brotherhood exclusive for people of northern Sudanese origin (see Karrar 1992 on the Sufi brotherhoods in the Sudan).

[34] Even today, the sultan of Dar Masalit, residing in El Geneina, the capital of western Darfur, takes recourse to a colonial document, which guaranteed him the right to secede from the rest of the Sudan on the premise of a quasi autonomy granted to him during Anglo-Egyptian rule (personal communication by Ibrahim Adam Ahmed, N'Djaména 2000).

zone, which transformed the region into a de facto Libyan territory during much of the 1980s (Prunier 2005: 70). It was during this time that international involvement, the impositions of both central governments, and internal opposition intensified in an unprecedented manner that led to the current crisis. Marchal (2004: 49) observed that all these elements of an escalation were multiplied without a single one having the potential of destabilizing the situation in such a radical way as can be observed today.

Culmination of factors leading to an intensification of warfare in the 1980s

Since the 1970s the ecological deterioration caused by droughts – particularly in the more arid zones of the northern border region – has caused more people to move south and to stay there longer than they normally would during their usual phases of transhumance. As a result, tensions between farmers and herders of different groups in central Darfur intensified. These tensions coincided in the early 1980s with the appointment of the first regionally recruited government of Darfur since the times of Sultan ʿAli Dinar. President Nimeiri installed this government after continuous protests by Khartoum-based Darfurians against the neglect of their region by the central government. But Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige (an ethnic Fur), the appointed governor, and his deputy Mahmoud Jamaa (an ethnic Zaghawa) soon faced irresolvable problems in Darfur. The mounting ethnic tensions, in the beginning, did not represent the most pressing and central problem of all ensuing events. But Sharif Harir, in his account of the phases leading up to large scale civil war in Darfur during the 1980s, argues that the local government, which appointed positions according to ethnic background (and eventually took different sides in the conflicts) did not help but rather aggravated the situation (1994: 161), regardless of the integrity of individual politicians (Marchal 2004: 51, Prunier 2005: 50). Without any help from the Sudanese government of President Nimeiri to provide water and food in order to reduce tensions and save the population from starvation, Diraige threw in the towel and left Darfur in 1983.

During the Sahelian droughts of the 1970s and 1980s that culminated in the 1983/84 famine, the influx of groups from all sides into the more fertile central Jebel Marra area of the Fur caused rising competition over access to land and water. Although the Fur usually received their guests with hospitality and shared their resources during normal transhumant influx as well as other in-migrations, the demands of all incoming groups could not at this juncture be met. By the end of the 1980s, the intensification of the struggle took the form of a racist war,

where different groups started fighting against each other with modern weaponry, burning villages and killing indiscriminately.[35]

These conflicts were extremely aggravated by the additionally disturbing and destructive presence in Darfur of the Chadian troops of Hissein Habré, who was preparing to stage a coup against his opponent, Goukouni Weddeye, the president of Chad. In Darfur, he was backed by Sudan's president Nimeiri, but military aid was provided to Habré also by the US, Saudi Arabian and Egyptian governments (Harir 1994: 164, Buijtenhuijs 1991: 132). After his successful coup in 1982, Habré took the Chadian Zaghawa, who had helped him in Darfur on his way to power, into his ethnic alliance ruling Chad. At the same time, the Libyan leader Gaddafi feared to lose influence in Chad after his protégé Goukouni Weddeye was overthrown. Thus, he started to look for allies who were not represented in Habré's government. In accordance with his ideas about Pan-Arabism and Arab supremacy, Gaddafi started recruiting Arab groups from Darfur and Wadai to build up opposition against Habré. He found a willing partner in Asheikh ibn Oumar,[36] the leader of the Chadian rebel group CDR (Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire), who was ready to lead an alliance of Arab groups coming mainly from northern Wadai and provide them with abundant weapons. This meant that on top of the conflicts arising from drought and famine proxy warfare between Chad and Libya was fought out in the border region.

When the Sudanese president Nimeiri, who had been supporting Habré, fell in 1985, military hindrance to Libyan recruitment in Darfur was also removed. Thus, Libya's massive supply of weapons poured into the conflict area at the same time that Chad-based Arab opposition groups and their cattle had fled Chad because of revenge attacks by Habré's soldiers. They escaped into the fertile Darfurian Jebel Marra range because the mountainous landscape made it difficult for Chadian government expeditionary forces to follow them. The new Sudanese president, Sadiq al-Mahdi, who had replaced Nimeiri after elections held in 1986,

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[35] The *Janjawid*, during the 1980s mostly made up of Arab groups from northern Darfur and Wadai, came up during these years of warfare in the area, when fighting had been influenced by outside involvement and taken on racist and ideological leanings, heavily laden with "tribal bigotry" (Harir 1994: 165).

[36] "Members [of the Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire (CDR)] were Chadians of Arab origin, most originating in Ouaddaï Prefecture or Batha Prefecture, with close ties to Libya and receptive to some of the ideological precepts of Muammar Qadhafi. After the death of its founder, Acyl Ahmat, the CDR was headed by Acheikh ibn Oumar. …Believed to number up to 3,000 at its peak in the early 1980s, the CDR dwindled to fewer than 1,000 adherents before it was battered... in 1987" (Library of Congress, http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/chad/-td_appnb.html). Since 1976 Acyl Ahmat Ashbakh had been in Libyan exile. He gathered Arab groups on the Chadian side among the Mahamid Arabs, who shared with him Gaddafi's ideological ideas of a grand Arab nation. The name and fierce rule of Acyl is well remembered among the Chad/Sudan border population as one of the warlords who rendered the area most insecure during the 1980s years of war and famine (personal communication).

did not resist Libyan presence in the border area, nor did he prevent the influx of weapons to Gaddafi's newly found allies.[37]

During this period of intensifying warfare, many things happened simultaneously. A factor further amplifying the situation was the renewed rebellion of the southern Sudanese SPLM under John Garang against the northern Sudanese government in 1983. In 1985 Sadiq al-Mahdi, searching for a 'cheap'[38] way to counter the SPLM and prevent their expansion into Darfur, armed the *Murahilin*, a group of fighters recruited from the southern Darfurian Rizeigat and installed them as militias against the SPLM. Concurrently, the Fur, who already had *fort à faire* with the large-scale Zaghawa penetration of Fur territory from the north, were also attacked by these Rizeigat militias from the southern side (Marchal 2004: 45). By 1987 Habré, who rightly feared a coup against him from the Sudanese side, armed willing partners most opposed to his enemies in the region: the non-Arab Fur, Masalit and other central and western Darfurian sedentary populations that felt neglected by all sides. At the same time, the Sudanese Zaghawa, initially not too involved in the Chadian conflict, mobilized opposition against Habré by siding with his opponent, Idriss Déby. Déby originates from the Chadian Zaghawa Bideyat and promised influence and station to his supporters. In 1989 the Sudanese president Sadiq al-Mahdi was overthrown by a group of middle rank military officers led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Al-Bashir, who in contrast to Sadiq was against Habré, did not hinder Déby and the Zaghawa to prepare the coup in Darfur,[39] which they successfully executed in early December 1990 with the help of Libya.

With Déby's takeover in Chad and al-Bashir as new president in the Sudan, warfare in both countries eased almost immediately. The Zaghawa, who, as Marchal (2004: 46) put it, did not react 'too modestly' after their triumph in N'Djaména, raided parts of Wadai in order to regain the areas that the people of the Libyan backed Arab warlord Asheikh ibn Oumar had brought under their control during the years of war and chaos. Marchal suggests that the Chadian Arab refugees

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[37] Sadiq al-Mahdi, grandson to Sayid Abd-er-Rahman al-Mahdi, had been hosted by Tripoli during the years of Nimeiri's reign and had maintained ties with Gaddafi after his return to the Sudan.

[38] See Alex de Waal's (2004) frequently quoted article in the London Review of Books, "Counter-insurgency on the cheap", which aptly characterizes the Sudanese government's method of fighting rebellion for more than twenty years.

[39] Sudanese help for Déby was more of a *laissez-faire* than an active help. At this time the Sudanese army was highly involved in overthrowing Mengistu in Ethiopia. Déby was granted the right to take what he wanted and to freely move in the region. General Tijani Adam Taher, a close confidant of Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who also belonged to the ruling junta in Khartoum, had gone to school with Déby in Kornoy and played a leading role in this. It should also be mentioned that many in Khartoum were against Déby's presence in Darfur and were ready to reach an agreement with Habré in the fall of 1990 when continuing attacks on Darfurians caused more and more casualties.

to the Sudan, who fled during the Zaghawa campaigns, became some of the later recruits of the renewed *Janjawid* militias in northern Darfur after the 2003 insurgency. But the Fur and Masalit, who had been supported by Habré towards the end of his regime, fell from favor. Neither Déby nor al-Bashir was willing to support what they perceived as either Habré's allies or the opponents of Arabism, respectively.

During the early 1990s, socio-political development differed in Chad and Sudan. In Chad, the Zaghawa military together with the new regime's administration took firmer control of the whole country, and by 1996, Déby held 'democratic' elections. Conflict in Darfur although slowed did not cease. In 1994, the new Sudanese government instigated a constitutional reform that divided all Sudanese regions into smaller parts. The newly gained positions and land rights throughout the split territories were mainly given to the Arab allies of the government who previously did not hold land rights or political offices in the area, thereby reducing the authorities of the three largest landholding groups in Darfur – the Zaghawa, Fur and Masalit – to mere tribal chiefs. The central government did not intervene in the resulting conflicts and fighting soon broke out again, first between Masalit and Arabs, causing tens of thousands to flee into neighboring Chad. Whereas before there had been heavy factionalism inside Darfur, with this new measure from the government, the Zaghawa and the Fur found themselves not as opposed to each other as one might have suspected after their fierce opposition during the conflicts in the 1980s. After a phase of relative calm, those groups of Darfur, now deprived by the state, who held the common claim to have been landowners and rulers, allied against their common opponent – the current government of Sudan.

Excursion: Local perceptions of the relations between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' in Chad and Sudan

In the following excursion into the data collected during my field research in 2000 and 2001, two points shall be underscored: first, the rupturing influence of the successive national governments of Chad and Sudan on the rather flexible structures of alliance and opposition that historically prevailed in the border region; and second, the subsequent hardening of differences along racial and ethnic lines, which can be observed to varying degrees in the two states and in accordance with their governmental politics. It gives a brief insight into the time period shortly before the outbreak of the 2003 rebellion, that is, the phase during or directly after the confrontations in Dar Masalit that resulted from the constitutional

reform mentioned above.[40] My informants were mainly Masalit and Arabs from various large families, who were residents in Chad or had recently come to Chad as refugees. Some of them were well aware that as a result of the constitutional reform, Masalit in higher positions of the local government in El Geneina were replaced with northern Sudanese in the administration and in the military. They saw the conflict originate in towns and soon afterwards sweep into to the rural areas, where the attacks on Masalit villages reached their first peak in 1998, causing several thousand people to flee to the Chadian side.[41]

Here, I feel it necessary to say a word about the dichotomy between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' often quoted in representations of the current Darfur conflict. As is inherent to all polarizations, this dichotomy reduces the actual complexity and diversity as well as the existing possibilities of changing identities that lie behind the terms. When I collected the data in 2001, Sudanese Masalit referred to the attacks which caused their flight as ones launched by 'Arabs'. They knew, nonetheless, that their actual neighbors in the Sudan, formerly nomadic Arab families who had settled in their immediate vicinity decades earlier, had not taken part in the fighting. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the contexts in which this dichotomy is invoked in the local setting. Since the 1980s when people discuss the conflicts in Darfur they refer to 'Arabs' as those who are supported by the newly installed northern governors of Darfur and by the government of Sudan, and who thus have gained extended rights to land and better access to public services than the other groups. The Masalit, on the other hand, consider themselves the 'original owners' of all the land in 'Dar Masalit'. They thus have played the autochthony card, as natives deprived of their rights. When I speak of 'Arabs' in relation to the research findings, therefore, several meanings according to context can be evoked: one refers to those families who had settled in Dar Masalit due to previous droughts in the northern parts of Chad and Sudan and later became refugees during the recent clashes; another relates to the groups of various (also Arab)

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[40] A detailed account of the events preceding the renewed outbreak of violence in Dar Masalit had also been given to me in a handwritten manuscript by Adam Ahmed Ibrahim and Khamis Yousouf Haroun (2001).

[41] From 1998 onwards, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had opened an office in Abéché, assisting the refugees together with the World Food Programme. Already in 1984, the UNHCR had intervened from the Sudanese side. In the memories of the people I talked to, the 1984 famine had so far been one of the worst phases in their lives. Not only had they been living in constant insecurity and danger coming from Habré's or Asheikh ibn Oumar's soldiers raiding villages and killing people at random, but their harvests after years of bad rainfall were not sufficient to support their families. Almost everybody had fled to Sudan; villages on the Chadian side were deserted, and whole village structures completely changed after the return of the people. Many of those who had fled the Chadian side in the 1980s had planned never to return, and, despite the insecure situation in Darfur, only came back during the clashes caused by the governmental changes just before 2000. Compare accounts of this emergency intervention by UNHCR (1984), Maxwell (1986), Doornbos (1987), Ruiz (1987) and de Waal (1988, 1989).

origin who have been instrumentalized by the Sudanese state to counter the Darfur insurgency, generally called the *Janjawid*.

Although aware before my actual research of the increasingly racialist confrontations on the Sudanese side of the border, I was surprised to find hardly any evidence of these problems just a couple of meters from the physical border (the area of the *Wadi Asoungha* riverbed) in Masalit and Arab villages on the Chadian side.[42] The villages were situated only short distances apart. Thus, Arabs and Masalit not only fetched water in the same nearby wadi, but families from both villages had also known each other for generations. The young Masalit women were particularly familiar with their age mates from the other villages and knew, for example, the interior of Arab houses.[43] After the influx of refugees from the Sudan – who at that stage were integrated mainly into existing villages or were given land outside a village (refugee camps had not yet been installed) – tensions between the groups rose. But, these tensions were far from causing outright fighting. Rather, the problems reported to me by both Arabs and Masalit farmers and traders were mainly about attacks by members of the Chadian army. The common antipathy of the population was therefore geared towards 'the Zaghawa', the term standing for Chadian military and police in general. Indeed, during the months of my stay, frequent cattle theft and deadly attacks on traders returning from market were testified, but people did not report these instances to the police. As one informant put it: "If you are killed, they will say he was a bandit [who cannot be traced, AB]; if you killed him, they will say he was a military man [for whose death the one to report will be punished, AB] (original in French)" – translating into impunity for those who committed these crimes.[44]

In the villages, gruesome stories were told for evening amusement about how Masalit were killed by their own people if they continued to cooperate with the Arabs. In actual fact, however, apart from barter between Masalit and Arab nomads who passed through occasionally, Arabs from the neighboring villages from time to time entered Masalit villages on foot or on horseback to greet friends; Masalit farmers worked for salaries in the few fields some of the Arabs had started to cultivate, and Arab camels were rented by the Masalit to collect their harvest. Cattle found spoiling the harvest in the fields were caught by the farmers and put into a kraal, from where Arab women would pick them up and pay a fine

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[42] Apart from the larger towns like the border town Adré, Arabs and Masalit did not live together in the same villages.

[43] Although more or less alike from the outside, Arab houses displayed a rich collection of pots and leather bags as well as, in some cases, large beds decorated with pillows and blankets. Rural Masalit houses normally were not decorated, and pots were stored in kitchen houses, but not on 'display'.

[44] Accounts of attacks around Abéché in 2005 have publicly been attributed to military from the Zaghawa Bideyat, for example at the website of 'Alwihda' under http://www.alwihdainfo.com.

to the village chief for the damage. Children were usually teasing each other and sometimes fights would break out between them, but these problems were regulated on the village level. These accounts of ambivalence between discourse and practice, although showing only minor instances of everyday activities, were also mirrored in the case of an old Masalit farmer whom I visited on his melon field close to the wadi. He told me that every day he had to wait until sunset for the Arab children who were herding goats and sheep to pass his orchard, so that they would not let the animals enter the fields. When the children came by, they stood at the thorn bush fence, laughing and waving their hands, and Abd-er-Rahman, the old man, went to give them a couple of melons to share on the spot.

Of course, friendly behavior of individuals does not give any guarantee that fighting between the groups and a tightening of ethnic identities that transforms into collective hatred might not break out at any time. But tensions like those reported from Darfur, at least at that point in time, were not observable in spite of the close proximity of the neighborhood of different groups on the Chadian side. Masalit refugees from the Sudan who had seen their villages burnt and all their belongings taken by 'Arab horsemen', knew very well that their long time Arab neighbors had not taken part in the attacks. However, they suspected them of having hosted 'strangers', who then forged the attacks against their villages after having 'spied' on what to expect during a raid. In retaliation of past attacks, Masalit farmers did counterattack their former Arab neighbors, causing a good number of Arab herders to take refuge in Chad as well.

From the information gathered in the field, it seems that Arab groups started to settle in the area around the Chadian garrison town of Adré on a permanent basis during the 1940s and 1950s, when land for herding in their own home area around Arada in northern Chad had become scarce. The land for their settlements was given to them by the local Masalit, but not, as the latter emphasized, forever. Fearing repulsion as a consequence to the conflicts on the Sudanese side, the Arabs in some villages recently had the land declared theirs by the ruling sub-prefect, justifying their claims with their Chadian citizenship.[45] The Arab settlements looked similar to those of the Masalit, but they were often larger and much less in number due to the fact that different Arab 'tribes'[46] shared a common space and lived slightly separated from each other in different quarters of a village headed by several 'tribal' and 'village quarter' chiefs, none of them responsible for the whole settlement (see Yalcin-Heckmann, Behrends and Leutloff 2003).

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[45] A similar strategy was reported for the Zaghawa and Arabs on the Sudanese side after the ecological degradation in the 1980s by Harir (1994).

[46] The Arab groups living in the villages of my research were Mahariya, Walad Zeid and Naddja all claiming to come from the northern part of Chad.

One of the most significant differences between Masalit and Arabs that I ob-
served was the free movement of Arabs into Sudanese territory. Arab women
with their small children frequently entered Darfur on donkeys to buy and sell in
the market in El Geneina, a venue that had once been very attractive for the Ma-
salit as well. But, in contrast to their Arab neighbors, the Masalit did not dare to
cross the border any longer, except for very rare and secretive visits to their for-
mer houses and fields. Most certainly, they still claimed ownership to their land
in the Sudan, a fact they demonstrated by harvesting fields immediately around or
on the grounds of their former houses. During the current conflict it has occa-
sionally been reported that Arabs from Chad were now moving into Darfur to
settle on the land that the local population had fled. From what I saw and heard
in 2000/01, this does not seem realistic, since the land would also not be safe for
the Arabs. The Arab groups that I met have remained in Chad all through the
recent warring, and they – as many other Arab groups in the region – have not
been involved in the violence themselves, although some of the younger men
might have crossed the border to join one or the other side of the fighting.[47]

In conclusion of the above and relating to the dissimilar perceptions of 'Arab'-
'African' relations in Chad and Sudan, the facts indicate that these discrepancies
result from the differing positions of the two national governments concerning
that point. When Déby was preparing his coup d'état to topple the regime of His-
sein Habré in Chad, he found initial support from the Arab 'people of Acyl'[48]
and from Libya. But this or other events in the past never led to an overall ideol-
ogy of Arab supremacy in the country. People in the Chad/Sudan border region
remember that during the times when Acyl and later Asheikh ibn Oumar ruled as
warlords over Wadai and Biltine in the 1980s, Arab soldiers enjoyed superior
positions. Soon afterwards, however, the Arab warlords and their followers were
reduced to the level of the rest of the population after Déby's successful coup in
1990. Their influential positions, military command and impunity more or less
transferred to the Chadian Zaghawa. In contrast to the Chadian situation, na-
tional politics and external influences from neighboring regimes in Sudan have,
over time, substantially altered relations between Arab and non-Arab groups,
particularly in Darfur. Today the state is obviously promoting an overall Arab
domination over the non-Arab population of the region. It thus becomes evident
that conflicts do not arise between groups with opposing interests, e.g. in land,
but between groups where one side is guaranteed impunity and full support of
the government while the other side is completely neglected by the state.

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[47] Young Arab men are said to also participate in the rebel groups that formed against the govern-
      ment of Sudan.
[48] Accounts of Acyl's influence in Chad are given in Brandily (1984) and Buijtenhuijs (1991).

How did the rebels mobilize support in the current Darfur conflict? Re-enacted patterns of forming and breaking regional alliances

Soon after the al-Qaida attacks on the USA in 2001 the government in Khartoum started to engage in showing the world that it could play in tune with US interests and signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the southern SPLM leader John Garang in January 2005. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, many said that the Darfurian rebels chose that point in time to start a rebellion in order to gain access to the proceedings in Naivasha, where, among other relevant issues, power and wealth sharing in Sudan were debated. Another less debated and less well known possible trigger for the rebellion goes back to 1999, when the Sudanese president al-Bashir fell out with his former mentor and Secretary General of the ruling Congress Party, the fundamentalist and Islamist 'guide', Hassan al-Turabi.[49] Turabi, who subsequently was arrested in Khartoum, had started to build up a large group of new followers (many of them from among the Zaghawa of northern Darfur), promoting their desire to assume control of central politics. This hope was largely diminished with Turabi's arrest, and thus, accelerated a process of re-orientating the Zaghawa and other Darfurians towards armed rebellion. It is the aim of the following part of the paper to show that the structures of the rebel movements in Darfur, their networks and the way they continue to separate and unite in changing constellations, mirror a long history of alliance and opposition within the Darfur/Wadai border region.

These structures become visible by looking at, for example, the recruitment patterns of the rebel groups. To understand who aligns under which umbrella and why, various political, ethnic, social and historical factors have to be considered. Apart from the *Janjawid* militias, who in themselves reflect much of Darfur's history, three rebel groups will briefly be discussed in their development and composition: the first, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (henceforth SLA) is the group that is usually said to have started the Darfur rebellion in February 2003; second is the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) which went public soon after and joined forces with the SLA; finally is the *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et la Liberté* (RDL) one of about eight originally formed rebel movements in Chad united under the aim of ousting the current president.

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[49] Hassan al-Turabi, the 'charismatic leader of the Muslim Brothers', has been a most influential figure in Sudanese politics for several decades. Prunier (2005: 82) describes him as a man who, throughout his political life, engaged in the most unprincipled forms of *talaahuf* (temporary alliances).

Sudan Liberation Army / Movement (SLA)

During the time I spent in Chad in 2001, many villages had a so-called 'horse-chief',[50] who held command over all (younger and older) men with horses. Asked about his tasks, one of these *chefs de chevaux* told me that he was in charge of organizing horse races if something was to be celebrated, but most of all to gather all men with horses in the surrounding villages through a complicated communication chain in cases of theft or murder – in short, to be in charge of reacting to imminent threats and retaliating in the name of the village.[51] I witnessed a couple of this group's activities, such as riding off at the break of day after cows were reported stolen overnight by a gang of masked robbers on horseback, or when a person was reported missing after he had gone across the border into the Sudanese area. The 'horse-chief' and all other villagers used to listen to music tapes of Mubasak, a Masalit singer from Darfur. They sang along when Mubasak, in the repetitive style of Masalit music, called the Masalit to go to war against the Arabs to fetch back the cows that had been stolen: "*Maslati*, gather and follow the Arabs who stole your cows!" But he was also insulting them: "You see the cows on top of the mountains, but you take the path through the valley." The songs accused the young Masalit men who did not fight against the Arab oppressors who had taken over administrative posts and granted impunity to Arab militias after the constitutional reform of 1994.[52] It seems that Mubasak was successful in his agitation.

To the attention of the world public the Darfur rebellion started in February 2003 when the SLA launched their successful attack on the garrison town Golo in eastern Darfur. According to information gathered by Julie Flint (Flint and de Waal 2005: 76), the attacks against government positions had already started two years earlier when the rebels (later SLA) united such local and independently formed self-defense groups like the 'horse-chief's' group from among the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa. As Flint (ibid.) came to learn, "by the time of the attack on Golo, war was already raging in Darfur: the rebels were attacking police stations, army posts and convoys, and Jebel Marra was under massive air and ground attack".

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[50] The office of the 'horse-chief' existed alongside a large number of local 'traditional' or 'neo-traditional' offices on the village and *canton*-level, many of which have come into existence during the colonial era – like that of the French imported *chef de canton* – or even more recently through international organizations and NGOs. Other offices were that of the village chief, responsible for matters concerning the village community, the female 'chief of the women' mainly in charge of communicating between NGOs and the women of a village, the 'chief of the refugees' who spoke for the groups of refugees who had come to settle in many of the border villages after the 'Masalit War' 1995–1998, and a 'chief of the young men', an office more likely to be of older origin, who was in charge of supervising dancing events and all matters concerning the village youth in communication with the elders.

[51] Interview with Mahmat Ismael Moussa, Achaba (Chad), October 29, 2001.

[52] Concerning the events that caused the 'Masalit War' in 1994 see Flint and de Waal (2005: 57f.).

Both, Marchal (2004: 54) and Flint/de Waal (2005: 76) suggest that the SLA movement initially was not united by a common project or an overall coordination, but rather was assembled after different localized resistance groups and movements eventually joined together under one common umbrella. The SLA gave its first public declaration under their original name, Darfur Liberation Front (DLF). Soon after their attack on Golo, they met with John Garang in Rumbek. After that, they came up with an agenda and a new name, Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA), which held the desire to be more far reaching in their aims as well as to lean ideologically towards the southern SPLM.[53] The SLA is the movement that, before its internal split, received most support and broadest acceptance by the local population; it recruits mainly from the Fur, Masalit and the Zaghawa Twer.

This group of the Zaghawa, who historically had aligned most often with Arabs in the region and with the government,[54] started to feel overrun and thus uncomfortable with their Arab allies after the events that led to the 'Masalit War' in the mid 1990s. By 1991, Zaghawa elders had complained to President al-Bashir "that the government was creating an 'apartheid region' in Darfur by instigating 'crimes against humanity', manipulating tribal hierarchies for political ends and attempting to turn 'black' tribes against each other" (Sudan Human Rights Organization quoted in Flint and de Waal 2005: 74). In July 2001 the assembled local resistance groups of the Zaghawa Twer joined their efforts with the rebel movement of the Fur and, later still, the Masalit, to fight the national government.

The original SLA was headed by Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur (an ethnic Fur); the movement's Secretary General was Minni Arkoy Minawi (from the Zaghawa Twer). After their initial success as a united group, the SLA split up in 2005, with Minni Arkoy Minawi today leading the Zaghawa section ('SLA/Minni'), and Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur leading the Fur under the 'SLA/Abdel Wahid' (ICG 2006: 3). The causes for this split were discussed in a briefing by the International Crisis Group, which maintained that divisions had been caused mainly

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[53] In 1991 the SPLM tried to extend its influence into Darfur, a region which the organization perceived as similarly neglected as the south of Sudan. This event is well remembered in Darfur in connection to the name of Daud Bolad, a Darfurian who had joined the SPLM and led a rebel section into Darfur. But his advance was ill-fated and short-lived and after Bolad was captured and killed by the ruling regime in 1992, the SPLM did not put forward any further operations in the region (see Harir 1994, Marchal 2004: 47, Prunier 2005: 73f., Flint and de Waal 2005: 81, but also the ICG Africa Briefing No 32, 2005: 3, for the SLA's involvement with John Garang). The fast defeat of Bolad's troops, however, gave birth to the government's notion that rebellion in Darfur could easily be suppressed by falling back on local militias – a notion that proved to be wrong (Flint and de Waal 2005: 117).

[54] For example in the 1980s, prominent Zaghawa Twer backed Libya's plans of pushing an Arab supremacy in Darfur, and in the 1990s they were well represented in the government of the National Islamic Front (NIF) (Marchal 2004: 54).

by personal animosity between the leaders along the "fault line of the two ethnic groups, the Fur and the Zaghawa", although both groups paradoxically agree on the political agenda (2005: 4). By 2006, the split between the factions had become increasingly volatile to the point that their internal fights over territorial gains started to additionally threaten the security of the population, reportedly causing further displacement.[55]

Neither Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur nor Minni Arkoy Minawi had previously had a significant political career, thus international backing and networking was less significant to the movement than the local support of the population. All parts of the SLA had come from the rural population, among whom they found a great number of volunteers, yet after the split, recruitment followed ethnic and sub-regional affiliations. The agenda of the SLA has always been secular. In their first memoranda, which were inspired by John Garang, the rebels claimed that their intentions were directed towards a secularization of the Sudan and an equal and democratic sharing of power and wealth on the national level.

Most recently, since the emergence of the rebel movements in Chad, the Minni-section of the SLA has built up amiable relations with the Chadian president Déby. After the attack of the new Chadian rebel groups on the Chadian border town Adré on January 18, 2006, Déby invited Minni and the leaders of the second Darfur rebel movement, the JEM, to N'Djaména to form a stronger alliance against the Sudanese state. This action created further distance between the SLA-Minni and the SLA-Abdel Wahid factions, prompting Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur to dismiss this newly formed alliance as one "between Zaghawa ethnic groups in Darfur with the Zaghawa regime in N'djamena" (Sudan Tribune, February 11, 2006, quoted in ICG 2006: 12). On May 5, 2006, Minni Arkoy Minawi was the only rebel group leader who signed the African Union mediated peace agreement with the Sudanese state (known as Darfur Peace Agreement, DPA). Although Minawi expressed reservations, UN representative Jan Egeland as well as the mediators of the African Union and their international advisors welcomed his signing the deal.[56] Neither the SLA section of Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur nor the JEM were willing to sign, as they saw the agreement as a "sell-out" of their former objectives to the government of Khartoum.

As of September 2006, dissidents of the former SLA section of Minni Arkoy Minawi formed a new rebel movement, called G-19. This group established a committee of mediators, consisting of tribal elders and native administrators, to find a solution for the war. Meanwhile, the remaining forces of Minnawi have been dubbed 'Janjawid 2' because of their repeated attacks on civilian communities and their assumed collaboration with the Sudanese military. El-Nur's section of the

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[55] See "SUDAN: UN humanitarian chief visits strife-torn Darfur", IRIN, May 7, 2006.

[56] See "SUDAN: Peace deal collapse would be catastrophic for Darfur", IRIN, May 5, 2006.

SLA by now remains the only group that joined neither of the new formations, the G-19 nor the National Redemption Front (NRF), a formation which grew out of the JEM (see below). El-Nur reportedly rejects Islamist ideals and proclaims to strive for more compensation to the Fur farmers than has been granted to them by the Darfur Peace Agreement of May 5, 2006.[57]

Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)

During a Sudan-Conference I attended in 2004 in Hermannsburg, Germany, a number of Sudanese participants were observed making and receiving telephone calls during the sessions, also getting up from their seats and talking excitedly. During the breaks, some of the younger men were quite open about their status: as members of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), they were in constant contact with other members, internationally and on the ground in Darfur via *Thuraya*, a satellite network, which disposes of the global positioning data which pinpoints the position of the speaker – a useful tool when giving outside directions for rebel attacks and locating the opponent's hideouts. During that meeting, the head of the JEM rebel movement, Khalil Ibrahim, wearing a distinguished dark blue overcoat, arrived for a few hours for some confidential dialogue with some of the other conference participants. While many of the Sudanese men present at this meeting claimed to be members of the JEM, who were employed or studying at German and British universities, not a single member of the SLA was present. Most of those present were Zaghawa from the Kobe family. When I asked them about Masalit or Fur in Germany or Britain, hardly any names came to their minds.

The JEM has normally been presented in the media as 'the other prominent rebel group active in Darfur'. Its leader, Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed, had been actively involved in national Sudanese politics before going 'underground'. The JEM movement's structure, its political background and the membership vary considerably from the SLA. The roots of the movement go back to the early 1990s, when a group from the National Islamic Front (NIF), the former party of President al-Bashir, clandestinely discussed reforming the current government "from within" (Flint and de Waal 2005: 92). In 2000 they anonymously published the 'Black Book', which gave account of the marginalization of Darfur in national politics since independence and caused great agitation among the Darfurians and other marginalized groups in Sudan.[58] In 2001, the movement turned away from ambitions to reform the government internally and became an armed movement. Khalil Ibrahim was one of twenty or so men whom the JEM sent outside the country to start an organized opposition movement, reaching out for a national

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[57]   See "SUDAN: Rebel fragmentation hampers Darfur peace", IRIN, September 11, 2006.

[58]   It can now be downloaded at the JEM website under www.sudanjem.com.

solution to the problems in Darfur (ibid.: 93). Although the supporters of JEM come from different groups, "its military capacity lies in its local base among the Zaghawa Kobe",[59] but its actual strength lies more in the political experience of its leaders (ibid.: 95).

Directly related to the sultan, Khalil Ibrahim is an influential man in both the Sudan and Chad. Before becoming a rebel leader, he was connected to the paramilitary Popular Defense Forces (PDF) in Darfur.[60] Because his good relations to Hassan al-Turabi were well known, Khalil Ibrahim was quickly removed from office after Turabi's arrest in 1999. The PDF were then led by allies to the government of al-Bashir and the new leaders started to strongly side with the Arab groups in the region against other local groups. The JEM's pro-Islamist agenda sparked implications of a direct link to Hassan al-Turabi and his plans to build up an alternative and decentralized movement to counter if not replace the current government in Khartoum. But the movement's members have so far fiercely denied this belief. The movement has attracted support from "across the political spectrum" (ibid.: 89), with most members either successful professionals or in some way politically influential – or aiming to be in the future. Recruitment follows two lines: whereas ethnic factors prevail on the ground, and JEM rebel fighters in Darfur originate mainly from the Zaghawa Kobe, the movement's urban and international recruitment is less influenced by ethnic factors than by its political and religious agenda. Consequently, international backing and influence seem to be far greater with the JEM, albeit with less impact and control over territories on the ground.

Soon after their first public statements, SLA and JEM joined forces. For the minority JEM it made sense to ally to the stronger power on the ground. Regarding their influence on the national governments in Chad and Sudan, the SLA originally had better connections to the Chadian government than the JEM, whose relations to Déby were reportedly bad. JEM was also connected to local rivalries between the influential Zaghawa Kobe and the Bideyat, where Déby was from (Marchal 2005: 12). But with its mainly Sudanese recruitment and without political backing in the Sudan, the SLA movement poses less of a threat to the Sudanese government, although the organization is the more efficient fighting group

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[59] The center of the Kobe sultanate is Tine, a market-town on the international border of northern Darfur and Biltine in Chad. See above for the divisions inside the Zaghawa community.

[60] Popular Defense Forces were originally installed by the government during the war in southern Sudan. To support the national army, local PDF groups were trained and equipped with cars and guns by the government. Marchal and Flint/de Waal hold divergent views on Ibrahim's responsibilities in the PDF forces. While Marchal maintains that Khalil Ibrahim has been in charge of the Sudanese security service, notably responsible for the surveillance of the Chadian Zaghawa and the organisation of the PDF forces (2004: 54), Flint and de Waal merely attribute to him that he "spent four months as a volunteer doctor in the PDF, …[but that he] never held national office" (2005: 91).

on the ground and the two factions hold larger territories than the JEM. It is the JEM's alleged link to the still very powerful Hassan al-Turabi and also their influential connections to the Chadian army that seem to give the JEM greater political impact on both regimes. In the beginning of the rebellion, the existence of these two rebel movements, both with support among the Zaghawa, put the Chadian president Déby in a precarious political position: on the one hand, he did not want to alienate his Sudanese ally Omar Hassan al-Bashir by openly backing the Zaghawa; on the other hand, he feared his people's anger should he not come to their help in the Sudan and on the Chad/Sudan border.

At their initiatory meeting in Asmara, Eritrea, on June 30, 2006, the JEM was part of a new umbrella group for rebel factions that are unhappy with the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), called National Redemption Front (NRF). The NRF's founding declaration was signed by JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim, Khamis Abdallah Abakar – former vice-president of the SLA and now the leader of the G-19 – and senior Darfur politicians Sharif Harir and Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige of the Federal Democratic Alliance (FDA), the former governor of Darfur (see above). The Sudanese government reacted with a building up of troops in North Darfur and with the bombing of several villages and towns in the region, where the rebels stay. Concerning the coherence of the new rebel alliance a local observer said that "apart from discontent about the DPA, there is little that keeps this rebel alliance together. The NRF has no political leader and very little political coordination – it is primarily an alliance of military necessity. The NRF is starting to disintegrate at the leadership level. It is a very fluid situation right now."[61] The fact that JEM troops have been observed to move away from the main NRF forces, while a senior officer of the SLA faction of el-Nur – who was strictly against uniting with the NRF – has now joined the movement, demonstrates very conspicuously the temporary character of alliances and oppositions that grow out of necessity and the better option of the moment.

Rebel Groups on the Chadian side of the border

As is well known today, Déby's fears of angering his people when he did not more actively support the Zaghawa in the war in Darfur proved to be justified. On January 18, 2006, rebels of the Chadian *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et la Liberté* (RDL) attacked the Chadian border town of Adré, and then withdrew again to their bases across the border in West Darfur. Déby, accusing the government of Sudan of supporting these rebels, declared a 'state of belligerence' against Sudan and actively sought international help. Help was given to him in several forms: Colonel Gaddafi of Libya convened a peace summit in Tripoli on February 10, 2006, at which the governments of Chad and Sudan signed a peace

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[61]   See "SUDAN: Rebel fragmentation hampers Darfur peace", IRIN, September 11, 2006.

deal and agreed upon stronger border controls. But despite the deal, rebel activities continued, and on March 20, 2006, Déby's army attacked Chadian rebel bases with the help of the French army.[62]

Déby reacted to the rebellion first by closing the borders to the Sudan in spring 2003, then offering to host peace negotiations in N'Djaména in summer 2003. But after an attempted coup against him from amongst his own people in May 2004, he took a more cautious and diplomatic position, neither confronting the Sudanese government directly for its implication in the conflict nor openly taking the side of the rebels. He did however take the first steps away from the Sudanese president al-Bashir, for instance, by condemning the great number of Sudanese troops assembled near the border of Chad, which he read as an unmistakable sign of building up armed resistance against him.

But unrest against Déby also mounted in other parts of the country, not only because of his hesitance to take sides in the Darfur conflict, but also because he pushed through a constitutional amendment allowing him to run for a third presidential term. He also diverted the annual 10 % of oil revenues earmarked for future generations in order to finance increased military spending, which has significantly increased his national budget since 2003 (see Gary and Karl 2003, Gary and Reisch 2005, Pegg 2005). Since August 2005, Chadian Zaghawa have been deserting the national army in large numbers and moving into the turbulent Chad/Sudan border region, where different Chadian rebel movements have united with the goal of ousting Déby. Originating from different families of the Zaghawa group, parts of these rebels claim support from the Sudanese government and are rumored to be receiving weapons, uniforms, and vehicles from China (among others), which allegedly is interested in gaining more political and economic access in (economically) American- and (militarily) French-dominated Chad. The border region has presented to the Chadian rebels a virtually custom-made base from where the rebel armies can not only conscript young men from the refugee camps, but also receive an abundant and easy flow of weapons and war machinery.

Recent developments have aggravated the situation of regional violence in Darfur into one of near proxy warfare between Chad and Sudan. Although by now more peaceful relations between the two countries have been re-established,[63] the government of Sudan has demonstrated an unmasked interest in helping to overthrow Déby by enlisting the help of Chadian Zaghawa opposed to their president, and by doing so, also weaken the Darfur rebels. On the other side of the

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[62] See "Tchad: Déby accuse le Soudan à partir d'Adré", Alwihda, March 25, 2006, and "CHAD: Residents prepare for war as rebels close in on capital", IRIN, April 12, 2006.

[63] See "CHAD-SUDAN: Diplomatic ties reopened", IRIN, August 9, 2006. With the decrease in tensions, both countries have agreed not to host rebel groups from the other side any longer, a promise that will be hard to keep given the conditions on the ground.

border, Déby explicitly supported those rebels against Sudan, particularly the Zaghawa section of Minni's group that recruits mainly from the Zaghawa Twer.

Parallel to the change of alliances on the national level, the groups' internal structures and mutual relations have also been subject to frequent crossings over. According to interviews conducted by the International Crisis Group (2006: 10), the RDL movement that was responsible for the attack on Adré was formed in August 2005 by Colonel Mahamat Nur, a Tama from northern Wadai (see map). This group is an outgrowth of a former movement, the *Armée nationale de résistance* (ANR), set up in 1994 by Mahamat Garfa, Déby's former Chief of Staff. By then, the Tama of northern Darfur had been advancing occasional attacks against the Chadian military, because they felt that impunity for continuous aggressions from the Zaghawa military against the Tama people had gone too far. The movement was set up across the border in Sudan, where its leaders and combatants settled among their families who had gone to Sudan during the crises in the 1980s (see above). Together with the other rebel forces of mainly Tama, Qimr and Zaghawa that temporarily united under the *Front Uni pour le Changement* (FUC), the RDL has approximately 6000 well equipped soldiers at their disposal in different state sponsored training camps along the Chad/Sudan border. Other groups like the *Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie* (SCUD) attracted such prominent figures as Déby's twin nephews, Tom Erdimi, who had been in charge of oil operations in Chad and Timan Erdimi, who was the former director of Déby's presidential cabinet. Tom presently lives in exile in the United States; his brother formed a new movement after the original FUC's fragile unity collapsed in March 2006 when some of the participating factions' leaders opposed the leadership of Mahamat Nur (of the RDL), who they complained had been put into the leadership position with the help of Khartoum.[64]

All of these events – amassing rebel forces in a turbulent environment, jockeying for support with the enemy's strongest opponent (such as using al-Bashir against Déby), and the changing clan-based allegiances of rebel groups – are reminiscent of the historical pattern of changing alliance and opposition building in the border region. The Chadian rebel groups, composed mainly of former army soldiers (Chadian Zaghawa), found allies in the Sudanese government to help weaken the Sudanese rebels in Darfur. The recently signed peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the SLA-Minni faction on May 5, 2006 is not likely to have much impact on the Chadian rebels since neither their aim to oust Déby nor their recruitment source (Chadian army) have been affected by the agreement. To the contrary, the disarmament of *Janjawid* militias and rebels proposed in the agreement could cause an influx of combatants into the Chadian rebel groups due to warlord structures and because lawlessness has become commonplace for the

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[64] See "Tchad: Le FUC s'explose en trois parties", Alwihda, March 14, 2006.

many young men who have no incentive to disarm and renounce the benefits of their illicit way of life.[65]

Janjawid

The Sudanese government's immediate reaction to the Darfur rebellion was to generate a 'well-prepared' and armed Arab opposition, a tactic utilized previously in the Masalit War of the mid 1990s. Similar to the counterinsurgency in the 1980s (when Sudanese president Sadiq al-Mahdi gave weapons and impunity to the *Murahilin* fighters to counter the SPLM), the government of al-Bashir has empowered another Arab militia, the *Janjawid*, in order to create an atmosphere of terror and violence. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the *Janjawid* are congruent with the Arab-based combatants of the 1980s' conflicts, who origi-nated mainly from the southern Darfurian Rizeigat. Prunier (2005), as one in-formed observer, insists on various possible recruitment grounds for the current *Janjawid*, enumerating – apart from young members of local Arab tribes – former bandits, criminals, fanatics and young unemployed Arab men "similar to those who joined the rebels on the 'African' side" (ibid.: 97). This reasoning also takes into account the distinction between the situation in Darfur in the 1980s – when there was region-wide famine and the Chad/Libyan war had swept over into Darfur, and all ethnic groups in the region were competing for food, land and ideology – and currently, when the government has reacted to a rebellion by mo-bilizing those most likely to fight against the mutineers, but without such press-ing reasons as drought, which is beyond human control, as was the case in the 1980s. This time, many of the Arab groups in the region resisted being drawn into such a war; but an array of outcasts would always be likely to assemble for the task.

Flint and de Waal (2005: 41f.), on the other hand, see the main part of the *Jan-jawid* originating from militant members of the camel herding northern Rizeigat Arabs (historical neighbors to the Zaghawa), and their Arab allies from Chad. During the time of the sultans, the northern Rizeigat were "a headache to the rulers of Darfur" (ibid.) for several reasons. Under British rule, they had been unwilling to be settled in a particular region, and they were too few to qualify for their own leader (*nazir*) but too far away from the *nazir* of the southern Rizeigat, who cooperated closely with the British. When they finally did elect a leader, rivalries prevented his installation – and in the end the northern Rizeigat neither resolved their tribal hierarchies nor were they given ownership over their tribal

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[65] For the difficulty of ending everyday practice of economic structures in 'markets of violence' see Elwert (1999). In September 2006, fighting again flared up between the Chadian government and rebels in eastern Chad, showing that tensions have not eased and war is still more likely than peaceful developments. See "CHAD: Govt and rebels clash in east", IRIN, September 13, 2006.

homeland, a vast pastureland north of Kutum, which would have ended "their centuries-old search for land to call their own" (ibid.: 42).

Of central importance to the organized training and ideological infiltration of today's *Janjawid* was, according to Flint and de Waal, Musa Hilal, son of an old and respected sheikh of the Rizeigat.[66] Expressions of Arab supremacy, which Hilal promotes, originated in the 1980s, more from Libyan infiltration than Khartoum based Arabism (ibid.: 50). During that time, when Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige was governor of Darfur in El-Fasher, a call – in the newly formed 'Arab Gathering' (ibid.: 52, see also Harir 1994) – for Arab rule in Darfur caused severe tensions in the area. The subsequent arming of both Arabs and Fur, through channels from Libya and Chad, culminated later in the violent escalations during the Masalit War, which followed Khartoum's move to put the requests of the 'Arab Gathering' into practice and give Arabs effective political control over large parts of Darfur.

The current war in Darfur bears the typical traces of all so-called ethnic, but actually deeply political, clashes of the recent past, where ethnic, religious or racist ideologies are instrumentalized in confrontations that unleash the worst and indiscriminate atrocities and cruelties towards the civilian population. Typically also, the war in Darfur is getting more and more out of control with all sides neither effectively commanding their own people nor being able to stop large-scale banditry or prevent splinter groups from forming. From the beginning, it was not the rebels and the government cum militias fighting each other. While the rebels started out attacking government military bases, the national army and in particular the militias retaliated against these attacks by indiscriminately assaulting and terrorizing the civilian population. The situation has now seriously deteriorated and humanitarian groups active in the region increasingly report attacks on their personnel by the *Janjawid* as well as the rebels. Not only does it seem as if the rebel leaders are not in control of their followers, but the different rebel factions are also reported to be openly fighting each other. Meanwhile, the Red Cross has reported 'agricultural collapse' for Darfur, describing the situation as worse than during the 1984 famine. Their reports also confirm that the fighting drastically increased again since September 2005. Thus, the social fabric of the border region has come under dramatic strain up to the point where it nearly "ceases to function" (Prunier 2005: 120).

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[66] Musa Hilal, a known Arab supremacist from Darfur, is one of the leaders of the *Janjawid* who has prominently been interviewed. Hilal himself always claimed to have led the Popular Defense Forces to help the government's army in Darfur and thus blurred the fact that the 'devils on horseback', as the *Janjawid* were often called in Western media, merged with both the army and the so-called PDFs. See Wax (2004) at http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/-A58171-2004Jul17?language=printer (last accessed November 1, 2005).

Conclusion

The historical trajectories laid out in this paper reveal, on the one hand, the continuity of regional alliances and oppositions on the Chad/Sudan border, and on the other they demonstrate the ruptures brought about by destructive manifestations of successive governmental regimes of both countries, and Libya, which have resulted in an enduring intensification of violence and warfare. A structure of flexibility that historically characterized the border region was interrupted first by the colonial border and later by the different national influences on the border region. As stated in the beginning, the following will briefly discuss the historical questions and current options for local actors, given the most complex conditions of social variety, land and water scarcity, underdevelopment, destructive political meddling and the ubiquity of firearms.

Historically, concerning the different groups and their strategies in Darfur, Fur and others' opposition to 'outside regimes' were already continuous during the period of Zubayr and later the Mahdiyya at the end of the nineteenth century, while the Zaghawa, at that time, and later various Arab groups, started to build up stronger ties to the central regime, still visible today. The first part of the paper, following Lidwien Kapteijns' (1985) historical account of the border region, showed how in 1888, at a point of overall crisis, different adversarial local groups effectively united against a common enemy – the Mahdist regime under Khalifa Abdullahi, successor to the Mahdi – under the leadership of a young man, Abu Jummayza, with whom they drove off the Mahdist forces together.

Currently, different local groups have united to fight the Sudanese government. Whereas the attacks of the SLA and JEM rebel movements were surprisingly successful in the beginning, their situation today would best be described by what Kapteijns said about the final stages of the historical uprising under Abu Jummayza in 1888: that the differences that historically developed between the members of different groups inside the movements – also related to their ethnic background – seem to be 'too persistent to be permanently suppressed' (Kapteijns 1985: 83). One of the obvious differences today, as compared to the times when a great 'tribal' alliance fought against the Mahdist regime, is that strong allies such as the Darfurian and Wadaian empires do not exist anymore on the regional level and are therefore sought elsewhere.

'Trying to find powerful allies' would be a fitting headline for the current conflict in Darfur, in which the constant negotiating and re-negotiating of who is on who's side seems to be the overarching characteristic. In a landscape with such a variety of rebel groups, militias, governmental forces, and international agencies, strategic alignment and realignment has become a permanent process. In addition to the constant reconfigurations of alliances from amongst the membership of local groups, the new allies of Darfur's rebels and militias can be found in the

various regional diasporas, among individuals within national and international governments, in rebel formations across national borders, among international militaries, and also in the arms trade. Each party to one of these alliances has its own – and often internally conflicting – interests in the events on the ground. This volatility explains why every step towards appeasement complicates the situation.

For example, in the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) of May 5, 2006, the one rebel group who originally signed the contract apart from the Sudanese government was the SLA faction of Minni Arkoy Minawi, which had just aligned with the Chadian government of Idriss Déby. Déby himself is extremely interested in pacifying the border region in order to gain control over the rebel alliances that have formed against his own regime. The Sudanese state, on the other hand, signed the peace agreement probably mainly under pressure from the United States, and actually shows no real interest to appease the area (which will most certainly not happen, as long as the government does not attempt to disarm the militia groups). The other faction of the SLA, under Abdel Wahid Mohamed el-Nur, is still divided between aligning with those who signed the agreement, and resisting the agreement, which, to those who did not sign, does not go far enough in its propositions for power and wealth sharing or security issues.[67] JEM is the most vocal in its protest against the agreement, arguing that after so much destruction and so many casualties, the present agreement would be a "selling out" to the government. But the JEM is not only supported internationally by a strong and politically active Zaghawa diaspora; their strongest allies are individual players in both national and regional governments in Chad and Sudan, in the Chadian army, and among interested foreign militaries, such as Eritrea's or Libya's (see Marchal 2005). Likewise, the SLA faction of Abdel Wahid does not have strong allies on either national level, but it is supported by the southern Sudanese SPLM, by Eritrea, and on the ground by large parts of the population of Darfur, to whom the movement feels accountable in the outcome of any effective peace agreement in Abuja.

For peace to come to Darfur, these different lines of support and alliance must open up in order to build mutual trust and create working structures that can facilitate reconciliation. Compromise solutions have been abundant in Darfur since the days of the sultanates,[68] and some reportedly were attempted even while

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[67] The part of the agreement that treats security issues is most contested. While the rebels seek compensation for each individual for losses and a possibility to return "in dignity", the concessions of the government of Sudan seem not to go far enough in this respect (personal communication at Sudan Conference in Hermannsburg, Germany, May 13, 2006).

[68] For traditional or well-established British practices of conflict settlement in Darfur see Sharif Harir (1994), Adam Azzain Mohamed (2004), Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil (2005) or Atta El-Battahani (2005).

the fighting was still intensifying.[69] But as Alex de Waal cautions us: "axiomatic to a negotiated end to a war is that each side comes to terms with its former enemy. Many Darfurians still choke on this. After what they have suffered, it is understandable."[70] Thus, after weighing what has been laid out in this paper – historically and presently – it is clear that a 'coming to terms' has been on the agenda for the people in this border region for a very long time.

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[69] Here I refer to the southern Rizeigat Paramount Chief Saeed Madibu who tried to revive local elites of the former Native Administration in an effort to influence their people towards non-involvement with the government's campaign (Flint and de Waal 2005: 124).

[70] See "SUDAN: Peace deal collapse would be catastrophic for Darfur", IRIN, May 5, 2006.

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Land, territoriality and ethnic identities in the Nuba Mountains

Leif Manger

Introduction

This paper was written at a time when the peace negotiations between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the dominant rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) were concluded with a formal peace agreement. This happened in January 2005. Great news, indeed! But as the parties involved and the rest of us also know, such a peace agreement is not only the end of a period of civil war; at the same time it is a *beginning* of a new phase. And this beginning is the potential building of 'a new Sudan'. Events in Darfur and in Eastern Sudan have already shown that this will be no easy task. The major challenge lies with the parties. Once again, with respect to the future of the peace agreement between North and South, during the period of peace settlement and reconstruction it will be crucial that the two systems of governance as represented by the warring parties (GoS and SPLM/A) should fit together. Issues of citizens' rights are involved, including the roles played by race and gender in society. Other issues include the problem of local and regional government, issues of education, of land, and of general development. The two parties represent very different positions in these matters, with GoS representing the Arabist and Islamist tendencies of the regime, and SPLM/A taking issue with the very basis of that system. Indeed, the war itself might be said to be fought over these differences. A major challenge now is thus to find solutions that will permit the co-existence of a culturally and economically diverse population within the various regions of the country, including the building of new relationships within and between groups, new understandings of ethnic and religious identities, new relationships between local communities and national and international forces, that are capable of meeting the popular expectations of the new and alternative nature of the Sudanese state, thus producing not only a new system of governance, but also the basis of a new Sudanese national identity.

The Nuba Mountains area is an important example of these processes. The adaptational and ethnic complexity of the region is a case in point, as is the fact that the region was a battleground in the civil war, with GoS and SPLM/A controlling different parts of it. Also interesting in the Nuba Mountains is the fact that a cease-fire was established and was put into effect several years (early 2002) before the final Peace Agreement was signed, thus allowing us to see how a relatively peaceful environment might affect the local situation once the overall Peace Agreement was in place. Furthermore, as one of the three special conflict areas

(together with Abyei and the southern Blue Nile) the Nuba Mountains area is a territory that lies within northern Sudan, but has been part of the war and is contested and, as mentioned above, partly occupied by the SPLA. In this situation some sort of solution is essential if the unity of Sudan is to be promoted along the lines of the Peace Agreement. The general conflict situation in the region is also typical of other areas, with issues including those of land, population displacement, personal security, and religion. Various strategic resources – oil, minerals and water – are also located there. As in other areas, the resolution of the specific issues in the Nuba Mountains will be affected by agreements over power and wealth sharing, religion and the state, human rights, accountable and representative government, the cease-fire, and security. Furthermore, the Nuba Mountains will also be affected by the drawing of the North-South border; whether that border remains merely a regional boundary, or becomes an international border. Some consideration has been given to special administrative arrangements for the area, including a form of dual mandate system, with the government and the SPLM both involved in the administration of the areas during the interim period. This may or may not satisfy local demands for self-determination and self-government. Mechanisms should be found to consult the indigenous peoples of the area about their future administration. The right of return of refugees, displaced persons and families is now guaranteed, and mechanisms must be created to further assist the return and resettlement of international refugees and internally displaced persons. Mechanisms will also have to be devised and put into effect to manage shared access to local resources, both at local government level and between administrative units.

The argument of the paper

Taking this general state of affairs as its point of departure, the aim of this paper is to discuss the general issues hinted at above, with special reference to the Nuba people. The importance of two major processes is highlighted: that of *land* and *territory*, and that of *identity*, both of which come together in a constant struggle of the regional population for their sovereignty and for their right to deal with their own development. The history of the Nuba Mountains area is as follows: Nuba have been living in their hills with Arabs on the plains, not as a result of any natural situation but rather of unequal strength during periods of slavery. The British colonial rulers moved the Nuba down to the plains, pacified the areas and started economic development, the plains being exploited to grow cash crops, first through traditional technology, and later via the introduction of mechanized farming. These processes have been continued through several decades of Sudanese independence, promoted by independent governments backed by foreign development aid. Throughout these periods, competition for territory and re-

sources has been couched in ethnic, religious, and racial terms, with the Nuba's history as a slave population being a central part of how the relationships between groups have been conceptualized.

However, the situation should not be simplified into one in which monolithic identities such as Arab-African, Muslim-Christian and so on stand against each other. Rather, the simple point I want to make is that differently positioned actors pursue different strategies, engaging in particular relationships. Such a point of departure must include a variety of actors in our analysis, ranging from the nation state, which seeks to control resources in order to promote 'development', to local groups and people's cultural values; from the ways in which individuals, households and communities conceptualize their lives to the ways in which their lives are constrained by internal as well as external resources; and the interactions between local actors and international agencies of various sorts. This broader perspective hides many tensions. 'Communities' and 'cultures' are not objective entities, perceived identically by all actors, but are 'arenas' charged with different meanings, depending on who is acting and who is observing and interpreting. Power is certainly a basic factor that influences what goes on in such arenas, but unequal power relationships are not only found between the Nuba and the rest, but also among the Nuba themselves, both between Nuba groups and within one and the same group.

Such a broad perspective necessitates a two-sided view of how the Nuba have been involved in the history of their region. First, there is the *outward struggle*, in which the Nuba have been fighting for access to land in competition with neighboring groups and with government land-grabbing and fighting for Nuba identity in an environment of Nuba and Arabic groups. Such struggles have been maintained via various means, from armed struggles such as we see today, through political organizations and traditional leaders arguing the case of their people, to more informal protests. This level can also be seen as an inter-cultural space characterized by different boundary-making processes. And it is on this level that we see active Nuba participation in the regional history, in times of peace as well as times of unrest. As pointed out above, certain issues or themes are prominent. In the Nuba history of resistance to outside forces we see for instance *tax issues* stand out as a recurrent theme. *Land* and *identity* are two other issues that have led to active Nuba reactions. However, such struggles also have internal consequences, and in the course of time we see processes of changing economic adaptations, changes in land use, in leadership forms, gender roles, and religious affiliation, all exemplifying *internal struggles* through which the Nuba groups have sought to find their place in a wider Sudanese context. Such struggles show that processes of change have continued throughout the various phases of external struggle, and are related in basic ways to the maintenance of various Nuba groups as cultural traditions, thus representing a local space as compared to the inter-cultural space hinted at above. Once again, various developments are under

way. For a long time the Nuba in some areas have been involved in an interactive game in which they have used signs and symbols to demonstrate to an Arabic and Muslim environment that they are respectable persons and not slaves and pagans. In other areas, such processes have been influenced by Christian missionaries, giving a different empirical direction to the processes, but also with repercussions for Nuba cultural traditions. General changes in social organization have occurred, notions of physical and sexual shame have changed, and so have transition ceremonies. Food taboos have also changed, as have notions of gender relations, to mention but a few.

Why this stress on *variation*? Why underline *cultural creativity* at a local level and insist that the various Nuba cultural traditions are *constructed* and shaped in a constant interplay between local discourses and various pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts? I do so because I believe that the implications of this way of thinking carry political weight, placing responsibility on the political leaders to design policies on grounds that will allow for this type of heterogeneity. The civil war in Sudan certainly illustrates that this has not been the case at national level. But it will also be a challenge to Nuba politicians to build a new future for their region within the context of the Peace Agreement.

To deal with a case like that of the Nuba thus requires an understanding of social process at various analytical levels. Certainly there are groups here that also represent distinct culture-bearing traditions. In the Nuba Mountains the ethnic picture would be defined by groups claiming to be Nuba, Arab, Fellata, Umbororo, etc., each group having its own language and with Arabic as the *lingua franca*. However, we cannot assume that ethnicity will provide the primary ordering of identities. For instance, the Nuba are divided into many different groups which, although they share some traits, represent different languages and localized cultural traditions. Similarly, the Arabs are made up of many groups that also might be described as reflecting a spectrum of ethnic variation rather than a unified ethnic identity. Rather than privileging 'the Ethnic' we need to regard ethnicity as one of several elements within a broader model of cultural complexity. In the Nuba Mountains, such elements would be religion, which would define people with reference to various Sufi orders within Sunni Islam, Christianity, and traditional Nuba religions. But as we have seen above, history and descent also play a role in the way people understand themselves, with certain groups being stigmatized as descendants of slaves. Occupation and class also play roles, as do settlement and life-style (the distinction between camp, village, and town), gender, kinship and age.

Other factors might also be added to this list, but the point here is that these domains of identity are only bounded to a limited extent and people may cross the boundaries between them. Hence, it is perfectly possible in such a situation for interactions among members of different groups to be based on codes of behavior in which the members of different groups can exist, allow others to exist and

maintain or avoid closer relations. In such a situation the ethnic boundary may be based on different cultural elements. The focus of analysis, therefore, should be on explaining the cultural meanings *that* people realize through their practice of social relationships. Such meanings are partly formed through everyday interactions and they are always evaluative. Our task is to see how such systems of meaning are construed; i.e. how people living in particular societies understand the unequal distribution of prestige, power and privilege.

A separate factor that affects these processes is that of violence. During periods of conflict more rigid identities tend to emerge and the walls between groups may grow higher. In such situations, identities may themselves be strategically tied to the conflict through active 'We' and 'Them' codifications in which 'The Other' is perceived as a threat to the preservation of the We-group. This may lead to a reassertion of cultural values as part of the violent opposition, stressing common ancestry and the sharing of common insults and suffering. This does not mean that cultures are actually made more different.

Such perspectives on culture and knowledge do not see culture as a series of clear-cut continua with clear-cut boundaries, but rather as a phenomenon in constant flux. Even so, the flux is not total. It is patterned through *social practice*, meaning that it originates not so much in our cultural ideas as in our specific experiences. We need to enter into the realm of actual interactions between people in order to see what they do and in what directions such interactions lead them. Rather than integrated social formations, our starting point should be *variation*. We seek to understand modes of practical action in society, not by seeking 'sub-cultures' but rather 'modes of signification'. People may disagree on the meaning of symbols but still hold similar identities. In short – we need perspectives that include the distinctive logic of 'world-views', 'mental habits' or 'styles of thought', at the same time as they are able to reveal how knowledge is related to the social context within which it exists, realizing that such connections are human constructions, historically evolved, culturally located and collectively reproduced. How can we show, then, that there is some reality to cultural patterns, without assuming that everyone embraces identical concepts of 'culture', or that everyone reads symbols in the same way? How can we understand that people who live within the same 'culture' can organize and emphasize differences among themselves, differences that, when drawn into the realm of social identity formation, may indeed be violent, while also recognizing that people may choose not to highlight certain differences and turn them into social boundaries?

The issue of land

The land question is very important to the type of identities indicated above. It is a basic source of survival, a source of individual and tribal pride, and a constant source of potential conflict. Any suggestion that established rights will be tampered with has always brought unrest and conflict. The evolution of the land issue in the Nuba Mountains has a rather special history. The Nuba have experienced loss of access to cultivable land through several types of processes. One is the outright land-grabbing that has been driven by expanding public and private schemes in the region, a process that has been encouraged through direct government interventions. Secondly, the Nuba have systematically lost territory to Arab groups in the region. Attempts to protest have only served to show how marginal the Nuba people are in the political set-up of their region and of their country. Efforts to argue their case in political assemblies have failed, as have many attempts to make use of the courts to challenge this process. Public courts have not been able to deal with the situation; on the contrary, in most cases Arabs have had their ownership confirmed over Nuba ownership. Conflicts with migrating pastoralists have also added to the problem. Developments since the early days of Sudanese independence confirm that the economic and political marginalization of the Nuba is on the increase, a process that has significantly contributed to the land problems that they now face. The problems have deep historical roots. Throughout their history, in the face of systematic marginalization and discrimination, the Nuba have lost access to their own resources and have lost opportunities to promote their own political and economic development. Their participation in the current civil war is merely the latest phase of this struggle. In fact, it may be argued that the land question was the single biggest issue of contention in the Nuba Mountains at the outbreak of the war, and that the settlement of the land issue, through land and land tenure-related reforms, is a key aspect of forging a lasting peace.

It should also be remembered that the land issue is interrelated with many other social, economic and political processes. Dealing with land cannot therefore be limited to the immediate use of natural resources. Rather, it requires a broader discussion of many factors that affect the ways in which the land issue manifests itself at any given time. Thus, it forms part of the general history of the relationship between the Nuba and the rest of Sudanese society, a history that goes back to a pre-colonial history of Arab slave raiding, continues through a colonial phase with attempts to 'integrate' the Nuba into a wider society, while at the same time isolating them from the influence of the surrounding Arab communities, arriving at a contemporary situation in which the level of exploitation has increased and the cultural and racial issues have once again surfaced as key elements of public policies vis-à-vis the Nuba, and which has led to the return of violent conflicts between Nuba and Arab groups in the region.

Key economic adaptations

The livelihood of the Nuba is based on agriculture. People living in the mountains and on the plains cultivate different types of fields called house fields, near fields and far fields. The first two types are in and around the villages on the sandy soil. Early-maturing varieties of sorghum, maize and beans are planted here together with peanuts. Off-farm activities, such as collecting grass, fruits, tubers, etc. have also been an important source of income, especially for women and the poor. Such activities have always been there, but the scale of involvement has varied with the level of economic stress in local communities. In the history of the Nuba the mountains and hills have been the main areas of settlement and cultivation, with people depending on a system of intensive cultivation based on building terraces to control water flow and erosion, manuring house fields and to some extent the near fields, and the collection of fodder for their animals. This intensive cultivation evolved as a response to population pressure, a population pressure brought about by the pre-colonial Sudanese context of Arab slave raids on the Nuba, blocking access to the plains and forcing the Nuba into the hills for protection. However, since the British pacification of the area and until the present civil war started in the mountains, i.e. in the mid 1980s, a general development occurred, in the course of which a majority of the people moved down from the hills and became increasingly dependent on the distant fields on the clay plains. Such fields were cleared by fire (*hariq* cultivation), and were planted with slow-maturing sorghum along with sesame and beans. There were regional variations in this pattern. In areas with a surplus of land, such as in the far south, inheritance was not of crucial importance as a means of obtaining land on the plains. Further north, in the Central Nuba Mountains where population densities were higher, all the land had been brought into use and there the transfer of plots and also of far fields was important.

But cultivation is not the only resource. Apart from rain-fed cultivation, settled people keep some animals. Cattle, goats, and some sheep and camels (pigs are also a very common feature in SPLM areas) are the most common. Apart from providing milk and meat, animals also provide fertilizer for plots, and they represent an important source of wealth accumulation. Success and failure in the management of animals is a major factor in the creation of differentiation among Nuba households. The accumulation of livestock is limited by outbreaks of disease and by the limited availability of pasture in the hills. Successful animal-keepers may come to agreement with the Baggara nomads on their seasonal migrations to northern Kordofan, thus better exploiting available resources, or the Nuba may themselves become nomads, joining a Baggara camp. It should be said, however, that such strategies have changed due to the war and the now hostile relationships between Arabs and Nuba.

The economic activities of the Nuba have traditionally been integrated with different elements of the wider socio-cultural system. The institution of the rain-maker has been important, and the timing of social and religious ceremonies and life-crisis rituals has been organized around the agricultural cycle, giving the Nuba cultural tradition its characteristic features. Agricultural production has mainly been aimed at *subsistence*, i.e. to provide the economic units (primarily families) with food for their survival. However, people have also been cultivating *cash crops*, i.e. crops that have been sold in local and regional markets in order to bring in a cash income. Sometimes grain might also be bought and sold in the market, but the major cash crops in the Nuba Mountains are sesame and ground-nuts. The scope of such involvement in cash crop cultivation was limited by the technology available as well as by marketing constraints. Due to price fluctuations in local and regional markets it has been a risky strategy to become too involved with cash crops only, and these have ended up as only part of the total agricultural 'package' on which the Nuba depend, engaging in cash crops and staple crop production to a changing and very pragmatic extent. The cash crops introduced by the government, primarily cotton, ran into problems and were significantly reduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A new strategy that has been appearing is in the field of horticulture. Gardens have been developed in areas with suitable soil and sufficient of water. This strategy is particularly evident in the eastern parts of the region, and shows the willingness of local farmers to engage in new activities when they see how they can benefit from them. Once again, markets place limits on expansion. Charcoal-burning is yet another source of cash income. As an alternative to local cash cropping the Nuba have a long history of labor migration, both within the region and also to Khartoum and other major Sudanese towns.

In addition to small-holder cultivation, the 'pre-war' region also presents us with some agricultural schemes that have been introduced as a result of public development policies. One type is the mechanized small-holder scheme administered by the Nuba Mountains Agricultural Production Corporation (NMAPC), which attempted to expand cotton production in the region. The NMAPC was formed to 1) increase productivity, reduce production costs and provide crop protection through research and extension services, 2) to improve the economic, social and cultural standards of farmers through the provision of drinking water, social services, rural development and the encouragement of cooperative movements, and 3) to encourage group farming, mechanized farming and the organization of rotational rules for the cultivation of cotton and sorghum. These ambitious aims were not followed up by the development of an adequate administrative structure. Rather, the result was a drastic drop in cotton production. This led the Nimeiri regime to go even further in 1970 by introducing the concept of 'modernization schemes'. But they too were a failure. During the first few years the results included reduction in cultivated area within the schemes by 55 %, while administrative costs rose by 81 %. Thus began a crisis in this sector that was to last into

the 1980s. People were reluctant to grow cotton because of low prices. They were constrained in their sorghum cultivation because of the rules of rotation within the schemes. Productivity was also low due to late planting of the crops, which in turn was related to mechanical problems with the tractor fleet. Studies of these schemes in the late 1970s and early 1980s showed that the traditional sector was at least as productive as the cotton schemes and that farmers' reluctance to participate was indeed a rational choice.

A second direct state intervention in the agricultural sector was the introduction in the southern Nuba Mountains of large-scale mechanized schemes, comprising farms of 1,000 acres each. These were administered by the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC), which was established in the 1960s. The first scheme of this type in the Nuba Mountains was Habila, in the late 1960s, and further south, the Beida scheme was established in 1976. Unlike the modernization schemes, these were not aimed at small-holders, but rather at people with capital who could afford the necessary investments. There is an initial fee payable to the MFC to be allocated a scheme, followed by an annual rent but the real cost lies in clearing land of trees and buying mechanical equipment (tractors and combine harvesters). Furthermore, the management of such schemes, with all the capital involved, the organization of hundreds of wage laborers and the marketing, was far beyond the competence of the local farmers, be they Nuba or Arab. It was the group of *Jellaba* traders who most effectively exploited this opportunity.

The impact of the schemes can be seen on several levels. First of all, they represented processes through which the Nuba lost land to Arab groups within the NMAPC schemes and to traders and other business groups in the MFC schemes. In financial terms, the MFC schemes have been a success for their owners. The profits reaped by the traders are considerable, and this success has increased income differentials in the region. In 1979, I made a calculation of the distribution of income on the schemes among owners and workers, i.e. between capital and labor, and found that 53 % went to the owner and 47 % to the workers. Since the owners were only one or two persons, while there were several hundred workers, there was obviously a dramatic skew in income distribution. The traders' position as the dominant economic group in the area has been further strengthened, while the workers, i.e. the local farmers and poor migrants from the south, remain poor, although the schemes do provide vital additional income for these groups. These vast schemes also have an ecological impact. First, due to the non-application of crop rotations, the farmers allow the land to deteriorate; when this happens, they obtain a new scheme. This is contrary to the regulations of the MFC, but experience shows that the rules are not enforced. The schemes thus appear to be sites of 'agricultural mining' rather than farming. This means that the agricultural value of this land is reduced and that such areas, even if they are transferred to Nuba ownership, would need rehabilitation. The schemes also occupy large areas that had previously been part of pastoral migration routes.

The problem of pastoralism

Pastoralist groups are a special challenge in the Nuba Mountains. The Baggara Arabs (primarily Hawazma) and some nomadic West African groups (Fulanis in the Sudan are called *Fellata Umbororo*) represent groups that move over long distances, spending the rainy season on the sandy areas of North Kordofan State, moving southwards into the Nuba Mountains as the dry season starts and staying there, with trips into Upper Nile State for dry-season grazing. The migration of the Hawazma Baggara, for example, takes its members to the area south of El Obeid and all the way south towards the White Nile, to northern Shilluk-land around Kodok and Kaka, and to southern Shilluk-land around Tunga. On these migrations they pass through the Nuba Mountains. On these migrations they have interacted with the local Nuba, in peaceful as well as less peaceful ways. There are cases of tribes making agreements that determine when nomads can utilize farming areas. On the other hand, the pastoralists in the Nuba Mountains also represent Arab groups of people with a troubled relationship to the Nuba population. Settled Arabs have benefited from the land-grabbing policies of the governments, and the pastoral Arabs have joined the Popular Defense Forces and have also provided manpower for the *Murahilin* militias. This is another example of how previously established structures for dealing with relationships between groups have been eroded and become sources of conflict. Since the time of the British, the policy of Nuba-Arab relationships was primarily aimed at keeping the groups apart. The pastoral Hawazma who migrated through the area received no land rights, but had to negotiate agreements with the local inhabitants to be allowed to use pasture and water. For the sedentary Arabs, the British solved their problem partly by opening up new areas for cultivation, partly by drilling wells and building *hafir*s (water reservoirs), and partly by giving the new settlers ownership rights in these areas, in order to avoid mixing Arabs and Nubas in Nuba-dominated areas. This system, designed to avoid conflict between groups, was further strengthened by the introduction of the Native Administration. Through their leaders, the Hawazma pastoralists negotiated acceptance by the Nuba and other Arab groups of their use of pasture and water. They did the same with the tribes of the Upper Nile in the southern Sudan. For the settled populations, the tribal leadership became an important mechanism for solving land disputes between groups and for negotiating the acceptance of territorial borders.

A history of relating to the center

The position of the Nuba in the wider Sudanese society is one of marginality. Throughout Sudanese history, members of certain communities and groups have been regarded as second-class citizens. Examples of such groups are the Nuba,

the Ingessana and groups in Darfur, commonly called the *zuruq* (the blacks), which is a derogatory term. Such a system of discrimination is sustained and reproduced through complex socio-economic and socio-political dynamics related to processes of Arabization, Islamization, Sudanization, commercialization and modernization. They all represent major processes that indicate the direction in which integration is moving. People from various local groups have been exposed to new socio-economic forms, new behavioral patterns and new religious thinking and activities. Wage labor is increasing in importance, while new patterns of economic differentiation appear to be based on access to ready cash. This relates to people's involvement in labor migration to the Khartoum area. The activities of Muslim missionaries brought influences that produced changes in social organization as well as in the basic notions that people hold about the world and their place in it. Such missionaries have traditionally been members of various Sufi brotherhoods. As several groups in the country are regarded as the descendents of former slave populations, with a stigma on their identity, this process of social adaptation becomes particularly crucial. The ways in which individual categories of people deal with this stigma is an important factor in explaining differences in the behavior of the groups themselves, how networks are established and how they relate to the outside world. This internal variation provides an entry into the actual processes by which wider cultural variation occurs.

The problem relates to the general history of the southern Sudan as well as such areas as the Nuba Mountains, Ingessana and Dar Fartit, as frontier regions. This frontier was a field of economic and human exploitation through raiding and slaving. It was also a zone within which ethnic and societal transformations took place, often as a consequence of assumptions of inferiority and superiority, assumptions reinforced by religion and presumed descent. In this century, the areas have seen an influx of *Jellaba* traders, West African Fellata and others, due to the opening up of commercial activities and the availability of wage work that followed. As a consequence of all this, the areas in the vicinity of market centers in the region are highly complex in their ethnic and cultural composition.

The evolving relations between such groups are not only defined by the local scene but also by the position of the various groups within the wider Sudanese social context. The main factor that influences this is the social power exercised by participants in the local arenas of interaction. This distribution of power is clearly in favor of certain Arabic groups and to the disadvantage of non-Arabs and non-Muslims. This is related to the long history of Arabization and Islamization in Sudan. Many societies went through this process centuries ago, but for areas in the south and in the so-called transition zone (Nuba, southern Blue Nile, Dar Fartit) it is a contemporary process and behavior that can be accepted within that Arabic and Islamic code is necessary.

There is also an ongoing contemporary process of change in Sudan. This process of social change is not one of accepting the Islamic religion or Arabic language

and customs alone, but rather of requiring ethnically diverse groups living on the Sudanese periphery to adapt to the dominant life-style of the center. Non-Arab and non-Islamized groups such as the Dinka, Nuer, Nuba, etc., show the most dramatic expression of such processes, but Arab groups that have already been Islamized are also going through similar processes. This process does not mean that people only want to catch up with the mainstream Arabic culture, but rather, as Paul Doornbos (1984) has argued, that they want materially and spiritually to participate in society in the same way as members of the stratum of traders and officials, and to be taken seriously and be considered trust- and creditworthy throughout Sudan.

This is a complex phenomenon that is related to different agents of social change. Traders are among the major agents of this change, as are modern schools, local courts and Islamic brotherhoods. This way of life is characterized by non-manual labor, non-drinking, seclusion of women and a clear public display of Islamic identity. The *Jellaba* traders represent such a way of life while the *zuruq* represent the opposite of this, as they are still regarded as a non-Muslim, non-Arab popula-tion, with a history as slaves, and they are still marginal to society. These groups suffered particular harassment in Sudanese towns during the final years of the Nimeiri regime, when sharia law was most actively applied. In the socio-eco-nomic field too, they are mostly at the bottom of the heap, serving as cheap labor in urban industries, and working as domestic servants or as casual labor. An im-portant point is that there is a stigma on their identity with which they have to deal, if they wish to participate fully on that scene. The acceptance that they themselves have an inferior social status in the wider stratificational system of Sudan can bring about a process of emulation. But this is nothing new. Through-out the past century, the gradual integration of various groups into society has produced similar problems, leading to processes of ethnic dichotomization. The difference is that today this integration process is more penetrating than it was before. The general commercialization of Sudan and the growing degree of labor migration have both contributed to the exposure to and need to relate to other groups in a continuous manner.

The general picture then, is no longer one of a simple dichotomy of subsistence-farmers and pastoralists versus the commercial groups, who are the main agents of commercialization. Rather, it is a complex setting in which most groups have become deeply involved in the commercial process and are looking for invest-ment opportunities to further improve their position. Thus it is important to note that we are not talking about a change from a unified, traditional culture into a less integrated one, in which new elements exist alongside old ones. What I have called 'traditional' culture is not altogether gone, nor have old people living a 'traditional' life disappeared. But with the emergence of new adaptive opportuni-ties, the complexity of local adaptation has increased and new 'agents of change' have entered the scene. The process is characterized by local groups that emulate

the life styles of the dominant Arab and Muslim groups, trying in this way to change a marginal and stigmatized identity into a socially acceptable one. But alternative strategies are also there, for instance by joining in the war to actively fight the same process, thus shifting the focus from 'integration' to 'resistance'. In such a context, this process is interpreted as racial oppression by dominant groups, an oppression that will have to end if local communities are ever to be able again to develop their identities.

The civil war

The civil war in the Nuba Mountains is well known among those who follow developments in Sudan. The Khartoum regime was staging a military 'jihad' campaign to force their version of Islam and Arabism upon the Nuba, denying them access to land necessary for survival, and relocating them to so-called 'peace villages'. The Sudan People's Liberation Army were fighting against this outcome, and they set up their own systems of government and administration in the areas that they came to control. Through the fighting, the Nuba were positioned against Arabs, Muslims against non-Muslims. The cessation of hostilities under the negotiated Cease-fire Agreement between the GoS and SPLM/A Nuba, even with its significant shortcomings in the initial phase, helped to improve people's lives in the region and allowed increased freedom of movement as well as improved access to assets and resources, including land, albeit only to a limited extent. The Cease-fire Agreement came into force on January 22, 2002 and a Joint Military Commission (JMC)/Joint Military Mission (JMM) was established to monitor it, with the broader objectives of promoting a just, peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The cease-fire guaranteed the free movement of civilians and goods throughout the Nuba Mountains and was intended to facilitate the creation of conditions conducive to the provision of assistance to persons affected by the conflict, including internally displaced peoples.

The cease-fire was rather successful in putting an end to open warfare in the Nuba Mountains. But some of its central features, such as improved stability, greater freedom of movement, and the opening up of areas hitherto regarded as no-man's land, re-introduced new sources of conflict that the war had allowed to subside, all of them tied to the issue of land. These include the return of pastoralists and their herds, the return of mechanized farming equipment and the return of people – all of which represent major challenges for the future.

During the war years, large tracts of the region, particularly at the foot of hills or between mountain ranges, became off-limits to pastoralists who feared the SPLA. Pastoralists became fewer and interactions between Nuba and Baggara became less frequent. Traditional migration and transhumance routes were disrupted.

Reciprocal agreements that had governed the passage of herds over agricultural land fell into disuse. In other areas, forcibly displaced Nuba no longer interacted with the nomads. The cease-fire changed all this. Pastoralist groups were increasingly visible, which led to increased local tensions. Many Nuba see the presence of pastoralists as a provocation on the part of the authorities, and express fears that increased pastoralist presence is a cover for the deployment of militia that make up for the withdrawal of Government troops mandated by the cease-fire. Whether these allegations are true or not, conflict dynamics are such that perception is as important as reality. Furthermore, it is undeniable that settled and nomadic populations are once again competing for resources – water, land – that they had lost the habit of sharing. This comes against the backdrop of a decade and a half of bloodshed. It will be difficult to revert to pre-war mechanisms to govern interactions between nomadic and settled communities.

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

The displacement of rural populations – both within the Nuba Mountains and to areas beyond the region – has been the major humanitarian consequence of the conflict and the associated anti-civilian operations waged by paramilitary groups. Once again, the cease-fire changed some of this. In SPLM/A areas, populations who had sought refuge in the mountains are now venturing further into the plains to farm. Some are moving closer to their original homes, a few even returning to their original homesteads. In government-held areas, some of those who had fled to the North are returning, if not to their homes, to nearby areas where they can rely on kin and prepare for their final return. For the time being, these returns are not causing any problems: numbers are limited, and the extended fallow period imposed by the fighting has allowed the land and forest cover to regenerate, which in turn offers better cultivation, grazing and charcoal and wild-food harvesting opportunities to rural communities. But this will not last: As more people

return, there will be renewed competition for increasingly scarce resources between or even possibly within communities.

These changes show that the cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains has brought about a series of positive developments, and has provided the region of the Nuba Mountains with a better starting point from which to develop peaceful relationships following the permanent cease-fire that is now in effect. But we can also see that many challenges remain.

Where to put 'ethnicity'?

Turning now to the issue of ethnicity and to the question of what role ethnic identities play into this type of situation, I draw on the perspective developed by Fredrik Barth, first in the influential discussion in his 1969 book *Ethnic groups and boundaries* and in later comments on the issue. The basic argument of the book relates to the formation of ethnic groups. Barth took two theoretical postulates, the bounded ethnic group and the tactical management of ethnic identity, and brought them together to show how both are dynamic and subject to modulation according to circumstances. Such circumstances are represented by the existence of significant others and by the actual interactions between the members of various groups. The cultural elements that influence ethnic identities are those that keep groups apart, i.e., they are boundary markers and signals of identity, not essentialized cultural elements of the group in question. Thus group A may signify different things to group B and to group C. Barth sees ethnicity as an aspect of a relationship, not the property of a group. His analytical point is that ethnic groups are relational, that ethnicity is about social organization and cannot be reduced to cultural traits. The ethnic identity appears as a result of processes of interaction in which the criteria for self-ascription and ascription are being established. Since such criteria are not identical to the cultural traits that actually exist within a group, we cannot have any pre-conceived ideas about what they are; they are negotiated in the ethnic process.

Although Barth's contribution was a landmark in ethnic studies I think the ensuing debate has shown that we need to take a few steps beyond those that he suggested in 1969. One modification is that we need a sociology of ethnicity, as well as studies of its consciousness. We need to understand both the construction of the social person as well as of the self (Cohen 1994). Secondly, we also need a clearer view of the role of the state in the establishment of ethnic identities.

Responding to some of this criticism in 1994, Barth suggested that we should approach the modeling of the ethnic process on three different levels. The first was a micro-level analysis, in which we see personal identities established on the basis of the specific experiences of individuals. Such experiences may differ be-

tween generations and the sexes, but also more randomly as an effect of the different choices that individuals make in the course of their lives. What is important is that these experiences, whatever they are, become resources for ethnic processes. They shape people's understanding of themselves, of who they are and who others are, thus in a very basic way affecting how they understand the world around them. This is important in understanding how various stereotypes develop and give further shape to such understandings. Barth also argues for the continued importance of a middle-level analysis of ethnic groups, ethnic associations, etc., i.e. the level on which so much of the ethnicity debate has focused. This is the level of ethnic politics and organizations, of the entrepreneurship of leadership, of rhetorical strategies and of stereotypes set in motion. The macro-level includes the state, religious groups and others who operate within the state sphere and hence also, the international arena. Barth's interest is in seeing the state as an actor, with interests to pursue to maintain state control, but at the same time being constrained by an increasingly globalized international arena characterized by a multitude of actors.

Following this general outline I further explore how we can set about analyzing ethnic processes in the Nuba Mountains. In a recent paper (Barth 2000), Barth has developed certain views on how to deal with the fact that individual experiences must be part of any understanding of the ethnic boundary-making process. The context of Barth's argument is of course his influential approach to the study of ethnicity, and whether ethnic identity is in constant flux that depends on what goes on at the ethnic boundary, or whether there are essential features of that identity that must be included in order to talk about *ethnic* identities at all? Rather than turning this into an instrumentalist versus primordialist debate, in this paper he shifts the discussion to a more basic level, the level of human boundary maintenance in general. Not only on the level of ethnic groups, but on the level of persons, nations, and so on.

The function and significance of boundaries may vary among cultures, and at this basic level some (referring to the Basseri and the Baktaman) are not particularly focused on boundaries at all. And even if there are boundaries, they may not merely keep people apart; there may be significant social engagement across boundaries. Social practice thus provides a template for the indigenous conceptualization of social boundaries. Barth argues that fundamental to the socializing and educative competence of such practice is personal experience of bodily boundaries. And as with groups, individuals experience this differently. But in both cases, they extend themselves into the world through the webs of their relationships, economic activities and inscriptions of themselves on the landscape.

In order to capture these processes, Barth argues strongly for a differentiation between cognitive categories, which tend to be definitive, and lived experience, which tends to be murky. To develop the cognitive implications of this way of thinking Barth refers to the contributions of Lakoff and Johnson. Lakoff, for

instance, argues that our basic concepts and categories are closely linked to our experiences as living and functioning human beings in an environment. They are not constructed in Aristotelian fashion as arbitrary symbols that take their meaning from their correspondence with objects that exist in the real world, and that are defined by distinctive properties. Instead, our concepts build on three kinds of perceptual source: a) our capacity for gestalt perception of part-whole configurations, b) our experience of bodily movement in space, and c) our ability to form rich mental images of perceived objects in the world (Lakoff 1987, 269ff.). From these we build kinesthetic image schemas, i.e., patterns that constantly recur in our everyday bodily experience. From such prototypes, our basic-level conceptual categories are enriched and fleshed out through experiences, and include similar experiences. The kinesthetic image schemas emerge as generalizations, schemas, of what are experienced and repeated as compelling connections. Then they are extended by metaphorical mapping and serve as instruments of reasoning and comprehension.

Categories thus structure and order the world for us and allow massive cognitive, social and political simplification. But the important point here, argues Barth, is that the use of metaphor does not come from logical necessity but as a *source of motivation*. And in situations of shared realities, where people are locked into a social organization of vested interests and mutual controls, there will be positive encouragement for cognitive assent and agreement with the others who share those interests, and sanctions will be brought to bear against those who breach this process. People are not acting out integrated structures, but each of them is an individual locus of reasoning and construction.

Linking this type of argument to the situation in the Nuba Mountains, I believe that one promising avenue might be to see such processes in terms of a 'politics of subjectivity'. Subjectivity always presupposes inter-subjectivity, and we need to write the history of such inter-subjectivity, which will require a combination of the personal, the political, the economic and the moral. The development of subjectivities can be seen as taking place on three levels: it is a political process insofar as it is a matter of subjugation to state authorities with very different rules of the political game; it is moral, as it is reflected in the conscience and agency of citizens who have rights, duties and obligations; and it is realized existentially, in citizens' consciousness of their personal relations. Michael Lambek puts it well: "In assuming responsibility and rendering themselves subject to specific liturgical, political and discursive regimes and orders, people simultaneously lay claim to and accept the terms through which their subsequent acts will be judged. People are agents insofar as they choose to subject themselves, to perform and conform accordingly, to accept responsibility, and to acknowledge their commitments. Agency here transcends the idea of a lone, heroic individual independent of her acts and conscious of them as objects" (2002, 37f.).

It is easy to see that Islam is part of the conflict in the area and also that there is a tendency among some Nuba to forge identities in opposition to this oppressive form of political Islam. Hence, the struggle takes on the form of Muslims versus non-Muslims, and in the case of the Nuba, Muslim equals Arab, and non-Muslim equals African. But once again, these are constructed differences, not essential ones. Let us look at the category 'Muslim'. At all times there has been disagreement within Islam about what it means to be a Muslim and the fact that some of these disagreements enter the political field from time to time should not surprise us. Certainly it is of interest to analyze cases of 'political Islam', but I also feel that we should not only look at Muslim politicians, but pay more attention to how 'ordinary' Muslims themselves argue concerning this issue, not only within the field of political Islam, but in everyday discourses about what is right and wrong, what is appropriate behavior, etc. Although less spectacular than *fatwa*s about jihad, such mundane issues nevertheless open up the possibility of understanding how Muslims themselves experience their religion. Such a perspective will of course show us that the problem of defining who is a Muslim in the Nuba Mountains in no way started with the Muslim Brotherhood's takeover of state power in Sudan in 1989.

To illustrate: while doing fieldwork in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Manger 1994) among the Lafofa Nuba in Liri I was struck by how people presented themselves as being Muslims. Any Lafofa would claim to be Muslim, but there was no agreement among people that their neighbors actually deserved that label. Older people would talk about the old way of life that they had long since left, when they went without clothes and when they kept pigs. But today they claim to be Muslims although they still treasure the memory of those bygone days. Younger men argued forcefully that their elders were still holding on to pre-Islamic customs, that they were ignorant, and that they did not understand the modern world. Talking to groups of Arabs in Liri, they would recognize scarcely any Lafofa as a Muslim. They recognized the fact that some of the young people were trying to leave their old ways and become Muslims, but few of them were known to pray and even fewer were fasting.

This evident difficulty in agreeing on who is a Muslim, and what it entails to be one, is not something peculiar to the Lafofa and the southern Nuba Mountains. In most Muslim areas there are constant debates over what is Islam proper and what is not, what behavior is derived from proper Islamic principles and what is derived from other sources. What is special in this case is that the Lafofa, as a Nuba group, is a non-Arab, non-Islamic people among whom the process of conversion is a contemporary phenomenon. The debates in Liri are thus not only between different Islamic traditions, but between an Islamic tradition and a non-Islamic, 'tribal' one. But such a discussion cannot focus on religion in isolation. The way in which the Lafofa participate in this discourse is not an isolated process of religious conversion, but is fundamentally a product of a people adapting to

the realities of the day. The discussion must therefore deal with wider *social identities*. As we have outlined above, the determination of personal identity has always been an issue in the Nuba Mountains. As a frontier region with a history of slave hunting, of exploitation of ivory and gold, and as part of the battlefield between earlier savannah states, there has always been a high rate of movement and resettlement, and of new groups coming together. The establishment of personal identity within broader categories such as Nuba-Arab, slave-freeman, Muslim-non-Muslim has always been of importance. A single-minded focus on religion alone would be as problematic as that on ethnicity and race.

But, as general history as well as more recent events in the Nuba Mountains show, such processes are not only characterized by a 'voluntary rendering'. Violence may well be a basic part of the process of the politics of subjectivity. In the Nuba Mountains, the result of the dynamics of the three levels is a movement away from peaceful co-existence, in which people acknowledge that various sorts of political and moral ambiguities, ambivalences and uncertainties are a normal state of affairs in such a transition zone, to one in which dichotomies based on claims to cultural authenticity dominate. In such a process, mutual respect and ethical rules constraining aggression may become transformed into violent inter-ethnic conflicts. The political dynamics represented by the civil war strengthen these processes and help establish new boundaries between peoples. A few examples serve to illustrate this point. First, parts of the Nuba Mountains areas are administered by GoS, other parts by SPLM/A, and their two systems of government have very different levels of involvement of local people, thus creating differences between members of the same adaptive and ethnic groups. Furthermore, as SPLM/A is suggesting a Western-based educational system based on the English language, whereas GoS favors a Muslim-oriented curriculum, plans in the educational sector will have a long-term effect on new generations; thirdly, the parties disagree about how the land resources of the area are to be developed, with GoS encouraging private investors from outside, while SPLM/A argues the case of local people, two strategies that will have important repercussions, as land, land use and land tenure also relate to social institutions as well as having cosmological dimensions related to land, fertility and ancestry. Finally, a cease-fire and an international control force are in place in the area and can provide a platform for further humanitarian interventions and the beginning of general reconstruction and development, a fact that also brings international actors such as the UN and various NGOs actively into the picture. This international involvement may help break down boundaries, but it may also help to strengthen the divisive tendencies through their political 'pragmatism' of accepting the rules of the game set up by the warring parties in order to be able to operate at all.

Nuba identity politics

In the discussion earlier in the paper, I claimed that the issue of marginalized groups represents a larger, national issue in Sudan. The issue is one of citizenship, and includes the challenge of how to compose a Sudanese national identity, in which not only Arabs and Muslims but also non-Arabs and non-Muslims can feel at home. Reading the available literature on Sudanese history and society, it is easy to be struck by the extent to which the processes of Arabization and Islamization have been taken for granted in the history of that country. One basic assumption among Sudanese elites seems to be that this wave of socio-cultural change is a natural process, and that it rolls on by virtue of historical necessity from the 'centers' in the Nile Valley towards the 'peripheries' in eastern, western and southern Sudan. It thus follows that it is only a matter of time before the whole country will be Arabized and Islamized. One tragic effect of such assumptions is that the political realities behind this spread of Arabism and Islam have not been dealt with in Sudanese politics. The problem is not one that can be ascribed solely to the current regime and this civil war. Obviously the Islamists in Khartoum go further in expressing their intentions towards Arabization and Islamization than earlier regimes and they make no secret of their views of people not belonging to this type of identity. The policies of the present regime thus dramatize the issue of race in Sudanese politics. But the issue of defining and constructing a Sudanese identity will not go away under this regime, and unless it is solved the future of Sudan looks bleak indeed.

This type of problem is also seen when we look at the various attempts at political and ethnic organization among the Nuba. Such attempts indicate that the Nuba themselves see different answers to this question. For many years, the General Union of the Nuba Mountains (GUN) headed by Father Philip Abbas Ghaboush, a Christian, and Mahmoud Hazeeb, a Muslim, was the only Nuba political organization, and it is interesting to examine its basic political orientation. GUN was based on a regional idea of securing Nuba resources for the Nuba people, i.e. it focused on the lack of development of this particular region, and clearly organized its supporters around a claim for territory. This strategy also meant that GUN sought to include Arab groups from the same region.

In the early 1970s a new organization called KOMOLO was set up by Yusif Kuwa Mekki. This youth organization took a more racial stance, and worked explicitly for Nuba issues, first through government organizations, but later in opposition to the same government. Yusif Kuwa joined the SPLA in 1984, established the New Kust Division in 1989 and, until his death in March 2001, was the SPLA commander in charge of the liberated areas in the Nuba Mountains. In 1985 Philip Ghaboush formed the Sudan National Party (SNP) and took his party into alliance with parties from southern Sudan. In addition to local Nuba, support for the party came primarily from Nuba migrants in Sudanese cities such

as Khartoum and Port Sudan. GUN has continued and is now more influenced by younger Nuba intellectuals and trade unions. However, as these political organizations developed, the Umma government of Sadiq al-Mahdi encouraged the arming of Baqqara Arabs, and made them form the militias (*Murahilin*) that spread terror among Nuba and Southern Sudanese groups just south of the border. This brought the SPLA, in alliance with KOMOLO, into the mountains, and by the end of the war they controlled sizeable areas in the central parts of the mountains, developing a civil administration in 1992, with a South Kordofan Advisory Council and village councils, and focusing on health, education, relief, and farming. The National Islamic Front (NIF) government declared jihad in the area in 1992, developing a mixed strategy, with military initiatives and the uprooting of people to Peace Villages (*dar al salaam*), and low-intensity warfare called 'combing' (*tamshit*), but also making attempts to recruit prominent Nuba (Peace from Within, *salaam min al dakhal*) and mobilization of pro-Nuba (*nafir al shabi*).

This particular 'climate' in the Nuba Mountains of course gives the Nuba struggle a distinct characteristic. But it also shows that people have several alternatives as to whom they want to support politically, depending on their interests and opinions. The 1990s also brought a new dimension into the struggle; that of the rapidly growing Sudanese diaspora. Throughout this diaspora we have also seen the mushrooming of various Nuba organizations such as Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad and Nuba Survival in London, and Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Society in Nairobi, the emergence of newsletters like *Nafir* and later *The Nuba Vision* in London, and the various positions in the Nuba struggle being presented in Western fora such as the House of Lords in the UK Parliament. In this process we also find Western organizations, primarily NGOs (such as Africa Watch) providing information on atrocities and also engaging themselves in solidarity efforts.

A quick look at issues being raised in *Nafir* seems to support my main points. The topics are by no means new: 'What is Slavery?', 'Agriculture in the Nuba Mountains', 'The Question of Land', 'Nuba Songs', 'Nuba Culture', to mention just a few headlines. But there are also stories about the new NGOs operating in the area, and pieces written by representatives of such organizations. My point is not that this is wrong; on the contrary, I support most of what I see. My point is that the dynamics provided by contemporary developments in the Nuba Mountains are similar to those of many other situations in regions and among people who take up the struggle against oppressive power-holders. The discourse of resistance is taken into international arenas, and the utilization of modern media provides new flows of information. The process is complex, and cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of state vs. society, or state vs. civil society. Rather than look for neat categories, I believe that what we can expect to find are groups and actors that are neither 'state' nor 'society', but are linked together in net-

works in which resources, people and ideas travel. Today, some of those networks are global in scope. We are all participants in this game. Not only development economists and planners from multilateral institutions like the World Bank, bilateral donor countries, or national governments, but also the Western press contributes, as do Western academics such as myself. But so do local Africans, politicians and activists alike, often in alliance with NGOs. This is so because what goes on is part of the effects of the general process of 'globalization', in which we are witnessing an interaction not so much based on 'real-world events' as on a constant battle between different discourses of interpretation and explanation. This puts us squarely back in the realm of the social and economic power wielded by the various actors involved, and their ability to shape the discourse.

I stress this point because I perceive a tendency in the way the Nuba are being portrayed in various 'centers of resistance' in Europe and the USA to privilege a certain type of Nuba. The hegemonic view in the contemporary discourse on the Nuba is one based on the Nuba of the Central Mountains, of the areas liberated by SPLA. They are not the southern areas in which I have done most of my work. In those areas, around Talodi, Liri and Kalogi people are 'Islamized', 'Arabized' and 'Sudanized' to a degree that bears little resemblance to the Nuba as portrayed in newsletters like *Nafir*. Furthermore, they are living in Government territory, which means that they are under very different types of civil administrations than that of the Central Mountains. Politically, they have been dominated by the commercial groups and political alliances built around the Talodi Arabs, who have been supporters of the Umma through their late political leader Gemr Hussein. One may argue that this situation is a fact, and there is nothing one can do about it. My concern is about the future effect of these processes on the possibility of building a peaceful society throughout the Nuba Mountains region. This is not to say that I do not support the struggle of the Nuba, but I must also confess a certain worry that if the Nuba succeed in achieving self-determination based on an understanding that: "The Nuba live in a well-defined territory called the Nuba Mountains, which was a separate province during the British rule in Sudan with its own administration and its capital at Talodi until amalgamated in 1929, during the British rule, into the larger Kordofan" (*Nafir*, Vol. 6, No. 3, December 2000), we might get a few surprises. Such an understanding, which of course is historically correct in the sense that there actually was such a province, hides many of the problems of any future settlement of what place the Nuba Mountains region should be given in a future settlement in Sudan. One problem that the statement under-communicates is the heterogeneity of the Nuba themselves. Another is the existence of other, non-Nuba groups in the region. A focus on ethnicity and race alone may hide the fact that many of the groups share a common predicament, and that alliances should be sought across ethnic boundaries.

The importance of the state

We also need to take into consideration the contemporary importance of the nation state as a distributor of resources of importance to the population, and to look closely at how groups and individuals operate in order to obtain access to what they want from the state. Vederey (1994) opened up a similar avenue relating to the existence of the state, arguing that ethnicity is a product of state-making, that national identity is not based on ethnic identity, but rather that the first generates the second. Thus, one result of the history of colonialism and nationalism in different areas was the formation of new ethnic identities. Here, we are approaching Foucault and his perspective on the role of the state and the creation of modern subjects through practices of state power. To cover this aspect of ethnicity, says Vederey, we need a historical perspective, perspectives of political science and historical sociology, indeed all types of perspectives from which anthropology has moved away (e.g. Roosen 1989). We need to look at the historical processes that produce particular forms, and also at what forces of differentiation and homogenization are in operation.

Where the situation in the Nuba Mountains is concerned, an important problem relates to how we can understand the direction of change, and at what level of social life such changes occur. One concept that is used in discussions of processes of the kind with which we are dealing is that of assimilation. As described above, the Lafofa would be an example of such a process of assimilation, in which people try to *become* similar to the majority way of life, in order to be *treated* as equals. But the use of assimilation lumps together many processes and confuses local borrowing between groups with the force of those integrative processes that are supported by society in general, including the state itself. To my mind, the processes of Arabization and Islamization, and the contemporary one that Doornbos (1984) labeled 'Sudanization', are of a different nature than local borrowing between groups.

This brings us squarely back to the role played by the Sudanese state in its dealings with various peripheral groups, particularly blacks, who are regarded as not being proper Muslims, and as Africans rather than Arabs. The political tensions inherent in these issues surfaced in Sudanese politics in 1982 with President Nimeiri's introduction of the September Laws, giving Islamic sharia law dominant status in the Sudanese legal system, also within the realm of criminal law (*hudud*). Seen from within Sudan it was obvious from the beginning that this was a political move, meant to boost the president's weakened position. This was further strengthened through a peace settlement that was also organized along such lines of group identity, giving the Muslim Brothers a central political role. However, the effects were devastating. It not only ended the era of optimism prevalent in the 1970s, but resulted, as we know, in the political turmoil that swept Nimeiri's regime away and in a civil war that might have torn the country apart. An impor-

tant element of the conflict is the definition of the Sudanese identity, and the application of sharia law dramatized to the people of Southern Sudan, as well as northern groups such as the Nuba, the fact that their identity was at stake and that their position as equal citizens in their own country was far from secure.

However, this problem did not originate in 1982. The 18th and 19th centuries were periods when there was active pursuit of slave populations. British colonial policy aimed to isolate the African populations from Arab and Muslim influence. This policy was based on positive discrimination, but served as a stumbling block for later attempts at integration. The 1960s saw attempts by various regional groups (Beja, Nuba, Fur, as well as southern groups) to create political organizations that could further their interests in the new national center and counter the dominant position of the national parties, the Umma and DUP. With Nimeiri's takeover in 1969, such organized political forces were abolished. They were replaced by the Sudanese Socialist Union, a party and a national force intended to bridge tribal and regional differences. The success in ending the civil war in 1972 and the ambitious development strategies of the 1970s actually provided considerable optimism. However, no real integration took place and the old elites remained dominant in Sudanese politics. And old attitudes did not go away easily. My point is well demonstrated by a quote from Mansour Khalid, a key member of Nimeiri's regime from 1969 to 1978, who writes in his book *The Government They Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution*: "In the closed circles of northern Sudan there is a series of unprintable slurs for Sudanese of non-Arab stock, all reflective of semi-concealed prejudice" (1976, 135).

Obviously, the solution to this problem does not lie in a policy based on the continued assimilation of groups such as the Nuba into the majority culture. But this does not mean that all integration is bad. If interaction is to increase, there must obviously be some shared understanding, such as a common language, certain agreed 'ground-rules', etc. If such a 'civic' type of integration is allowed to develop there might be some hope of holding Sudanese communities together. What the Sudanese will discover at that point is something they already know from centuries of living together; that it is surprising how little we have to share in order for interaction to develop. The political challenge then is to provide space for people as *subjects*, not as *objects* to be formed in the image of a majority culture. Which brings us back to where we started, with the individual as the key starting point for any understanding of ethnic processes.

Towards some conclusions

This paper has explored a situation in which a civil war such as the one in Sudan has been conceived of as a conflict between ethnic and religious groups. By focus-

ing on the Nuba Mountains in particular we see that this type of perspective easily presents the ethnic groups themselves as solid entities and they are presented as 'actors' in their own right. This is further strengthened through a peace settlement that is also organized along such lines of group identity, channeling resources and access to the political systems through negotiated systems based on belonging to such perceived 'groups'.

This paper has challenged this type of 'groupism'. When we look at the Nuba Mountains we clearly see various processes at play, relating to ethnicity, race, nationalism, ethnic violence, identity, collective memory, migration, assimilation and the nation-state. But, summarizing the central argument that I have tried to put forward, it is my opinion that although many of these terms make us think about 'groups', we need to focus on categories, schemas, encounters, identifications, stories, institutions, organizations, networks and events. That is to say, ethnic groups must be seen as 'things in the making'.

To substantiate my position, the paper refers to the various political discourses that have evolved from the complex situation in the Nuba Mountains. A complex history, a complex man-land relationship, a complex ethnic picture with Arabs and Nuba, a complex religious picture with Muslims and Christians and traditional Nuba religions, and a long civil war have all contributed to producing a series of discourses that must be analyzed. Through the analysis of some such discourses, from a 'Nuba' perspective, from an 'Arab' perspective, and as discourses in a religious field of 'Muslims' and 'Christians', I have tried to show that the realities behind such labels are not 'things in the world' but rather 'perspectives on the world', i.e. they are ways of seeing and ways of interpretation more than they are 'facts'.

Such a perspective does not mean that ethnicity is not real, nor that groups organized on the basis of ethnicity do not exist. Rather, the point is that such groups are not 'facts' but rather 'events' and something that 'happens' (Brubaker 2004). Hence, we must study group-making as process, including the games of production of meaning and of processes of metaphorization that go into its legitimization.

It is true that in the Nuba Mountains we see a situation in which groups labeled as Nuba and as Arabs, as Christians and as Muslims have been through a civil war. But it is also necessary to make this picture more nuanced. First of all, in the Nuba Mountains it is not so much the ethnic groups that are organized, as the protagonists themselves, the Government of Sudan and its opponent the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. Through these organizations, and the war machines at their disposal, people have been forced to choose sides and to 'appear' as one or the other of the available identities. Rhetoric has been heated on all sides, with claims to speak for larger groups of 'Nuba', 'pure Nuba', 'Arab', etc.

Such processes are very real and have certainly had profound effects on the ground. But such effects cannot be conceived of as realities involving complete groups. Rather, we are dealing with categories, processes and relations. And what we need to explain are the ways in which people and organizations do things with these categories and how they thereby channel specific effects, for instance on the relationship between members of so-called ethnic groups.

I also include issues of identity in this perspective. Rather than thinking of fixed identities we need to look at the processes of identification. Once again, through new processes such as the civil war, new collective identities might develop and form the basis of new beliefs among people about who they are, which might in turn lead to very real 'group' consequences. But what we want to understand is the underlying process, rather than merely to accept the result as a de-contextualized 'fact'.

In the Nuba Mountains region the directions taken by processes of this sort have been deeply affected by the civil war, which means that violence itself becomes a factor. Fears and threats are being constructed through narratives and cultural representations of 'the Other', demonizing various groups in the process. Obviously this will affect the process of reconstruction after the war. This brings us to the current situation.

With the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of January 2005 this situation is now part of the political reality in the Sudan and must be dealt with in the process of nation-building. I do not know where these debates will take us, nor do I know in which direction the future of the Nuba Mountains will develop. However, on the ground, among the people who are still in their home areas, members of the various Nuba groups will have to deal with their predicament themselves, both as groups and as individuals. In the midst of all the unrest there is an ongoing process of defining and redefining what culture and ethnicity is all about, creating new types of solidarity between people and building a new sense of community. The issue is not so much one of realizing that this is the case as of understanding how some versions of reality win over and replace other possible versions in these processes of transformation. Such processes must be acknowledged, also in the political realm, because they will certainly affect the realism of any future political settlement. In this context it is important to differentiate between the Central Mountains, in which relatively large groups of Nuba control their territories, and the southern areas where many different ethnic groups are living together and where the dynamics of the local situation are quite different from those of the Central Mountains. At this moment, however, they belong together in a Nuba Mountains region, and the fate of this re-merger will be decided by the ways in which the various 'world views' that are currently being developed actually coalesce and are allowed to express themselves.

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The autochthonous claim of land rights by the sedentary Nuba and its persistent contest by the nomadic Baggara of South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains, Sudan

Guma Kunda Komey

Introduction

This chapter is a preliminary ethnographic analysis based on fieldwork in *Keiga Tummero* village in the Nuba Mountains region, Sudan. It is part of an on-going research titled 'Contested autochthony: land and water rights, and the relation of nomadic and sedentary people of South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains, Sudan'.[1] In addition to Keiga Tummero, the main research project covers another three field sites, namely *El-Azraq, Umm Derafi* and *Reikha*, which are beyond the scope of this paper. In this introduction, I shall highlight the research's central question, focus, objectives, methodology and the paper's overall layout.

Research problem, focus and objectives

The underlying root causes of the Sudan's civil war – which started in its southern part in 1983 and extended into South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains region in 1985 – were claimed to be diagnosed, negotiated and finally transformed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed on January 9, 2005. Despite the fact that many interwoven root causes were behind the eruption of the civil war, the question of the communal customary land rights is hypothesized here as one of the main root causes of the civil war in Sudan in general and in the South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains region in particular. Therefore, after the formal end of the war, in South Kordofan the question arises is how the conflict between the nomadic Baggara[2] and the sedentary Nuba people on the one hand and the contradictions between traditional land rights and modern state policy on land rights

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[1] The project is headed by Professor Richard Rottenburg of the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Halle, and is part of the Collaborative Research Center 586 'Difference and Integration' of the Universities of Halle and Leipzig (http://www.nomadsed.de); and is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the period 2004–2008.

[2] The term *Baggara* (plural) or *Baggari* (single), which means cattlemen, applies to "an Arab who has been forced by circumstances to live in a country which will support the cow but not the camel. [...] The physical conditions upon which his existence depends, are a dry district for grazing and cultivation in the rainy season connected by a series of waterholes with a river system where grass and water are available during the summer months" (Henderson 1939, 5).

on the other hand may be resolved? The issue involves aspects of *territoriality*, *space*, *land rights* and *ethnicity* including their political, economic, cultural and religious dimensions.

In view of this central question, the objective of this research project is to examine the *mechanisms of simultaneous differentiation and adjustment* between the Baggara and the Nuba of South Kordofan mainly in the period since the early 1980s. The focus is on the claim of *autochthonous land rights* by the sedentary Nuba and its *persistent contention* by the nomadic Baggara in the region. The bone of contention is that most of these claims are articulated in terms of *autochthonous rights*. Autochthony is the claim to *collective rights* on the basis of belonging to an indigenous group with strong ties to an *ancestral homeland*, associated with an ever-increasing articulation of collective rights in categories difficult to reconcile with the principles of a modern state. To be precise, the claimed land rights are presented in categories of ethnicity, culture and religion, among others. The difficulty to reconcile these categories with the principles of the modern state stems from the fact that all these categories have questionable references and contradict the principle of citizenship, modern contract law and state ownership of all resources below and above the surface of the land. Furthermore, these categories are far from being clearly defined and tend to be invoked rather than being clearly stated.

Another point of contention is that in a region with several centuries of migration, forced displacement and all kinds of ethnic mixture, claims of autochthony are always contested. Moreover, the call for autochthony as a tie between *space* and *collective identity is problematic* not only for the relation between nomadic and sedentary groups but also for the relation between the various Nuba hill communities, which are not used to making of clear-cut territorial boundaries. Against this reasoning, the study explores the local *discourses and practices of autochthony* in South Kordofan within the framework of the general developments and their specific Sudanese forms. The main focus of the study of *autochthonous identity politics* is on questions of *customary land ownership rights* claimed by the sedentary Nuba, on the one hand, and *access to land and water rights* pursued by the nomadic Baggara, on the other.

Methodology

In light of the above-mentioned research focus and objectives, a twelve month period of ethnographic fieldwork was carried out, in two stages, during 2005–2006. In the first stage, a number of criteria were deployed and tested in order to ensure the suitability and practicality of some selected sites as viable ethnographic case studies, namely: El-Azraq, Umm Derafi, Reikha and Keiga Tummero. These criteria include, among others, the history of ethnic settlement succession, inter-ethnic settlement mixtures and the traceability of frequent bound-

ary shifts and changes, documented or verbal claims to land by more than one party pursued in terms of autochthony, the existence of some form of socio-economic interaction between various competing actors, such as the sharing of and/or interaction in market places, cultural events, watering points and farming/grazing lands and finally the existence of political and socio-economic practices related to customary land ownership and access to rights of use.

Following this introduction, a general overview of the Nuba Mountains region in terms of land and people is highlighted. The study then proceeds to present a field-note-centered preliminary analysis of the ethnographic data from the Keiga Tummero site. This part represents the core of the paper and with focus on the dynamics of the autochthonous claims to land rights and the related conflicts and disputes between the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Baggara in the studied area. The ethnographic field notes analyzed here are a result of systematic participatory observation, informal interviews and the documentation of the people's daily life, institutional discourses and practices related to the sedentary Nuba's autochthonous claims and the nomadic Baggara Arabs counterclaims. It also highlights some persistent forms of sedentary-nomadic cooperation, complementarities and interdependencies despite the recurrent conflict. After that the study traces some on-going local discourses related to land issues discussed in the recent ethnic conferences among the Nuba of Keiga and the Hawazma-Baggara respectively. Finally, it looks briefly at how these debates are reflected in the CPA before the main points of the discussion are summarized in the conclusion.

The Nuba Mountains: an overview

The Nuba Mountains region, officially known as South Kordofan State with Kadugli town as its capital, covers a total area of approximately 30,000 square miles in the virtual geographical center of the Sudan. Its topography comprises a complex mixture constituting four main mountain masses and a number of isolated hills separated by plains of various sizes as part of a basement complex formation. It is part of the savannah summer-rain belt of the Sudan with sufficient rainfall for raising crops and grazing cattle. The plain areas are covered with muddy cracking and/or non-cracking clay soils with some alluvial deposits in the lowlands. Sandy soils dominate in the western and northern parts of the region. Based on these physical characteristics, the region has been a major economic base for the Sudanese agrarian economy; the recently discovered and exploited rich oil fields in its western part have made it even more significant, economically, politically and strategically.

Nuba and Baggara settlement history and land-use patterns in the region

According to the 2003 census, the population of the region is estimated at 1.1 million, representing 3.5 % of the total population in the country. This population comprises two major ethnic groups, the Nuba representing about 70 % of the total population in the region and the Baggara nomads (Komey 2004) and other small but extremely influential groups, including the Jellaba from northern and central Sudan. The Baggara and Jellaba are Arab-speaking Muslims who migrated to the Nuba Mountains in several waves beginning at the turn of seventeenth century for slave raiding and trade purposes, although the nomadic Baggara were initially in search of pasture. A sizable number of Fellata (West African migrants) who migrated to the Nuba Mountains in search for work as agricultural laborers in the cotton fields during the 1920s following the subsequent droughts in the West African Sahel also inhabit the region (M. Salih 1999, 36; see also Manger 1984, 1988).

Several anthropologists, such as MacMicheal (1912/1967), Nadel (1947), Stevenson (1965) and M. Salih (1999), among others, agree that the Nuba peoples were the first to settle in the area more than 500 years before other groups arrived in the region. As a consequence, the term 'Nuba' is commonly used to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of more than eighty hill communities of the Nuba Mountains who are dominantly sedentary groups that practice traditional rain-fed agriculture as their main livelihood. Not withstanding the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Nuba hill tribes, there exists something like a 'Nuba culture', a cultural foundation common to all the various groups. It does not pervade the whole cultural life of the groups but it goes deeper than merely a common form of livelihood – it is a cultural affinity that could be explained as an adjustment of essentially dissimilar groups to identical environmental conditions (Nadel 1947, 3f.). Based on this feeling of togetherness and a common history, their ethnopolitical identity has progressively been constructed with strong ties to the territory of the Nuba Mountains; although this has systematically been contested by the other ethnic groups in the region.

Due to some major *historical and contemporary* dynamic forces, the indigenous Nuba peoples were forced to resort to the hilly parts of the region, while the fertile plain was forcibly occupied by others, mainly the Baggara. The historical forces include, among others (i) the influx of Baggara Arabs in waves into the region and their effective participation in pre-colonial slave raiding; (ii) the Turco-Egyptian regime and its successive slavery campaigns against the Nuba (MacMicheal 1912/1967; Sagar 1922; March 1954); and (iii) British colonial rule and its closed districts policy (Gillan 1931; Nadel 1947; March 1954; Stevenson 1965; M. Salih 1999). Contemporary forces include (i) the post-colonial state associated with two separate, yet interrelated dynamics, namely: the Jellaba domination of national politics and wealth, including land, and the outright appropriation of land by the government for public and private mechanized schemes (Ro-

den 1972; M. Salih 1984a; Manger 1984, 1988; El-Battahani 1986; Ibrahim 1988); and (ii) the central government's war, associated with mass displacement, ethnocide and genocide.[3]

The Baggara who moved into the area of the Nuba Mountains over 200 years ago as pastoral nomads represent the major sub-ethnic group of Arab origins (Mac-Micheal 1912/1967; Sagar 1922; Cunnison 1966; Suliman 1998). They move systematically along a north-south axis between the hilly Nuba areas during the rainy season and the traditional homelands of the peoples of South Sudan during the dry season. In recent years, some of these nomads have gradually shifted to agro-pastoralism and have engaged in traditional and mechanized rain-fed cultivation in the Nuba Mountains (Henderson 1939; El-Battahani 1986; Gore et al. 2004).

Accordingly, land-use patterns in the region are characterized by the co-existence of two traditional systems of subsistence rain-fed cultivation and pastoral nomadism. Agricultural land-use patterns as practiced by the Nuba recognize three types of customary land ownership: (i) individual-owned land; (ii) vacant land, which is recognized as communal land owned by the village or hill community; and (iii) vacant land. They cultivate different types of fields divided into *house farms*, *near farms* and *far farms* (Nadel 1947).

In addition, modern mechanized rain-fed farming systems have been successively introduced into the region since the 1960s. Under the 1968 Mechanized Farming Act, 60 % of the land was to be allocated to local people and no one was to have more than one farm. However, in practice, this was ignored and some outside landowners ended up owning more than twenty farms (Harragin 2003). State intervention was mainly exploited by the private sector based on the concessions made by the governments to secure food for the urban population and cash crops for export. The 1970 Unregistered Land Act, the 1984 Civil Transaction Act and its amended versions of 1991 and 1993 were meant to reinforce government power to appropriate communal lands for mechanized public and private farming. As a result, the local communities and traditional farmers were pushed to the margins and reproduced as landless farm labors in these large-scale mechanized farms (Ibrahim 1988; Harragin 2003).

The introduction of mechanized capitalist agricultural schemes in the region marked the economic climax of the Jellaba traders, who assumed full control of all economic spheres in the Nuba Mountains. "At the same time, it crystallized the present socio-economic structure and stratification in the region where the Jellaba, the Baggara and the Nuba occupy the top, the middle and the bottom of the socio-economic ladder respectively" (Ibrahim 1998, 6). In short, the introduc-

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[3] For details, see M. Salih 1984b, 1999; Manger 1994, 2003, 2006; Suliman 1998; African Rights 1995; Rahhal 2001; Harragin 2003; Gore eds. et al. 2004; Komey 2005.

tion of mechanized farming projects in the Nuba Mountains plains had a disastrous effect on the Nuba. Their land was seized and they were evicted and driven from their ancestral land without compensation. It brought suffering to the Nuba people and caused widespread ecological deprivation to the region, resulting in further social dislocation and conflict over diminishing resources (Rahhal 2001). The net result was the participation of the Nuba in armed struggles within the greater framework of the civil war in Sudan. In this regard, it has been argued that "the land question was the single biggest issue of confrontation in the Nuba Mountains on the outbreak of the war, and that the settlement of the land issue, through land and land tenure reforms is a key aspect of making a lasting peace" (Manger 2003, 2).

The civil war and its implication on territory and ethnic relations in the region

The extension of the civil war from the Southern Sudan to the Nuba Mountains in 1985 brought about new dynamics that came to have significant repercussions on the rights of land ownership or access. First, the normal coexistence of the sedentary Nuba and the Baggara nomads ceased to exist as the bulk of the Nuba supported the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) while the Baggara sided with the Islamic-oriented central government. Second, as the war intensified, the Nuba Mountains territory was progressively divided into two geo-political and administrative parts: areas either controlled and administered by the Islamic-oriented Government of the Sudan, where the Baggara had the upper hand in political affairs and where the Nuba were alienated from their land; and areas controlled and administered by the Nuba-led SPLA/M, with effective land management by the Nuba peoples while the Baggara Arabs were denied access to the grazing lands and water throughout the war period. Third, the two parties pursued two different policies pertaining to land rights in their respective territories. In the SPLA/M controlled areas, customary practices of communal land rights were recognized as legal rights and strengthened further. The SPLA/M initiated a Land Action Strategy (2004) that meant to empower the Nuba communities in administering their claimed land at different levels of social and spatial organization. The strategy, which is still in making, recognizes two different types of customary land rights in the SPLA/M controlled areas: customary *ownership* rights for the indigenous Nuba people; and customary *use access* rights for nomadic groups with longstanding seasonal access to the same lands (Manger 2006, 13). Contrary to the SPLA/M strategy, the government continued the policy of appropriating arable land for public and private investments based on the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, which considers all lands owned by communities or individuals on customary basis as government lands. Therefore, the government offers no legal recognition for the customary land rights (African Rights 1995; M. Salih 1999; Harragin 2003; El-Imam and Egemi 2004; Manger 2006).

In a nutshell, the war intensified antagonism between the two divided territories along ethno-political lines leading to recurrent mass displacement mostly among the sedentary Nuba. It also stimulated the articulation of ethnic identities in the struggle for land as a source of socio-political identity and economic survival and therefore accelerated the rate and the scale of local conflicts along ethnic lines as demonstrated by the following ethnographic case study.

Keiga Tummero village: a case of multi-faceted land-related conflicts

Keiga Tummero is a cluster of interconnected homesteads, about 50 km north of Kadugli and 5 km from the eastern part of the Kadugli-Dilling asphalt road at el-Queik point. The hill community is part of the Keiga sub-ethnic group, which is composed of five tribes: Keiga Jerru, Keiga Demik, Keiga el-Kheil, Keiga Luban and Keiga Tummero. Each of these tribes has its own loosely defined territorial boundaries within the overall customary Keiga lands. Keiga Tummero, the case in point, is composed of four sub-villages or sub-hill communities – el-Joghba, Tummero, Keidi, and Kolo respectively – situated in a line from the west to the east at the foot of the southern part of their main hill known as Keiga Tummero hill. Southward of each community there are wide plains that continue to the borders of the Laguri and Saburi hill communities. This land is a farming zone during the rainy season and a pasture during the dry season. Beside the horticultural activities of the sedentary farmers of Keiga Tummero it is also a zone for the collection of gum arabic. Two major water courses run through this arable plain, with seasonal water points known as *mashaga* and permanent water resources available along the *bat-ha*. Thus, the *bat-ha* provides permanent water points for humans, livestock and horticulture during the dry season. It is within this ecological environment that nomadic and sedentary peoples are constantly in the process of competition associated with recurrent disputes over the limited land and water resources.

The Arab agro-pastoralists in Keiga Tummero territory

Several agro-pastoral groups of Arabs and Fellata with their own native administration also live on the land traditionally claimed by the Keiga. At present, part of the Baggara of *Dar Jamai'*, a sub-tribe of Rowowga of Hawazma, have established their *Immara*[4] (native administration) in the Keiga Luban territory with el-

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[4] *Immara* is a term introduced by Islamic-oriented government led by the National Congress Party in the early 1990s as part of its Islamization programme among native leaders. Though it is associated with social leadership, the term also connotes that this social leader, by virtue of his leadership position in time of peace, is also a commander (*Amir*) of the Islamic fighters (*Moja-*

Queik as their politico-administrative seat, under the leadership of *Omda*[5] Bushra Somi of Dar Jamai' and Abkar Abdella of the Salamat tribe. Although the origin of the Salamat tribe can be traced back to Darfur, they allied with the Dar Jamai' of Hawazma on Keiga Luban territorial land and formed two inter-related *Omodia*s, which are currently part of the Dar Jamai' Immara under the paramount chieftainship of Amir Musa Somi.

In addition to the Dar Jamai' and Salamat Arab agro-pastoral groups, there are other smaller but influential Arab groups including (i) part of the Awlad Nuba sub-tribe of Rowowga of Hawazma, who are basically based around their Immara at Tecksowna in Laguri area, although some of them have extended their settlements northwards into Keiga Tummero agricultural land at its southern border near the Hajar el-Tash and el-Darot areas; (ii) the Zenara Arabs, who recently migrated from North Kordofan and are currently concentrated in a fertile area in the Keiga Tummero territory called el-Joghan, although without any native administration; (iii) some Bedeyria from North Kordofan and (iv) several nomadic Arab groups, namely Dar Na'yla, Shenabla, Humr, Messeiriya and Dar Shalango, who only come to the region with their cattle during the dry season. These groups invariably practice agro-pastoralism, mechanized farming and trading, with a recently growing tendency towards claiming land ownership, resulting in the autochthonous claims of the Nuba of Keiga being seriously contested.

The Keiga Tummero autochthonous land claims and the agro-pastoral Arabs contest

The people of Keiga Tummero, like so many Nuba tribes, believe that they are the indigenous population who inherited their present landed territory from their forefathers quite a long time ago. Therefore, others who have lately joined them by ways of settlement, grazing, farming and trading only enjoy rights of access to their autochthonous land, and no rights of ownership. In this respect, the people of Keiga Tummero have several legends and stories related to land autochthony.

For instance, they narrate how the Dar Jamai' Arabs of Rowowga-Hawazma were hosted, for the first time, upon their arrival in Keiga territory. Several elders from Keiga Tummero stated that, according to stories narrated by their forefa-

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hideen) during war. In the past this native administration unit was termed *Nazirate* for the Arabs or *Mekship* for the Nuba; the native leaders were called *Nazir* or *Mek* respectively.

5   "*Omodia* is a term for a group of villages, numbering from two or three up to thirty or more. The Omodia is essentially a concept derived from the Arab tribal organization, whereby each tribe is ruled by a Nazir, beneath whom there is a number of Omdas, each responsible for an Omodia, and beneath the Omda is the Sheikh, who is the headman of a small group of families, if the people are nomadic, or often of a village if the people are settled" (Population Census Office 1958, 7).

thers, there were inter-tribal conflicts between two sections of Arab tribes of Dar Betti and Dar Jamai' in a place called Baraka at el-Qoz in North Kordofan several generations back. Having lost the battle, the Dar Jamai' were forced to flee southwards to the Nuba lands, seeking refuge and protection. Upon their arrival, they divided into groups with each one targeting specific Nuba communities in their respective hills. A group led by Sheikh Tawir (the founder of Dar Jamai' in the area) approached Keiga Tummero hill at Kolo point. They were well received by the Keiga Tummero leaders and, for security reasons, were settled on top of the hill together with their horses, where some of their material culture still exists today.

Through time, however, and with assistance of various state power forces, these late comers started to strengthen their presence as settlers as well as nomads on land claimed by the Keiga. Today, historical and contemporary evidence on the ground suggests that Keiga Tummero autochthonous claims have progressively been contested by this group of Sheikh Tawir, which maintained its name as Dar Jamai' within the Rowowga-Hawazma federation in the region.

The annual Nuba campaigns of clearing roads under supervision of their native leaders during the Turco-Egyptian and the colonial periods is one of the widely shared arguments among the Nuba of Keiga Tummero supporting their collective ownership rights of their customary land as indigenous territory. My informant, Omda Elias Ibrahim Koko of Keiga Tummero argued that during the British colonial period the people, under the leadership of the local chiefs, used to annually clear the Dilling-Kadugli road, which used to pass in those days through Keiga Tummero. In the process of the campaigns to clear the bushes along the road after each rainy season, the people of Keiga Tummero used to receive the work from the Nuba of Debri at el-Ganaiya point, and hand it over, in turn, to the people of Keiga Luban, who, in turn, pass it over to those of Saburi. They claim that there were no *kilinki* (borders) between them and any Arab group despite their seasonal presence. These Arabs never participated in the annual road clearing campaigns; and whenever they were asked to participate in the campaign, my informant continued to argue, they used to say to the *mufatish* (the British inspector) or *mamur* (the British administrative officer) in front of the Nuba native leaders that they have nothing to do with the Nuba land, and that they were not inhabitants of this territory but merely seasonal nomads who were passing by. Their homeland, they claimed, was in Kordofan (Interview: Elias Ibrahim Koko, Keiga Tummero, June 5, 2005).

From the Nuba point of view, that was recognition of their autochthonous land ownership rights by the Arabs, who are contesting these same rights today because of several ecological, ethno-political and socio-economic changes. The emerging agro-pastoral Arabs' attitude towards claiming ownership rights over some of the Nuba historical homeland territory have intensified the recurrent

conflicts at grass root levels between the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Baggara in the Nuba Mountains.

The Keiga Tummero people were also able to narrate numerous historical and current cases of land-related conflicts between them and some agro-pastoral Arabs in the area. For example, it was claimed that in 1952 a land-related conflict arose between the Baggara of Awlad Shadad of Dar Jamai', known locally as *Takarir*,[6] and the Nuba of Keiga Tummero in the arable area of el-Tash south Keiga Tummero. The conflict resulted in human losses on both sides. The victim from Keiga was seen as a martyr who sacrificed his life for defending the collective rights of the Keiga people. Despite this incident, the family members of one of the Arab victims continued to practice traditional farming in the area. After they accumulated some wealth, they were able to shift to mechanized farming on the same disputed land. By this time the Awlad Shadad family were backed by the government in getting an approval for a mechanized farming project despite the Keiga customary ownership claim to the land. From the Nuba perspective, all these actors, including the concerned government institutions are, in reality, different sides of one coin, the dominant ingredients of state formation in South Kordofan throughout the post-colonial period but most markedly during the civil war.

Another narrative worth mentioning is about a conflict dated to the early 1980s, before the civil war in the Nuba Mountains, when serious tension arose between the Nuba farmers from Keiga Tummero and the Baggara of Awlad Nuba of Rowowga over some arable land in the el-Joghan area on the southern border of Keiga Tummero territory with Laguri. As a result of government intervention, a fact-finding committee was formed to visit the area and try to verify the claims of the contesting parties. After thorough investigation, the committee's verdict was in favor of the Keiga farmers and official documents were given to both parties confirming the contested land to be customarily part of the Keiga territory. The verdict was based on the fact that the disputed area was part of the Keiga Tummero cotton production zone during the colonial period and thereafter. However, at a later stage the Arabs of Awlad Nuba appealed against the verdict and the case was reactivated. The original verdict in favor of the Keiga was nullified in court. My informant believes that some officials and Baggara native leaders hid a certain supporting document for the Nuba claim. By so doing, they were able to jeopardize the Keiga claim over the contested land (Interview: Makein el-Wakeil, Keiga Tummero, June 8, 2005).

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[6] All Fellata and other tribes that come from the west and pass through Kordofan on their way to Mecca for the hajj are subsumed under the umbrella term *Takarir* (MacMicheal 1967, 152). They are part of the Dar Jamai's native administration in South Kordofan despite their being of different ethnic genealogies.

The alienation of the traditional farmers from their lands by the courts, among other institutions, has been widely reported by different sources. For example, in its summary findings, the UN-sponsored Nuba Mountains Program for Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT) concluded that "tension and discrimination, including in the court system, between nomads and settled farmers, between Arab and Nuba remained one of the root causes of the conflict which remain unaddressed in the region" (NMPACT 2002, 21).

The people of Keiga Tummero claim that the land currently occupied by the Arabs of Awlad Nuba in the border area between them and the Laguri tribe was their ancestral land until the 1940s. It is an arable fertile zone that includes the areas of *Hejir el-'Ajal*, *el-Tash*, *Khashim el-Girba*, *el-'Eriq* and *Shaq el-Gideil*. The area was famous for Keiga Tummero cotton production since the 1940s. Gradually, however, the Baggara of Awlad Nuba started to systematically settle into the area from Laguri territory. Through time they started to claim ownership over the territory while the Keiga peoples perceived them as users and not owners of the land. In this regard, an elder from Keiga Tummero stated that: "These Arab peoples came to us and our grandfathers gave them our land, in good faith, after they took an oath to respect our coexistence and mutual respect to our indigenous land. But they have betrayed this oath and have by now grabbed most of our arable land. Also, those who recently came from Kordofan are deliberately encouraged by their leaders to expand territorially at the expense of our customarily owned lands. As these peoples continue to create many problems including claiming lands, we can not continue the peaceful relationship with them; unless all of our land-related grievances are fairly redressed and all of our inherited territory is restored" (Interview: Adam Abu Shok, Keiga Tummero, June 9, 2005).

Some major aggravating factors to the nomadic-sedentary conflicts in the area

Based on the Keiga Tummero case, three separate but closely interrelated dynamics have been identified as some of the main factors that systematically trigger local conflicts. In fact, all these factors are externally-imposed, on the sedentary and the nomadic populations alike. First, government's control of the seasonal routes for the nomads on sedentary people's customary land; second, the forced settlement of the nomads as a result of socio-ethnic and ecological changes in North Kordofan; and third, the establishment of privately or publicly-owned mechanized farming schemes on communal, customarily owned territories with no consideration of the local people claims and interests.

(i) The institutionally imposed seasonal migration routes

Keiga Tummero territory is classified by the government as a formal passing route for nomads during their migration movements. According to the Southern

Kordofan State Act No. 3, 2000, titled 'Agricultural and Grazing Regulation Act', Keiga Tummero's *bat-ha* (a permanent water source) is recognized as a farming and horticultural zone as well as an '*Id* point, i.e., as a water source for livestock during their dry season migratory movements. The same Act prohibits any farmer from blocking the water points for this reason. But horticultural production is at its peak during the dry season and allowing access to the water for livestock leads inevitably to a situation of severe competition over this water resource. Under such circumstances, recurrent water-based conflicts are unavoidable.

The Arab nomads feel that they have legal rights of access to the water sources as stipulated by the Act while the Nuba sedentary people feel that this is their own indigenous land and, therefore, maintain their primacy in utilizing its resources, including water. Sheikh Makein el-Wakeil el-Zubeir of Kolo sub-hill community in Keiga Tummero remarked that: "We are not developing our rich lands around the water sources into large-scale horticultural schemes despite their economic feasibility because this has been occupied by the nomads' systematic intrusions during the dry season. Their intrusions are backed by various government institutions and policies, which favor nomads while preventing us from using our fertile lands around the water sources during the dry seasons. It is unfair to remain underdeveloped in our rich territory. We want to establish large and permanent horticultural installations around these water points; but this has always been made impossible by the presence of livestock around these water points throughout the dry season, which is also a peak season for horticultural production for the local sedentary people of Keiga Tummero" (Interview: June 6, 2005).

Another source of sedentary-nomadic conflicts is related to the frequent intrusion of livestock onto fields before they are harvested. Every year, during October–December, the harvest becomes the main economic activity in Keiga Tummero. Thus, it is also a period of frequent cooperation and/or friction between the local sedentary and nomadic population as the latter start their southward migratory movements as early as October every year. In a period of six weeks of participant observation in Keiga Tummero, I was able to experience and document thirty-five cases of farmer-nomad conflicts centered on livestock intrusions onto fields, causing partial and sometimes even total crop damage in Kolo village; another twenty-three cases were experienced and recorded in Keidi village in the same period. These repeated cases of livestock intrusions onto fields not only during the day but also during the night led the Keiga Tummero youth to bypass their *Omda* (who regularly negotiates with the nomads on water source access within Keiga Tummero territory every year), and forcefully prevented any Arab nomads from access to their farming and horticultural zones, within which the permanent water points are found. As a result, the Arab nomads felt the need to seriously negotiate getting access to grazing land and water for their livestock in Keiga Tummero's *bat-ha* during the dry season of 2006. The situation was tense and the nomads were forced to reluctantly accept a written agreement with harsh

conditions attached to their rights of access to water in that dry season. One such condition imposed upon the Dar Na'yla nomadic Baggara by the Keiga Tummero leaders denied them access to the entire Keiga Tummero territory as of the following dry season, i.e. 2007. But in reality they managed during 2007 to peacefully cooperate in using the same water resources.

Although this local tension was finally resolved peacefully by means of a direct, local-led negotiated agreement, similar cases escalated when they were instrumentalized not only along ethnic lines but along the political dimension as well. The results were lethal fighting with automatic weapons, as was the case in the Debri area near Keiga Tummero, between the sedentary Ghulfan and the nomadic Awlad Ali of Dar Na'yla during November–December 2005 (Interview: Omda Elias Ibrahim Koko, Keiga Tummero: June 12, 2005). As the spill-over of the conflict into neighboring Keiga Tummero was expected, an excessive presence of weapons in the hands of the young people, day and night, in and around Keiga area was observed throughout the conflict period, the impact of which continued for several months.

It is interesting to see how some of these conflicts were settled by means of direct negotiation, mediation or court settlements while other, similar cases resulted in direct local confrontation on a limited scale. Moreover, some of these local conflicts escalated when they were ethno-politically instrumentalized and given wider regional dimensions. The wide distribution of the weapons among the sedentary and the nomadic people alike seems to be a stimulating factor that triggers the frequent use of force to resolve some of these recurrent conflicts, which historically are quite solvable through peaceful means.

(ii) Ecological changes and forced settlement of nomads in Keiga Tummero

In the last three decades the African Sahelian zone, including some dry regions in central and northern Sudan experienced a series of severe droughts. North Kordofan was severely affected by these droughts particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (Abdul-Jalil 2005, 63; Adams 1982, 268). Due to the ensuing ecological changes, South Kordofan was subjected to the influx of successive waves of Arab nomad refugees from North Kordofan. Upon their arrival, they became partially sedentary and engaged in farming while maintaining their livestock although in drastically reduced numbers. Several local farmers in Keiga Tummero complained that despite the fact that the government had demarcated passage routes for nomads, some of these nomads decided to gradually settle and established permanent hamlets along these migratory routes, thus blocking the traditional migration movements. In this changed situation, as the nomads attempt to deviate from the prescribed routes, they frequently and inevitably find themselves in nearby farming zones, causing destruction and damage to the agricultural production. Several cases of conflict in the area are ascribed to this fact.

For example, the el-Darot plain south of Keiga Tummero hill and the el-Joghan area along the Keiga Tummero-Umm Heitan border are the main 'far farm' lands for the people of Keiga Tummero, with a migratory route passing between the farming zones during the dry season. To be more precise, the el-Joghan area has gradually been transformed into a settlement by *Zenara*[7] Arabs, who fled the drought in the el-Goz area of North Kordofan. The Keiga people claim that they had frequently hosted these Arabs as they fled southwards with their livestock from their drought-plagued homeland in North Kordofan. Some returned home voluntarily when the situation improved while some did not; and the Zenara people of Jowekaiya and Jafiel areas of North Kordofan are some of those who remained behind on fertile el-Joghan land in Keiga Tummero. The problem is that these Zenara started to claim ownership to one of the most fertile areas in Keiga Tummero. This ownership claim was practically consolidated during the intensive civil war in the 1990s, when the people of Keiga Tummero felt insecure and started to retreat from their plain areas back towards the foot of their main hill. This temporal retreat persuaded several Arab groups, namely Dar Jamai', Awlad Nuba, Zenara and Gommoiyya, to expand their settlements and farming activities into Keiga Tummero territory. And they started developing a sense of ownership over the land under their use and control.

Later, following the Nuba Mountains Cease-fire Agreement of 2002, the people of Keiga Tummero started moving back to their far farmland in el-Joghan area, only to find that the area had been settled and was being farmed by these new-comers. The result was recurrent conflicts and confrontations. In one of these disputes between Keiga Tummero farmers and Zenara Arabs over farming land, the Zenara raised a complaint against these Keiga farmers attempting to re-gain their traditional farming land. Interestingly, though the disputed arable land falls within the jurisdiction of the Keiga Tummero native court, the Zenara Arabs de-cided to bypass that court and submitted their complaint to an Arab court in Fangalo in Umm Heitan area under the chairmanship of Amir Sanad, the para-mount native leader of the Baggara-Rowowga. The implication here is that the Zenara were not ready to subordinate themselves to the Keiga Tummero native authority in this particular case, because their aim was to own land within the Keiga Tummero territory; and it is obvious that this would not find the support of the Keiga Tummero leadership. Although the Zenara did not win the case, they have managed to continue to date with their settlement and farming activities in the area.

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[7] Zenara and five other tribes (Bedayria, Takarir, the Jellaba Howara, Gawama'a and Slaves) make up Halafa, one of the three major sub-sections of Hawazma, the other two being Rowowga and 'Abd el-'Ali. According to MacMicheal (1967, 151–52), of these six tribes that form the Halafa section of Hawazma, none of them is Hawazma by origin; they were all integrated into Ha-wazma in the middle of the eighteenth century after they swore a solemn oath binding them to the Hawazma.

These new settlement patterns have far-reaching implications for the local seden-tary Nuba people. First, the permanent settlements of the newcomers associated with their farming activities in the Keiga Tummero far farmlands have alienated the local sedentary people from their traditional resource-base. Second, the new settlements block prescribed migration routes forcing the actual routes to be modified at the expense of the local farmers' arable lands. Eventually, these changes increased the recurrent tensions and conflicts along ethnic dimensions, i.e., between the sedentary Nuba people and the nomadic Arabs. Third, these newly sedentary Arab groups started to develop a sense of ownership over the land in the course of their permanent utilization of the land for settlement pur-poses and mechanized as well as traditional farming activities, among others.

Some of my informants in Keiga Tummero believe that this demographic and territorial restructuring in favor of the Arab groups (nomads, sedentary farmers and merchants) is occurring with support from the regional and central govern-ments as part of their policies aimed at empowering the Baggara while weakening and eventually eliminating the Nuba territorially-based identity and livelihood, particularly during the civil war and thereafter.

(iii) The establishment of the privately-owned mechanized farms

The Keiga area as a whole has several mechanized farming schemes owned by merchants from outside, mostly Jellaba based in Kadugli. However, the mecha-nized farming schemes and the way the government allocates them to outside merchants with no consideration of the views or interests of the local sedentary or nomadic people is one of the main sources of contention between the local population and the scheme owners on the one hand and between local communi-ties and the government on the other. It also aggravates farmer-nomads tensions because both tend to be squeezed out by the mechanized farms that expand sys-tematically at the expense of both. From the Keiga Tummero community per-spective, any land allocated by the government as mechanized farming land be-longs customarily to certain sub-hill communities in Keiga Tummero. From the nomad standpoint, the mechanized farm projects usually intersect the migratory routes permanently because, unlike traditional farming, the mechanized farm projects owners usually continue their farming activities throughout the dry sea-son. From the government standpoint, all unregistered lands are government property, and it maintains it right, based on civil law and respective regulations, to determine its utilization as it sees appropriate. The contradiction between the communal customary rights of the two traditional communities (farmers and nomads) and modern state civil law, which does not recognize these customary rights, is obvious.

Currently, there are a number of privately-owned mechanized schemes in the north-eastern part of Keiga Tummero. They are part of a wider mechanized farm-

ing area that extends onto Debri communal land in Ghulfan territory in Dilling Province. One of the largest projects in this area belongs to Annies Halim,[8] a well-known merchant in Kadugli. My informants expressed their dissatisfaction with the government actions of allocating their customary lands to such projects through lease contracts to Arab merchants and senior government officials from Kadugli and other towns in the north because these government actions are done with no consideration to the customary land rights of the indigenous peoples. In this context they referred to a recent case of a wealthy local Arab of Dar Jamai' known as Shadad, whose family had managed to gradually settle as traditional farmers while maintaining livestock in Keiga Tummero. Through time, he accumulated cattle wealth that enabled him to buy a tractor and shift from traditional to mechanized farming. And perhaps through his ethnic-related links to government circles in Kadugli, he was able to get approval for a sizable plot for mechanized farming on Keiga Tummero traditional land without the local community's or their leaders' knowledge. In 2006 some Keiga farmers, who claimed to be the customary owners of the plot, start clearing part of the plot that had been identified by Shadad as his approved mechanized rain-fed farming project. Shadad filed a case against these farmers to the security authorities in Kadugli. But the case remained pending as of March, 2007.

The aggregate results accruing from these public or privately-owned mechanized rain-fed projects, are many, including the alienation of the sedentary Nuba from their traditional arable land, environmental deterioration, acceleration of nomad-farmer conflicts, since they are systematically being squeezed out by the expanding mechanized rain-fed farming, and recurrent unequal conflicts between the mechanized farms' wealthy owners, backed by the state's modern land policies and the local communities, who maintain their claims to their autochthonous and indigenous land, based on their longstanding history of customary land practices as basis for their socio-cultural identity, livelihood and economic survival.

Keiga Tummero market as ethnic, socio-cultural and economic intermediary institution

Despite the above-mentioned recurrent conflicts associated with persistent autochthonous claims by the sedentary Nuba and the responses of the Baggara nomads, the existence of various forms of economically motivated cooperation, complementarities and interdependency is evident. These are observable in intermediary spaces and among actors such as local market institutions, socio-cultural events and especially wrestling, watering points, mixed or neighboring settlements and farming activities.

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[8] Annies Halim is a descendent of one of the families of Syrians employed as civil servants and traders since the Turco-Egyptian era.

Through participant observation, several features of daily cooperation, socio-economic complementarities and ecological interdependency between these competing groups could be recorded. The Keiga Tummero's weekly market as socio-cultural, political and economic intermediary is a case in point. It is an effective intermediary point that brings together different societal actors with their respective functions and interests. Various forms of transactions were exceptionally apparent in this weekly market, which functions as:

(i) A center for *economic and commercial transactions and exchanges* for all the local communities with their different ethnic, political and economic affiliations. The economic complementarities between the nomads' produce and that of farmers are strongly felt in this market. In market exchange, economic interests supersede all other politically or ethnically-based interests or considerations.

(ii) A center for *networking and information exchanges* between different actors. For example, information related to lost animals is usually found in the market where nomads from different camps meet, not only for market business, but also for exchanging relevant information, views and news about their possible migratory movements, potential pastoral areas and water sources and other issues of common interests.

(iii) A *forum for political campaigning and mobilization.* One of the SPLA/M political campaigns that I attended was conducted in the market where a huge number of people attended, including those who were not planning to do so. For the government institutions, the market day remains the most effective forum for disseminating information and realizing other campaigns such as tax collection and immunization.

(iv) A *meeting point for negotiation, mediation and conflict settlement* including the payments of fines incurred as a result of court verdicts or gentlemen's agreements. Most conflict cases are mediated by the elders or native administration leaders during the market session because everybody can easily be found there.

(v) A *medium for developing social ties and acculturation* among different socio-economic and ethnic actors. The selection of Friday as a market day has a religious dimension as well. A mosque located at the center of the market represents one of its cultural landscape features. All Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds come together to perform the Friday communal prayers in that mosque. Furthermore, friendships between people of different affiliations are regularly stimulated and strengthened through such local market interactions. This can be observed in a gathering around a woman serving tea to her customers of different ethnic backgrounds. By its very nature, the market imposes certain conditions of physical proximity of different people to the extent that

some warring parties may find themselves forced to peacefully face each other because a third party had brought them face to face without prior arrangement.

The persistence of these forms of cooperation, interdependency and complementarities among the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Baggara is, perhaps, strong evidence that the root causes of the present recurrent local conflicts, and the way they escalate from local to regional levels, are external rather than internal factors. In fact, several conflict cases, as shown above, are related to national politics and the state's distorted development policies that do not take into consideration the interest and priorities of sedentary and nomadic communities alike.

Emerging autochthonous land claims at the Nuba Conferences: the Keiga case

The autochthonous land claims have become widely popularized among the Nuba people including those of Keiga Tummero. To that end, a communally-initiated land committee was formed in Keiga Tummero in 2005. It was entrusted with the task of tracing, identifying and fixing local communal territorial boundaries. The Keiga 1st Conference (Tummero, Luban, Demik, El-Kheil and Jerru) held on April 12–14, 2006 in Keiga Tummero reinforced this initiative. In fact, issues related to autochthonous land claims were the central subject of the conference deliberations and its final communiqué. The conference was organized and facilitated by urban-based Keiga elites, local community leaders and youth. The elites mobilized their people through the *Keiga Council*, a newly established, community-based organization (CBO) with its headquarters in Khartoum. According to the Council's chairperson, Shamsoon Khamis Kafi, land-related problems were the primary driving force behind the formation of this Council as manifested in its mandate aiming at (i) uniting all Keiga people, (ii) identifying and fixing Keiga territorial boundaries, (iii) laying out a strategy for dealing with other ethnic groups who have or have not shown feelings of belongingness to Keiga territory and (iv) establishing a separate native administration for the Keiga sub-ethnic group (Shamsoon Khamis Kafi, Sudaneseonline.com, June 23, 2006).

In its introductory part, the communiqué of the Keiga 1st Conference demonstrated the solidarity and will of the Keiga people, as a sub-ethnic group, to take collective action for development and to protect their land. It expressed the collective commitment of the conference participants to their autochthonous land claims: "With all our consciousness and free will, we, the people of Keiga Tummero, Luban, el-Kheil, Demik and Jerru, have determinedly decided to totally adhere to our communal unity, to respect democratic practices and principles, to recognize citizenship as a base for rights and obligations, and to work collectively for the sake of developing Keiga while protecting its land territory, people and resources" (The Keiga Council 2006, 1st Conference, April 12–14).

The communiqué enumerated several land-related recommendations and resolutions, with the following being the most relevant to this discussion:

1- Formulation of a high commission for Keiga land;

2- Affirmation of the complete ownership over communal land and its boundary fixation;

3- Nullification/cancellation of all contracts related to the sale of any Keiga land;

4- Compensation of the Keiga people, who have been affected by the construction of the oil pipeline at levels equal to that paid to other groups;

5- Representation of Keiga people in the Southern Kordofan State's Land Commission;

6- Reconsideration of the overlapping native administrations on the same territory within the Keiga land;

7- Reviving the indigenous Nuba names among the Keiga peoples and the names of places within the Keiga territory;

8- Prevention of the intrusion of nomads' livestock into the farming areas (*hadaba* or *faw*) until the harvesting of the crops is completed, i.e. not before March. Severe punishments should apply in cases of violations against people's property or dignity; and

9- Confirming that the displacement of the Keiga peoples and their alienation from their land, which has since then effectively been controlled by others, was due to the civil war (The Keiga Council 2006, 1st Conference, April 12–14).

This conference and its resolutions, which centered on ethno-political identity and land autochthony, are similar to numerous other regular tribal conferences among Nuba groups.[9] All these conferences seem to be inspired by the *All Nuba 1st and 2nd Conferences* held under SPLA/M patronage in November 2–4, 2002 and April 5–8, 2005 in Kauda, the political and military headquarters of the SPLA/M in the Nuba Mountains. The emerging movement among the Nuba ethnic groups, focused on forming themselves as unitary cultural and political communities, is based on a perceived 'Nuba territoriality' as an ancestral homeland and source of the livelihood, ethno-cultural identity and political heritage and part of a comprehensive nation-building dynamic. This movement is expressed in different forms including *Nuba identity and cultural revival* with strong ties between *ethnicity and territoriality* as manifested in the recent process

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[9] See, for example, the Abol 3rd Conference in Kobang, April 13–16, 2005; the Leira 3rd Conference in Hagar Bago, April 16–18, 2005; the Irral Payam Conference in Shwai, April 21–22, 2005, and the Korongo-Messakin tribes Conference in Farandella, Buram County, May 29–June 1, 2005.

of *renaming* of all tribes, places, natural and human features using *original Nuba names* on new maps and records and, therefore, the purging of all names that are not related to the roots of the Nuba peoples.[10]

Baggara parallel conferences and land-related discourses

As a reaction to this emerging collective Nuba position, the Baggara of Rowowga-Hawazma decided to hold parallel conferences in response. The Nuba's ongoing attempt to articulate their ethno-political identity in their struggle over land is perceived by the Baggara as a deliberate move aiming at ethnic exclusion of all non-Nuba groups from land entitlement in the region. The Baggara argue that all non-Nuba groups are indispensable ingredients of the Nuba Mountains' demographic, economic, cultural and ethno-political landscape. Therefore, their exclusion is just not a possible or a practical option. This discourse is manifested in the two consecutive Rowowga conferences held in Kurchi in Moro, May 20–21, 2005 and in Kadugli, June 21–23, 2006.[11] Looking critically at the resolutions of these two conferences, it is evident that Nuba-Baggara coexistence and land-related concerns and issues were the central themes of the conferences. They emphasize, among others, the following issues:[12]

1- The need for renewing the longstanding pre-war Nuba-Baggara alliances based on new principles of coexistence, mutual understanding and respect;

2- The need for the other ethnic groups in the region to recognize and accept the reality that the Baggara of Rowowga are part of the indigenous community in the Nuba Mountains region;

3- The need for South Kordofan State's Land Commission to reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the region;

4- The need to re-open seasonal migratory routes and provide necessary social, security, water and animal health services;

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[10] This issue of Nuba identity and cultural revival with strong ties to territoriality was listed as resolution No. 27 in the All Nuba 2nd Conference in Kauda, April 5–8, 2005. It was then discussed and put into practice in a number of community-based conferences. For example, the Korongo-Messakin tribes Conference held in Farandella, Buram County, May 29–June 1, 2005, resolved that the Arab names of the Buram, Reikha and Teis areas were henceforth to be known by their original Nuba names as Tobo, Tolabi, and Tromo respectively.

[11] See the Khartoum-based daily newspaper Al-Adwaa, Issue No. 996, June 25, 2006, 8.

[12] These points were extracted and translated from Arabic to English from the final documents of the Rowowga 1st and 2nd Conferences held in Kurchi in Moro in May 20–21, 2005 and in Kadugli on June 21–23, 2006.

5- The need to guarantee the rights of all citizens to secure lands for farming, grazing and settlements, among other purposes;

6- The need for the representation of the nomads in legislative and executive institutions at state and local levels during the transitional period; and

7- The need for mobilizing local institutions such as native leaders, singers, artists and various socio-cultural festivals for purposes of promoting a culture of peace and coexistence.

Contrary to the Nuba position, which perceived the Baggara nomads in the region as users and not owners of the land and its resources, these conferences resolutions demonstrate that the Baggara perceive themselves as indigenous inhabitants of the region with full land entitlements and political representation based on the citizenship principle. The resolutions also reflect a strong desire for rebuilding Nuba-Baggara inter-ethnic ties disrupted by the civil war; see this as the only way to ensure sustainable and peaceful coexistence between these ethnic groups in the region.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the question of customary land in the region

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) concluded on January 9, 2005 between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA/M addressed the land question in the *Wealth Sharing Protocol*, as well as in the *South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains* and *Blue Nile States Protocol*. However, looking critically at the passages related to land issues, it is not difficult to deduce that 'land policy issues are not fully addressed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement' (Polloni 2005, 21) and that the core land issues were not explicitly resolved despite the *centrality* of the land question in the civil war. The Wealth Sharing Protocol highlights the traditional nature of land tenure arrangements but it explicitly avoids addressing the core issue, i.e., the question of customary land ownership rights. This is evident in part 2 titled 'Ownership of Land and Natural Resources'. It stipulates that:

"2.1: …[T]his agreement is not intended to address the ownership of those resources. The parties agree to establish a process to resolve this issue."

"2.5: The parties agree that a process be instituted to progressively develop and amend the relevant laws to incorporate customary laws and practices, local heritage and international trends and practices."

The main institutions stipulated in the CPA to deal with land issues during the interim period are *Land Commissions* at national, Southern Sudan, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States levels. Their functions are to include *arbitration*

and *consultation* on land reform and customary land rights, *appraisal* of compensations and *recording* of land use practices. The Protocols offer no direct guarantees for securing ownership rights for communally-owned lands, or for incorporating customary land rights, practices and laws in expected new legislation. The final settlement of land issues was left to the discretion of the Land Commissions. In the absence of clear-cut guarantees or solutions in the CPA on issues related to customary land rights, uncertainties have emerged concerning the nature of laws upon which arbitration will be based, the recognition of customary law, the enforceability of verdicts on land and alternatives for redress in case a commission refuses to consider a claim (Polloni 2005, 21f.).

Despite the fact that the Interim National Government has been in power for more than a year, Land Commissions at various levels have not yet been established. Therefore, no progress has been made in incorporating customary land rights into legislation at different levels. This implies that the on-going land related conflicts between the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Baggara and the government policy of appropriating lands customarily owned by rural peoples in Sudan in general and in the Nuba Mountains in particular continue, despite the existence of the CPA. In fact, it is doubtful as to whether the stipulated guidelines regarding land issues in the CPA are sufficient to redress the deeply rooted grievances among the indigenous peoples of the Sudan in general and the Nuba of South Kordofan in particular.

Conclusion

Ethnographic analysis of this selected village has shown that the most dominant cultural feature of South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains region is the coexistence of sedentary Nuba and nomadic Baggara communities, although with constant competition over the land resources including water. This coexistence has been characterized by intensive and longstanding relations, with various forms of co-operation and conflict at different levels of their social organizations. In the process of competition over land resources, various social institutions are mobilized and often eventually instrumentalized along ethno-political lines, especially when normal competition escalates into direct confrontation.

The land rights claims, being customary ownership claims by the Nuba or rights to access to land by the Baggara, are usually articulated in terms of autochthonous rights on the basis of belonging to an indigenous group with strong ties to ancestral land. The ancestral land itself, especially from the Nuba point of view, is perceived as a basis for collective ethno-cultural and political identity as well as a source of economic wellbeing. This implies that the contested autochthonous claims are multi-dimensional in nature. It is evident that the conflict can be be-

tween the nomadic and sedentary groups over natural resources, including water, between the settled Arabs and Nuba over land ownership or between other socio-political actors such as the Islamic-oriented central government and the SPLA/M over different territories, not only as natural resource base but also as strategic socio-political and military center.

One major recent development in the Nuba-Baggara territorial relations is the emerging Nuba movement to reconstruct themselves as one unified ethno-political group in order to be able to take collective socio-cultural and political actions, including their restless effort to consolidate their claim of autochthonous land rights. However, this emerging collective Nuba position is being contested, persistently and systematically, by the Baggara and other ethnic groups in the region by means of different forms of alliances, solidarity, and power control at various levels of governance, including the manipulation of the native administration and the mobilization of the relevant institutions of the government to support their response.

Despite these conflicting claims between Baggara nomads and sedentary Nuba, it is also evident that various forms of economically motivated cooperation and interdependency exist, discernible in intermediary spaces and among intermediary actors such as local market institutions; socio-cultural events and especially wrestling; watering points and mixed or neighboring settlements and farming activities.

These longstanding historical forms of differentiation, adjustment, conflict and cooperation in the relations of the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Arab people of South Kordofan have undergone significant changes during and since the civil war. Several pre-war forms of coexistence and complementarities between nomadic and sedentary groups have ceased to exist, with one party losing its control over land ownership or access rights. After the war, the return of various stakeholders to their land has been a tense process. This is due to the fact that each party exerts tremendous pressure to practically consolidate its control over land under its actual use while contesting others' claims. This new repositioning is evident in the struggle of the people of Keiga Tummero to regain their far farms land, which has been occupied by the newly settled Arabs of North Kordofan and some local Baggara groups.

In sum, the case suggests that the settlement of the issue of customary land rights in terms of ownership or access rights is a vital step towards achieving sustainable social and political peace and stability in the region in particular and in the Sudan in general. However, a critical look at the land-related Articles in the CPA and the disappointing performance of the Government of National Unity born out of the CPA itself, raises doubts as to whether the guidelines regarding land issues in the CPA are sufficient to redress the deeply rooted grievances among the indigenous peoples of the Sudan in general and the Nuba of South Kordofan in particular.

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