

Islamization and Arabization of Africans as a Means to Political Power in the Sudan: Contradictions of Discrimination based on the Blackness of Skin and Stigma of Slavery and their Contribution to the Civil Wars

Dr. M. JALĀL HĀSHIM**
PORTSMOUT UNIVERSITY

Background

Introduction

The name “Sudan” has more or less been the same all through history. Aside from the toponyms relating to the south (such as *Hent-Hen-Nefer* and *Wawat*), it has been associated with the colour of blackness (such as *Ta-Nehesu*, *Kush*, *Kerma*, *Æthiopia*, *Nubia*, *al-Saḥana al-Zarqā’* and lastly *al-Sūdān*) [Sagheiroun, 1999], which was- and is still- the colour of its people, since the early times of the ancient civilizations of the Nile valley up to the present. The same name seems to have evolved by translation from language to another in the course of time. This, regarding belonging and identity, puts Sudan in the heart of Africa, which is rightly called the Black Continent. What seem to be differences of colour among the Sudanese are nothing more than the shades of blackness.

The significance of the name “*Sūdān*” is important, because it bears very strong identity implication. The Arabized people of middle Sudan, generally speaking, tend not to recognize themselves as black Africans. As the State for the last five centuries has belonged ideologically to this group, Sudan has ended up identifying itself more with the Arabs than with black Africa. This issue is central to the contemporary problem of the reality of the Sudan and national integration

The State

In what roughly constitutes the geography of present day Sudan, the State has prevailed all through history. Archaeologically the State can be traced back seven thousand years at least [*cf.* Welsby, 2000]. Like in other parts of Africa, the State functioned in a kind of federal

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights’ Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

autonomy where the ethno-cultural entities were its political nucleuses. The vast geographical space necessitated that justice to be the key for any ruler to reign for longer. Seeking a better place to live in was handy and convenient for every ethnic group thus leaving any tyrant to rule either the desert or the jungle. Today's demand for self-determination by different marginalized groups is the modern manifestation and formulation of the history-long practice to pull out from any state that does not answer equally the longing of its different subject-groups to *Freedom, Justice and Peace*.

At no time was there any kind of political vacuum in the Sudan. The traditional tribal federacy of ancient Sudan was maintained in the Christian era (650BC-1505AD) to also prevail later in the Funj Sultanate (1505AD-1821AD).

The People

All the people of present day Sudan contributed in making the ancient civilization of Sudan. Even the people who call themselves 'Arab' have their rightly recognizable share in building that civilization since they are a mixture of Arabs and indigenous people. In fact the weaving of the ethno-linguistic fabric in Sudan, which is taken for granted to be heterogeneous, reflects homogeneity as well. For instance, taking the Eastern Sudanic group, we may well be amazed to see people living on the Sudan-Uganda borders (e.g. the Baria) are related in a cousin-way manner to people living on the Sudan-Egypt borders (Nubians) and both people are related to others living on the Sudan-Ethiopia borders in the Funj region (e.g. Ingassana) and all of them are related in the same way to other groups living on the Sudan-Chad borders (e.g. Daju). We must bear in mind that before the Arabization of middle Sudan those people were in a dynamic contact with each other. This is an ancient land with ancient people and ancient civilization; the most to be expected is that they are interrelated ethno-linguistically.

Below we are going to show how the peoples of the Sudan are related to each other in an intrinsic way. The ethno-linguistic groups (based on www.ethnologue.org) will be mentioned according to their principal regional habitats which comprise the following: Equatoria, Bahr al-Ghazal, Upper Nile, Nuba Mountains, Dar Fur, Funj and Ingassana, Eastern Sudan, Northern Sudan, and Middle Sudan. The languages spoken by the people in these areas will be used as a material indicator of the ethnic groups. Although Arabic, being the *lingua franca* of the Sudan, is spoken all over the country, it will be related to the Middle of Sudan where it claims supremacy. 'Northern Sudan' indicates here the ethno-linguistically

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

distinguishable group of Nubians only. Both Meroitic and Old Nubian and other extinct languages will be mentioned for historical significance only. The following characters, which are randomly applied, will mark the ethno-linguistic affiliation: Afro-Asiatic (☉), Niger-Kordofanian (♂), and Nilo-Saharan (☼) with its sub-group of Eastern Sudanic as (♀). **This symbol (☉) indicates that almost all the languages are spoken in the given area.** The eastern Sudanic sub-group shall be mentioned because it cuts across the Country, from Nimuli to Halfa, and from al-Jinēna to al-Kurmuk. We shall try to mention all ethnic entities, but we cannot claim that the list is inclusive; we apologize to those who may have slipped from record. The alphabetic order will be adopted.

1.3.1. Middle Sudan:

☉ Arabic Colloquial ☉ Arabic Standard
 ♀ Meroitic ♂ Old Nubian ● All

1.3.2. Eastern Sudan:

☉ Arabic ☉ Bedaweyit ♂ Fulani
 ☼ Fur ☉ Hausa ♀ Meroitic
 ♀ Nobiin ♀ Old Nubian ☉ Tigrey
 ☉ Tigrinya

1.3.3. Northern Sudan:

☉ Arabic ♀ Dongolese ♀ Kunūz
 ♀ Meroitic ♀ Nobiin ♀ Old Nubian

1.3.4. The Nuba Mountains and Kordufan:

♀ Affitti	♀ Aka	♀ Ama	
☉ Arabic	♂ Dagik	♀ Dair	
♀ Daju	♀ Delenj	♀ Dinka	
♂ Eliri	♂ Fulani	♂ Garme	
♀ Ḥugairat	♀ Ghulfān	♀ Ḥaraza	
☉ Hausa	♂ Heiban	♀ kadamu	
♂ Kanga	♀ Karko	♂ Katcha	
♂ kadugli	♂ Katla	♂ Keiga	
♂ Kawalib	♂ Kau	♂ Korongo	
♂ Lafofa	♂ Laru	♀ Liguri	
♂ Logol	♂ Lumun	♀ Meroitic	
♂ Moro	♂ Ngile	♀ Old Nubian	
♀ Shatt	♂ Shuway	♂ Tagoi	
♂ Talodi	♀ Tese	♀ Temain	
♂ Tima	♂ Tingal	♂ Tocho	
♂ Togole	♂ Torona	♂ Tulishi	
♂ Tumma	♂ Utoro	♀ Wali	
♂ Warnag	☼ Yulu		



1.3.5. Dar Fur:

☉ Arabic	☉ Bargo	♀ Baygo
☉ Berti	♀ Birgid	♀ Berno
♀ Daju	☉ Fongoro	♂ Fulani
☉ Fur	☉ Hausa	♀ kanuri
☉ Masalit	♀ Meroitic	♀ Midob
♀ Old Nubian	♀ Sungor	☉ Zaghawa

1.3.6. Baḥr al-Ghazāl:

☉ Ajja	☉ Arabic	♀ Daju
♀ Dinka	♂ Feroqe	♂ Fulani
☉ Gula	☉ Hausa	♂ Mangayat
♀ Meroitic	☉ Mittu	♀ Njalgulgule
♀ Old Nubian	☉ Sinyar	

1.3.7. Equatoria:

☉ Abukeia	♀ Acholi	☉ Arabic Std.
☉ Arabic Juba	♂ Bai	☉ Baka
♂ Banda	♀ Baria	♀ Belanda Bor
♂ Belanda Viri	☉ Bongo	♀ Dongotono
♂ Homa	♂ Indri	☉ Jur
♀ Kachipo	♀ Kakwa	☉ Kaliko
☉ Kresh	♀ lango	♀ Lokoya
♀ Lopit	☉ Luluba	♀ Luwo
☉ Ma'adi	♀ Mundari	♀ Meroitic
☉ Mo'da	☉ Morokodo	☉ Moru
♂ Mundo	♂ Ndogo	☉ Njamusa
☉ Molo	♀ Old Nubian	♀ Otuho
♀ Shilluk	♀ Suri	♀ Tennes
♀ Thuri	♂ Togoyo	♀ Toposa
♂ Zande		

1.3.8. Upper Nile:

♀ Anuak	☉ Arabic	♀ Atuot
☉ Beli	♀ Didinga	♀ Dinka
♀ Jumjum	♀ Lokoro	♀ Longarim
♀ Mabaan	♀ Meroitic	♀ Murle
♀ Nuer	♀ Old Nubian	♂ Tumtum
☉ Uduk		

1.3.9. Blue Nile, Funj and Ingassana:

☉ Arabic	☉ Berta	♀ Burun
♂ Fulani	☉ Funj	☉ Gumuz
☉ Hausa	♀ Ingassana	♀ Kelo
☉ Komo	♀ Meroitic	♀ Molo



The above-mentioned relationships which reflect the reality of today stand as an evidence that the Sudanese people are *united* in their *diversity*. How can one draw a line and say that this is the South and this is the North? Or even this is the East and this is the West? All the groups cut across the country from Halfa to Nimuli and from Kurmuk to Jinēna. The Nilo-Saharan Group (☀), of which the Eastern Sudanic (♀) is a sub-group, constitutes 64% of the total identities of the Sudan, of which the Eastern Sudanic sub-group (♀) alone constitutes 44% and 22% of the whole. The Niger-Kordofanian Group (♂) constitutes 32%, where the Afro-Asiatic Group (☉) constitutes only 04%. Although the populations of these ethnic identities are proportionately reversed, the issue of Human Rights, however, is not a question of ‘how many?’ All ethnic groups should be entitled to equal rights in matters pertaining to culture and development regardless of whether their population number is small or big.

The Boundary

The historic boundaries of ancient Sudan are thought to have been much bigger than today’s boundaries. The chart of languages shows that all areas share the Meroitic and Old Nubian languages, consequently their culture and civilization. There is archaeological evidence to this effect. Excavations have proved that there are both Cushitic/Meroitic and post-Meroitic settlements in Southern, Western and Eastern regions. The linguistic evidence is proving that languages as far as Equatoria (the Baria (♀) for instance) can potentially help in deciphering the Meroitic language (♀) [‘Abdu al-Gādir M. ‘Abdu Allah, 1985]. Archaeological evidence has supported the stories of ancient historians about the tall and very black cattle herdsman who used to roam the area of today’s Buṭāna up to the Red Sea hills. This is also supported by oral traditions of Nilotic tribes, the Dinka in particular. The meaning of the place-name ‘Khartoum’, which is traditionally pronounced as ‘*khērtūm*’ is offered in Dinka language as ‘*kēr tom*’, i.e. the ‘the river confluence’ [cf. Lazarus, 1985]. Just 250 years ago the White Nile region above Jabal Aulia was Shillukland. The Arab thrust into the centre of Sudan caused Nilotic people and other groups to shrink back deep into the Savannah and Equatorial zones and thus cut off from the milieu of their lingo-cultural setting of Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Kordofanian region, which has been in fact disrupted altogether by this factor. The historical and natural frontiers of this region are the Equator in the South and the cataract of Asuan in the North.



Westward the boundaries of ancient Sudan are much bigger as natural topographical features do not obstruct the movement of people. Recent researches have shown that the iron industry of Meroe is to be associated with the industry of iron smelting in Central *Bilād al-Sūdān* [Lobban *et al*, 1999]. The Hausa and Fulani people have been taking these routes in their eastward movement since ancient times [El-Nagger, 1970]. These are the same routes the Arabs took in their migration into the Sudan from *Bilād al-Maghrīb* [Fadl, 1973].

Religion

In this regard two things have characterized Sudan all through history; it has always been multi-religious and religiously tolerant. Ancient polytheism accommodated other deities survived in today's traditional religions. The treasurer of the Candace of Meroe [800BC-450AD] was a Jew who converted to Christianity in its early days apparently without fearing the slightest persecution. Christianity did not invade the Sudan [Vantini, 1978; Werner *et al*, 2000]; it was the Sudanese who asked for it. In Dongola, the Capital of the Christian Kingdom of Nubia [650AD-1350AD], there was a Mosque for which the Christian State was responsible. In Soba (25km south of Khartoum on the Blue Nile), the capital of the Christian Kingdom of Alodia [650AD-1505AD], where there were about 300 Churches, there was also a Mosque within a hamlet assigned for the Muslims.

In the 19th century Christianity will catch up again as a result of intensive missionary work. The biggest Christian communities are in the South and Nuba Mountains and the big urban centres. In the face of the rise of Islamization and Arabization as vehicles for facilitating the domination of the central state, Christianity will get involved and eventually it will become, along with Africanism, the ideological backbone in countering Islamo-Arabism.

Islam broke the encapsulation of Sudan and opened it to the outer world of that time. The transformation from Christianity to Islam took a gradual process thus giving way for a distinctive mix of Sudanese cosmology and culture of tolerance. A Sudanese Islam was in the making that finally took its shape in the Sufi sects that flourished in post-Christian Sudan, thus bringing about an effective acculturation of indigenous practices and Islamic teachings. The local people transformed from the traditional and Christian choirs to the Sufi chanting smoothly.

The conversion to Islam culminated in the Funj Sultanate [1505AD-1820AD], which retained many ancient features with regard to administration and cultural symbols [*cf.* Spaulding, 1980]. The traditional system of tribal federacy, with its inherent democratic



practices, was maintained. Other ancient practices such as the ritual killing of the king (regicide) and the Christian headgear and regalia were also retained. In the beginning Sufi Islam assumed supremacy in reflecting the ideology of the State. A little later a rival came into the scene represented in scholastic Islam that could only be acquired through classroom teaching at such religious centres like al-Azhar in Cairo [Yaḥya Ibrāhīm, 1980]. Where Sufi Islam interacts with the local society, scholastic Islam challenges it in its persistent endeavours to reshape it according to its own norms. Where the former does not give heed to the penal code of the Sharī'a as literally stated in the scriptures, the latter only pays attention to the scriptures without giving any heed to the realities of setting and context. At the beginning many scholastic shaykhs took to denouncing their jurisprudence by throwing away their symbolic scholastic graduation robes, to declare themselves as Sufi. At the end of the game this will be reversed.

The Sufi Islam could have won the rivalry if it were not for the Turco-Egyptian colonial rule [1820AD-1885AD] which introduced the culture of official Muslim clergymen who were appointed and paid by the state and who adhered to scholastic Islam as they were mostly graduates of al-Azhar Mosque-University. That rule also introduced the modern educational system where the classrooms were also made available for this kind of Islam to flourish.

The Mahdia Islamic state [1885AD-1899AD] represents the ultimate victory of the scholastic Islam over the Sufi Islam. The Mahdi was a Sufi man who revolted against what he took to be leniency on behalf of the Sufi shaykhs towards the traditions of people which-according to his own views- did not follow the book of Sharī'a. The Mahdia state understandably followed a strict scholastic Islam. Thenceforward the Sufi Islam will gradually identify with the scholastic Islam so as to catch up in the long run. By the late decades of the 20th century the two can hardly be distinguished from each other.

The British-Egyptian colonial rule [1899AD-1956AD] resumed the same system of the Turco-Egyptian rule with regard to government-sponsored education and the culture of official Muslim clergymen. By the time the Sudan achieved Independence the educated class was mostly orientated to scholastic Islam. This showed in the rising tide of the Islamic fundamentalist movements among the students of higher educational institutions.

Slavery and its Impact on the Process of Power Appropriation in the Sudan

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

The Origin of Slavery

Slavery is a history-long human vice. All nations were involved in slavery and all of the members of their respective societies were virtually subject to slavery if it chanced upon them. Long before the Christianization of the Roman Empire the institution of slavery in the West has accommodated another vice, which is racism. In Judaism the sons of Ham, erroneously taken to be the apical father of the blacks, were cursed by God [cf. the Bible, Genesis 9:25], hence they have come bearing African features [cf. Yamauchi, 2004]. Christianity took from there its own bias against blackness. Thus the Christianization of Europe paved the way for a culture of anti blackness. From Rome and Byzantium it gradually moved westward to infect the whole of Europe. A little later, with the rise of the Arabs just before Islam, slavery will take another swing of colour connotation which created a very lasting racial effect- that is the association of slavery with the black colour. The infection of racial slavery came to Arabia from Judaism and Christianity. Thenceforward slavery will be more and more associated with the black coloured people thus making Africa its prime target.

With the coming of the age of geographical explorations and industrialization the West frantically scrambled on Africa from all directions in pursuit of slaves, showing evilness unprecedented in the history of mankind. Populous Africa was depopulated in a few decades. Africa has come out of this with an eternal wound; the West with an eternal shame.

The Arabs, a dark-skinned people themselves, began showing in their culture a strong orientation toward light-skin colour. Their pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry is abundant with racial and derogatory themes about black colour. 'Antara ibn Shaddād, a famous pre-Islamic poet whose mother was a black African with fuzzy hair, painfully suffered from discrimination; his people did not recognize him until he proved his ultimate knighthood in tribal wars. Prophet Muhammad addressed to this problem many a time in his traditions. Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ, a close companion of him who was a black man of African origin, suffered a lot from colour derogatory remarks made by other Muslims.

By the end of the Abbasid Caliphate the Arabic word for 'black' has become synonymous with the word 'slave', just like the word 'nigger' became synonymous with 'slave' in Western languages. However enslaving white people did not stop. Slavery for hard labour was almost restricted to black Africans; Children from non-black communities, especially from the Caucasian regions in Central Asia, were abducted in order to be sold either for soldiery in the case of the males, or as harem in the case of the females. Even so they were not called slaves; the

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

former was called ‘*mamlūk*’, literally means ‘owned’, and the latter was called ‘*jāriya*’, i.e. ‘mistress. They were saved the derogatory word ‘slave’ simply because they were not black. In Egypt those white slaves managed to assume the rule of the country for centuries to be removed only by Muhammad Ali Pasha -himself an Albanian Ottoman mercenary- in the early 19th century. One of those *mamlūk*, however, was a black African thought by some scholars to be enslaved from the Nuba Mountains in Sudan. He managed to usurp the power from his master who was the governor and became the ruler of Egypt. His name was Kāfūr, a typical name for a black slave. He was highly cultured to the extent of being called ‘*al-Ustāz*’ i.e. the teacher. In one of the most famous Arab derogatory poems he was bluntly called ‘*abd*’ i.e. slave and further mocked by the advice that no slave should be bought without a stick to straighten them up with. (Ironically, for years this infamous piece of poem was taught in Sudanese schools). Thus by the middle ages any black was subject to be called slave in the Arab and Islamic world.

Al-Jallāba: the Slave Traders of Sudan

Slavery was practised in Sudan since ancient times. The Arabs in the Paqt treaty demanded from the Christian Nubians slaves that were brought from hinterlands. However it was more or less African traditional slavery resulting from petty tribal feuds and wars. It kept on like that in the early time of the Funj Sultanate until the Europeans began making incursions into the continent to procure slaves. It was the Turco-Egyptian colonial rule that launched the era of mass slavery in the Sudan. They made it a state-policy loaded with the whole weight of Arab cultural stigmatization of the blacks. Locally, the Arabized people of the centre, which was growing fast, followed their lead. They played the role of the intermediary who organized the raids, captured the blacks and then sold them. The term *al-Jallāba* is a plural adjective in Sudanese colloquial Arabic literally meaning the procurers. The singular is *jallābi*. The term originated in reference to the intermediary slavers who were mostly Arabized Sudanese. The culture of *al-Jallāba* had a big impact in consolidating the establishment of the centre. When the Turco-Egyptian colonial rule was compelled to abolish slavery, *al-Jallāba* defied that and boldly continued to practice it. By that time their raiding squads had developed into formidable armies. In the last decade of the Turco-Egyptian colonial rule, Al-Zubayr wad Rahama, their leading slaver, led his slaving army and conquered Dar Fur. In fact they were just one step from becoming the rulers of the Sudan. The Turco-Egyptian rule not only recognized the *de facto* al-Zubayr’s governorship of Dar Fur, but further bestowed on him the prestigious title of ‘Pasha’. The *Jallāba* cherished the prospects

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights’ Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

of inheriting the faltering Turco-Egyptian rule. If it were not for the Mahdia revolution that took place, they would have assumed that power.

The Mahdia state, strictly following the scripture of Islam where there is no direct verse from either the Qur'an or the Prophet traditions abolishing slavery, indulged itself in reinstating the institution of slavery. However it strongly abolished tobacco and snuff although there is no direct verse either from the Qur'an or the Prophet traditions to that effect. Understandably the pragmatic and Machiavellian *Jallāba* were among the first to declare their allegiance to the Mahdia. They put their huge military resources and expertise at the service of the revolution. That is one of the factors that made the Mahdia state to belong ideologically to the Arabized centre.

Backed with its colonialist pragmatism, the British-Egyptian rule that succeeded the Mahdia had very soon consolidated its alliance with the Arabized centre. Although officially declared abolished, slavery was tolerated as a practice and culture (*cf.* Saikinga, 1996). In post-Independent Sudan, the national rule clearly showed its stand in this regard by naming a street in Khartoum after al-Zubayr Pasha, the most notorious slaver in Sudan's modern history. In fact the culture of slavery is truly the catalyst behind the bad treatment of the black Africans of Sudan who live in the periphery around the Arabized middle. Successive national governments have shown this malignity which takes place under the pretext of curbing the civil war.

The Arabization of the Sudan and the Power-related Conflicts of Identity

The Demise of the Christian Kingdoms of the Sudan

With the weakening of the Christian kingdoms, between the 14th and 16th centuries, many Islamic and Arabized kinglets began appearing and eventually succeeded in replacing the old regime [Fadl, 1973; Shibeika, 1991]. The first was the Kunūz (*Bani al-Kanz*) kingdom around Asuan area in present-day Egyptian Nubia, to be followed a little later by the Rabī'a-Beja Islamic kinglet of Hajar (Eastern Sudan). In the late 15th century the Islamic kinglet of Tegali (Togole) in Nuba Mountain (West-Middle Sudan) came into existence. A century later the Ottoman Sultan Selim the Second made a thrust deep in Nubia in the aftermath of which appeared the Northern Nubian Islamic kinglets of the Kushshāf, Maḥas, and Argo (Northern Sudan). Two centuries later the Fur kingdom of Kunjāra was established upon the fall of the Tunjur kinglet (Western Sudan). But the most important was the Funj Sultanate which came into

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

existence in the early 16th century and which succeeded in spreading its influence over most of these kingdoms.

The Funj Sultanate came into existence with slavery looming in the background and with the colour black fully stigmatized by being synonymous with 'slave'. By the turn of the 15th century, Soba, the capital of the last Christian kingdom of Alodia, fell at the hands of the Arabized people (known in middle Sudan as the Arabs). Having its founders being virtually blacks, it was understandably called "*al-Salṭana al-Zarqā*", i.e. the 'Black Sultanate'. As it came in response to the growing influence of the Islamo-Arabized Sudanese it explicitly showed an Arab and Islamic orientation. The new formations of Arabized tribes began claiming Arab descent supported with mostly fabricated genealogies. The small family units compensated for their vulnerability by claiming the noble '*sharīf*' descent, i.e. descendants of Prophet Muhammad; eventually in the name of this descent they would appropriate both wealth and power, something the immediate descendants were not ordained to have while Prophet Muhammad was still alive. To be on an equal footing with these tribes in matters pertaining to power and authority, the Funj also claimed an Umayyad descent. Scholars in Arabic and Islamic sciences from other parts of the Islamic world were encouraged to settle in the Sudan.

Arabization and the Rise of Islam

Thenceforward the Arabized Africans of middle Sudan will pose as non-black Arabs. Intermarriage with light-skinned people would be consciously sought as a process of cleansing blood from blackness. A long process of identity change began; in order to have access to power and to be at least accepted as free humans, African people tended to drop both their identities and languages and replace them with Arabic language and Arab identity. A new ideological awareness of race and colour came into being. The shades of the colour of blackness were perceived as authentic racial differentiations [*cf.* Deng, 1995]. A Sudanese-bound criterion for racial colour was formed by which the light black was seen as an Arab (*wad 'Arab* and *wad balad*), i.e. white or at least non-black. The jet-black Sudanese was seen as an African, i.e. slave (*'abd*). Then a host of derogatory terms was generated in the culture and colloquial Arabic of middle Sudan which dehumanize the black Africans.

Right there the seeds of Sudanese ideology of Arab-oriented dominance over the Africans were sown. It works through two mechanisms: 1) the *stigma* of slavery, blackness and people of African identity, who occupy the margin and surrounding periphery and 2) the

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

prestigma (coined by the present writer from 'prestige' to serve as a countering term to *stigma*) of the free, non-black and Arab, who occupy the centre. This ideology, in its drive to achieve self-actualization, underlines a process of alienation and domination. While posing as whites, they do not hold white people proper in high esteem. They largely indulged themselves in stigmatizing the Africans and prestigmatizing the Arabs with whom they identify. This ideology of alienation has prevailed for the last five centuries up to the present moment. It has been consolidated by successive political regimes whether Turco-Egyptian or Egyptian-British or national rule. It finds its roots in the vice of slavery. No wonder slavery was once again in full swing by the late 20th century as a result of extremely intensifying the processes of prestigmatic Islamo-Arabism by the state. By sublimating the Arab as a model for them through this erroneously confused concept of race, the Arabized people of Sudan have made themselves second-class Arabs. The repercussions of this will not only affect them, but their whole country which will be split up between Arabism and Africanism

The State Ideology of Centro-Marginalization

Introduction

Although roughly situated in the middle of Sudan, the centre is neither geographical nor cultural. Rather it is a centre that comprises both power and wealth. People from the periphery are always encouraged and tempted to join the centre by renouncing their African cultures, languages and becoming Arabized. This complex process is made to look like a natural cultural interaction that takes place out of the necessity of leaving one's home village and coming to live in a town dominated by Arabs (i.e. Arabized Africans). The cultural relegation of the periphery will eventually end up into developmental relegation. Within the Arabized middle itself there are different circular castes. The centre is very complex. In essence it is neither racial nor cultural nor geographical; neither Islamic nor Arab. Rather it is a centre of power that makes use of all these, especially Islam and Arabism. This is why we depict it as Islamo-Arabism which is of purely ideological bearing. This centre of power processes itself through the cultural agenda of Islam and Arabism. This has virtually lured those who identify with Islam and Arabism with power and wealth so as to consequently turn them into complicity. Usually the spearheads of the centre are people who originally belong to the margin, but chose with their own free will to alienate themselves from their people in order to serve the centre loyally. Those should not be

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

counted as belonging to the margin. One of the aims of this essay is to show that those Arabized people of Sudan are in fact being done for right at the moment when they perceive themselves to be winners. This is because the parameters of centralization are embedded in the marginalization of the *Arabized* Sudan to the Arabs proper.

The “Melting Pot” Perspective as a Mechanism for erasing Non-Arab Identities

A discourse of unity and national coherence will opportunely come into shape, as different ethnic groups from the periphery are being culturally reproduced in the centre. The mishmash is hailed as the real Sudanese make. Hence we have the perspective of “*the melting pot*” as a backbone of the discourse of national unity, i.e. the process of assimilation. But since the origin was in the processes of stigmatization versus prestigmatization it will always fall short of achieving integral unity even when the assimilation is complete. The jet-blacks of Sudan who have been completely assimilated in the Islamo-Arab culture and religion are not only being racially discriminated against, but are still stuck with the stigma of slavery and consequently being dehumanized. This is so because the whole process is built on contradictions and paradoxes; where the process of prestigma would wave the people toward pro-Arab culture and Islam, the process of stigma on the other side would keep dismissing them on racial grounds. One can acquire a new culture in a relatively short time, but one can hardly change their colour. So, blackness is always taken as a stigmatic clue to slavery.

Conflicting Ideologies: the Circular versus the Linear Polarization

It is clear that the model of ideological polarization is a circular one represented in a centre working hard to assimilate the margin, and a margin fighting hard to dismantle the centre. This model reflects the realities of pluralism represented in both the Arabism and Africanism as analogous entities parallel to the 'centre' and the 'margin'; the 'middle' and 'periphery'. Where the Arabism can be called *Sudano-Arab* as it consists of the Arabized Sudanese, Africanism can be called *Sudano-African* as it consists of those who have their African languages and who have their homelands either in the north, south, east or west. So far, the awareness of 'Arabism' as opposed to that of 'Africanism' has been analogous to that of centro-marginalization. Although it seems to be reduced into dual form, the circular polarization, however, is rather pluralistic rather than dualistic. The social arenas of the centre and margin have their respective internal differentiations and strata, because they contain the nucleuses of pluralism. This makes the

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

circular model of polarization qualified to reflect and tackle the situation of centro-marginalization.

The mechanism of centro-marginalization has been working for the last five centuries. One may wonder how come that the people of Sudan have been living under the yoke of centro-marginalization for so long? The short answer is that by being subject to the operating vehicles of prestigma and stigma. The centre has never posed as being a centre of wealth and power facing a margin; it is, rather, a bloc of *free* and *noble* people of *Arab* origin linearly divided from another bloc of *slaves* and *degenerate* people of *African* origin. By this tactic it does not only neutralize the people of the *middle* but also turns them into accomplices. When it comes to the people of the *periphery* it neutralizes them by linearly stratifying their stigmatisation further. According to the process of the stigma, the people of the margin are not equally stigmatized. It goes as follows below.

The Degrees of Stigma

The more black a person is and the more African this person is, the more stigmatized they become. The levels of stigma go from high to low degree as follows: a) African features (thick and broad nose and lips, and fuzzy short hair); b) blackness; c) an African language; d) and lastly being a non-Muslim. The most stigmatized are those who combine the four degrees of stigma, like the majority of Southerners who thus become first degree stigma. The Africans of Nuba Mountains and Ingassana come immediately after the Southerners as a *via media* second degree stigma. Then come the peoples of western Sudan “*al-Gharrāba*” as the third degree stigma, regardless of their different tribal affiliations, and of whom the most stigmatized people are those who are originally from either Central or Western *Bilād al-Sūdān*, like the Fulani and Hausa, etc. Then next group is the Beja people of eastern Sudan who, although light-skinned, have their own non-Arabic language and are very poorly educated and can hardly speak either standard or colloquial Arabic fluently; furthermore, they are bedouins leading a life that is very backward [*sic*] at best. The last to come are the Nubians in the north who are the least stigmatized for one main reason. The people of the middle, generally speaking, are nothing but Arabized Nubians, with some survivals of Christian customs still manifested in their cultures. Nothing is wrong with the Nubians of the north except their *twisted* tongue, i.e. their language, which clearly betrays their African origin. This is also why the Nubians will be the last to get disillusioned regarding where they belong. Both the Beja and the Nubians are half-way, but not prestigma in any way.

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

The Independent Sudan and the Question of who is Sudanese

The Sudanese Nationality Law

The national rule will not only run smoothly in the groove of linear polarization, but will institutionalize it by law. The law of Nationality enacted immediately after independence holds any Sudanese as a suspect foreigner until they prove otherwise. The Sudanese people will be the first people in the world to hold inside their own country official documents to prove that they are Sudanese and not foreigners. The states all over the World take the population in its generality as to be nationals, and then tend to control the foreigners who are relatively very few. This is common sense: if you have a bushel of peas mixed up in a sack of broad beans, you sort them out by picking up the peas from the broad beans. The successive governments of post-Independence did exactly the opposite; they began picking out the Sudanese inside the country and leaving out so called foreigners. Until now, far fewer than 9 millions have proved that they are Sudanese in this linear demarcation of nationality. This strange nationality law is nothing but a tactic of obscurantism and a tool of deception and alienation. According to the last census undertaken in the 1990s, a figure of at least 26 million is given for the total population of Sudan. These are two systems that defeat each other, but simultaneously adopted for a reason. According to this law, all marginalized Sudanese are officially not considered as Sudanese until they prove otherwise.

The linear significance of the law in classifying the people as stigma vs. prestigma becomes clearer as its first victims are always those who are jet black or those whose ancestors were immigrants, but not in any way the so-called Arabs. In the mid-1970s a Libyan-backed movement of armed Sudanese opposition broke into Khartoum with the intention of toppling the May regime. After being routed, it was dubbed by the regime as the movement of “Mercenary Foreigners”. Sudan TV made live interviews with people in the streets of Khartoum to show to the world that they were really mercenaries and foreigners from the public’s point of view. The standard question was as follows: “How did you know that they were foreigners?” The average answer was that: “They were blacks and did not speak Arabic”. The people were not

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights’ Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

saying this because of siding with the regime. By simply belonging to the centre culturally and socially, they were telling the *truth* as they perceived of it.

The Policy of Islamization and Arabization

Since independence, Islamization and Arabization have been shared in common by successive governments as state-dictated policies [*cf.* Al-Sīd, 1990]. Taking for granted that the middle of Sudan represents the whole country prompted this. The post-Independence governments dealt with the Sudan as consisting of (a) the *noble* Arabs of the middle, (b) the Muslim Africans in the periphery, who, with possible Arab blood, are supposed to undergo very quickly the process of Arabization so as to be honoured with Arabism, and (c) the slaves, who have not yet undone their black Africanism with Islam and a drop of *noble* Arab blood and who have no place so far in the bench of power. If allowed, the prestigma would have created an institutional apartheid state.

Being the first sub-Saharan African country (i.e. black African) to achieve independence, Sudan was expected by many African liberation movements to lead the struggle against colonialism. Its flag of independence which consisted of the three horizontal colours of yellow (desert), green (jungle) and blue (Nile) will be revered by black peoples as the flag of freedom; later when they respectively achieved independence their flags will more or less be made of these colours. But Sudan turned its back on black Africa and ran to the Arab world so as to be recognized as an Arab nation. Declined by some Arab states, its membership might have not been accepted if it were not for Egypt, which takes Sudan as its strategic backyard. This prompted a veteran of African liberation movements to say that: “Instead of being the best Africans, the Sudanese people have chosen with their own free will to be the worst Arabs”. Later, under the May regime (led by Nimeiri, a Nubian who is a pious Pan-Arabist, *sic*) Sudan dropped the flag of freedom for a typical Arab-design flag. And this shows how the ultimate goal of the processes of centro-marginalization is to marginalize Sudan, and Sudanese people, as an Arab state.

The Civil Wars of Sudan

The First War in the South

A Linear Civil War of South vs. North

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

In the three years of self-rule (1953-1956) that preceded Independence, the Southern politicians made it clear that they wanted the South to be ruled by its own people in whatever way possible, whether federacy, confederacy or self-rule. Too excited to reflect on what they were saying in their eagerness to take over from the colonial ruler, the Pan-Arab Northerners (dubbed as *mondukuru* by the Southerners) generously made promises to this effect [Alier, 1990]. Holding the Southerners generally in the status of slaves, they naturally took the Southern politicians lightly with the evil intention of flatly dishonouring these promises. Overnight the Southerners discovered that Independence meant to them a change from master to another, from foreign master to an indigenous master. The conflict will be triggered by what was then called the Sudanization of senior government posts in which the Southerners were not only disqualified, but even the few qualified were conspiratorially removed away from the milieu of their influence, in the South. To further strip the South from any potential power, the *mondukuru* came up with a plot to disperse the Southern soldiers in the army in different parts of the country away from the South. They were taking their precaution against the plots of the Southerners; the plots which were the brain-children of their own. Coming to Independence with bad intentions combined with short-sightedness, the prestigmatic centre projected its own bad intentions upon the Southerners so as to rationalize its plots for weakening the South. To enter the phase of Independence with such weakness meant that the Southerners were doomed for ever. One year before Independence (1955) they took to arms; having their just demand of self-rule declined by the *mondukuru*, now they will fight for the separation of the South from the North.

This is how the civil war began. That was truly the launch of the war of the marginalized people of Sudan against the Islamo-Arab centre. It should have come backed with awareness of its circular nature rather than the linear track it had followed. For many factors beyond the control of the Southerners the civil war came out based on the same linear polarization, South vs. North. Looking retrospectively one may observe that the colonial rule did not only obscure the processes of centro-marginalization, but it further reinforced it by adopting the linear polarization in its policies. For instance, in what it took to be the North, the educational system was designed in a way that would only enhance the Islamo-Arab ideology of dominance and assimilation. Of the peripheral Sudano-African people who were threatened with marginalization, it accelerated the rate of their assimilation in the dominant culture. Betrayed by both the colonial British who at the same time boasted of protecting them and by the *mondukuru* politicians of Khartoum who dishonoured their promises, and having the rest of the Sudan

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

menacingly posing as an Arab entity, the Southerners were left with no choice but to mobilize the Africanism of the South to linearly counter the Arabism of the North.

The Sudanese army systematically ravaged the South. Both elected governments and military regimes ran the Sudan with one goal of subjugating the South. Where the role of the former is to deceptively kiss the South on one cheek to lure it into a peace that does not solve its problems, the role of the latter is to heavy-handedly slab it on the other cheek. It is very rare for any Sudanese not to have come across an ex-soldier who has stories to tell about the nasty atrocities committed by the army in the South in the period 1956-1973.

Addis Ababa Accord: A Linear Peace for a Linear War

The 1972 Addis Ababa agreement granted the Southerners the self-rule they demanded 17 years before. A year later the Peace Accord of Addis Ababa was signed according to which the Southerners put down their arms and came with a clean heart only to find the old system of stigma waiting for them. At last the guerrilla fighters joined the same army they were fighting and their leaders enjoyed the high echelon of government posts they had previously been denied. A few years later President Nimeiri, whose day deeds never honoured his previous night speech, dishonoured the peace accord [*cf.* Khalid, 1985; Alier, 1990].

Administratively the South was divided into three provinces with a Supreme Council. By establishing the whole peace process of rehabilitation of the South on the linear polarization of the Sudan, with its parameters of centro-marginalization and the vehicles of stigma vs. prestigma, the Southerners came out to be completely identified with the *North*. The South began forming its own prestigma which was represented in the biggest and strongest tribe, the Dinka. This consequently led to the formation of a Southern centre with its own margin. The Southerners who fought the dominance of the *mondukuru* for 17 years could not tolerate the dominance by the Dinka. A tendency to pull out from this Dinka centre surfaced to be immediately picked up by the big *centre* in Khartoum with the evil intention of scrapping the whole peace accord. The three provinces were nominally promoted into fully autonomous regions, which practically made the peace accord redundant. These regions did not survive for long; otherwise they would have infinitely undergone further linear segmentations. This is because the linear polarization can only manage dualistic situations but not pluralistic situations. The South is a pluralistic chromosome of Sudan, and Sudan is a pluralistic chromosome of



Africa. If applied in a pluralistic context, the linear polarization will push it into dualism in order to deal with it.

Back to Arms: the Second Civil War in the South

Background to the Second Civil War

By 1982 the state in Sudan was plunging into an abyss of extreme religious fanaticism; Nimeiri, a secular sanguinary despot, feigned sainthood and put on the regalia of Islam as a camouflage. The Inquisition state of the Mahdia type was reinstated once again. Islam was abused by reducing it into a harsh penal code, arbitrarily applied. The machine of the stigma/stigma was operated at full throttle, thus targeting the people on the margin; the blacker you were the more targeted you became. In an unprecedented measure, Khartoum was declared a *stigma-free* capital; it was decided that people from the margin be evacuated from the Tri-capital (Khartoum, Umdorman and Khartoum North) under the pretext of eradicating vagrancy and loitering. In daylight, under the cynical and mocking laughter of the (*black*) Arabs, the black Africans of Sudan were hunted and herded like animals to be loaded into trucks that took them back to their home regions, which were too impoverished by the process of centro-marginalization to sustain them. Ordinary Sudanese people did not understand what was going on; it seemed to them that leaders at the top had lost their common sense. As the targeting was proportionate with the degree of stigma, the Southerners, by virtue of their true Sudanese complexions, were the most to moan under the yoke of that apartheid-like state. Their intellectuals and political leaders, who were mostly Christians, were forced at gunpoint to undergo the humiliation of declaring their allegiance to the false Imam, Nimeiri, according to the *Islamic* allegiance [*sic*] (*al-bay'a*). Being already abrogated some years ago, Addis Ababa Accord was long since forgotten by President Nimeiri, the delirious Imam.

SPLM/SPLA

In 1983 a group of Southern military soldiers rebelled and took to the jungle: the second civil war had begun. It proved to be one of the longest civil wars in modern history, claiming the lives of over two million Southern civilians who were massacred by the marauding army of the government or caught in the cross fire or otherwise perished of hunger and disease. This tragedy of major proportions went unnoticed by the international community including the Organization of African Unity in spite of repeated appeals by the SPLM.

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

The rebellion was engineered by three different groups and was very soon joined by veterans of the first civil war. The scenario of civilians' tragedies and legacy of that war with its demand for separation of Southern Sudan still loomed in the minds of Sudanese people. Of the three factions that were behind the rebellion at least one of them was wholly committed to the separation of the South [Johnson, 2003]. Then a highly educated senior army officer, who was also a veteran of the first civil war, joined the rebellion to emerge very soon as its paramount military commander and intellectual thinker. This was of Dr. Col. John Garang De Mabior who will make Sudan take its sharpest turn in history since the establishment of the Funj Sultanate in 1505AD, that is, the unification of the marginal forces against the centre.

According to its Manifesto, the revolutionary body was called "the Sudan People Liberation Movement" (SPLM), with its military arm called "the Sudan People Liberation Army" (SPLA). Although greatly and understandably overshadowed by the South, the movement declared itself as concerned with the whole of Sudan. It declared that the war was not a war of the South against the North, but rather it was the war of marginalized people in the South, the Funj and Ingassana, the Nuba Mountains, the West, the East and the North against the centre which is represented by the government of Khartoum, which is not in any way the virtuous government of the whole of Sudan. The dominance of the centre on, and its exploitation of, the marginalized people was deeply rooted in the system that only an armed liberation movement could undo it. That is to say to transcend the linear polarization model (South vs. North) to the circular polarization model (margin vs. centre); that is to say to transcend "the melting pot" model of nationalism to "the unity in diversity" model of national integration. The true version of Afro-Arabism as an identity of Sudan has been declared where the plural components of Africanism and Arabism shall be honoured on an equal footing without violating the rights of any party. All this was concluded under the banner of the "New Sudan". It took Sudan five centuries to reach this point of national maturity.

The Circular Civil Wars of the Margin against the Centre

Introduction

Presently the civil war is not only in the South, it has spread to these other marginalized areas. One of the two armed movements of the people of Dar Fur has named itself Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). It is only the people of Northern Sudan, especially the Nubians and the Manāṣīr, i.e. the fourth column of the margin, who have not yet taken up to arms. There

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

are strong indications that they may take to arms very soon. By claiming that it came to liberate Sudan from the hegemony of the centre, which relegates the whole country into marginalization, especially the periphery, the SPLM/SPLA has become very attractive to people from the margins. Now it includes among its fighters people from Nuba Mountains, Ingassana, Beja, Dar Fur and representative figures from all over the country.

The Civil Wars in the Nuba, Ingassana and the Beja

From the South, the civil wars first spread to the regions of Nuba Mountains and Ingassana Mountains in the strategic area that lies between the North and the South. A little later it spread further to include the marginalized area of the Beja in the Eastern region. Eventually they all joined SPLM/SPLA. At the beginning, very few people took the words of SPLM/SPLA and its nationalist banners seriously. The people from the margins began slowly taking the movement at its word; after so many centuries of subjugation and intimidation, it was so difficult for them to believe in freedom at its face value. Then they began adhering to the movement. The people of the margins joined the call of the movement in accordance with their degree of stigma: the more stigmatized the people the more enthusiastic they were in taking to arms (1) the South, (2) Ingassana and Nuba Mountains, (3) the West, (4) the East and (5) last but not least the North). A considerable number of people who were socially supposed to belong to the prestigma showed their national far-sightedness by joining the movement as soldiers and politicians.

Being the most stigmatized, the Southerners were the core of the movement and its army. As was the case in the first civil war, they took it also to be their own war. The national nature of the movement will not dawn on them until later when joiners from outside the South began showing among their ranks. Given the relatively small number of joiners, the national dimension of the movement was not felt in a direct way yet. It was extremely distressful for the Southerners to fight and die on behalf of other people who do not support them even sentimentally, to say nothing about the *mondukuru*. Nevertheless they kept fighting under the banner of liberating the whole of Sudan. The increase of joiners, with whole areas (such as 2nd degree and 3rd degree areas) taking to arms, soothed their hurt feelings and boosted their morale.

The War in Dar Fur

Dar Fur has been the victim of the involvement of the neighbouring Arab states in the civil war of Chad that flared up in 1970s. Libya, an extreme advocate of Pan-Arabism with

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

highly volatile policies, intervened in Chad with the sole aim of helping the Arab nomad tribes with money, logistics and arms. These Arab tribes are generally an extension of the Arab tribes of Kordufan and Dar Fur in the Sudan. During the 1970s-1980s they used to make incursions deep into Sudan where their Arab brethren in Dar Fur and Kordufan invariably welcomed them. To them Sudan was a kind of backstage common room where they took a rest and made plans quietly; they also made business in arms trafficking. However, they did not cruise their way in and out of Sudan peacefully; they would maraud the villages of African sedentary tribes they came across, killing and looting. Due to the ruthless atrocities committed by these Arab tribes in Chad, they were compelled to flee the country after peace was restored. By this time they had already plunged the region of Dar Fur into chaos due to the culture of armed robbery they had established. In one decade, history-long conventional and customary laws that govern the relationship between the pastoralist Arabs and sedentary Africans were scrapped. The rift between the two groups widened more than ever. Tribal rivalries and petty tribal skirmishes and vendettas were magnified, and eventually developed into tribal wars launched by the most armed group, i.e. the Arabs. With the fanaticization of the state in Khartoum and ethnic manipulation the tribal war has turned into holy jihad directed towards the “infidels” who were taken at first to be the Southerners. In essence, however, it is a racist war camouflaged with religion, as it will unfold later.

Al-Di'ēn: the Launch of Slavery and Genocide in Dar Fur

The ideological polarization of centro-marginalization will reach its zenith when people who have a lot to share together would come after each other. That is how the Baggāra Arabs came to commit the worst bunch of crimes in Sudan's contemporary history against people with whom they have been living peacefully for so long.

The Baggāra tribes in Kordufan and Dar Fur are nomadic Arabs who have been greatly influenced by the Nilotic tribes, especially the Dinka, from whom they have taken the cows for livestock and the colour of blackness. The word “Baggāra” is a plural adjective in Sudanese colloquial Arabic derived from the word “cow”. Highly conscious of their Arab identity they are naturally susceptible to prestigmatic orientations, but they are not in any way prestigma. A bedouin Arab is never considered a prestigma even in pre-Islamic Arabia. However such orientations were triggered off in an anti-Dinka direction for the first time during the Turco-Egyptian rule and the Mahdia as the Baggāra were drawn into the vice of slavery. Although the

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

rift between the Baggāra and the Dinka had already happened during the British-Egyptian rule, they were, however, kept at bay by the infamous policy of pacification, i.e. crushing the people in order to impose stability. By the time the prestigma assumed the national rule immediately before independence, the Southerners declared their first civil war. The manipulation of the Baggāra Arabs by the prestigma as cat's paw had also begun. The dirtiest and most gruesome part of the game will be assigned to them to undertake; later prestigmatic intellectuals can easily furnish excuses by portraying them as savage and wildly uncontrollable bedouins. With the intensification of the civil war, the Dinka who live on the border of Kordufan and Dar Fur, such as the Ngog, found themselves being held accountable by the state for the war. The elected government of al-Sādiq al-Mahdi (1986-1989) did use the Baggāra Arabs to punish them.

In 1987 the prestigmatic elected government of al-Sādiq al-Mahdi established the infamous Popular Defence Forces (PDF) as a pretext for officially arming the Baggāra Arabs to fight the Southerners, in this case the above-mentioned Dinka who were taken for granted to be SPLM/SPLA. The defence minister (Burma Nasir) was an army general from the Baggāra Arabs. Until then the hostility between the two sides was relatively kept at bay due to the history-long interrelationship. Thousands of Dinka who fled the war zone came and lived with the Baggāra. This is how in a certain village called al-Di'ēn in Southern Dar Fur more than 6.000 Dinka people peacefully took refuge and lived with the Baggāra.

Armed in this way, the marauding Baggāra squads of PDF began making incursions into the South, raiding the Dinka villages that naturally sought help from the SPLM/SPLA. The latter came to the rescue with a vendetta. In all aspects the Baggāra Arabs were not an equal to SPLA. They began licking defeat after defeat. The prestigma was driven too far away with its own vanity to sensibly feel the incumbency of saving the Baggāra the degradation of this manipulation. The fact was that it was not only the Dinka that were being victimized, but the Baggāra as well. As they faced mounting defeats, the Baggāra began nursing deep hatred towards the Dinka in general. The rift was widening, the inter-relationship weakened. A certain bitter defeat that befell the Baggāra at the moment when they thought themselves victorious led them to direct their attention to the peaceful Dinka who were living with them at al-Di'ēn on whom they sought to take revenge, pouring the venom of their hatred.

In one day in mid 1987 at least 1,000 Dinka were massacred, 4,000 were burned alive, and the survivals- around 1,000- were enslaved. The massacre began early in the day. At first the bewildered Dinka did not believe what was going on. When reality dawned on them,

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

they fled into the houses of their hosts who were also their attackers. They were dragged by their feet like animals to be butchered outside the houses of their hosts. The Dinka took refuge in the Church; there they were killed along with the priest. Then they ran and took refuge inside the Police station which was part of the railway station, but, alas, the Police turned to be accomplices. They were killed there also. Whether in good or bad faith- which does not matter- they were ill-advised to take refuge in the empty carriages of a standing freight train so they could be taken away from al-Di'ēn. With the trustfulness usually shown by totally vulnerable and helpless people in their eagerness to cling to a straw, they hurriedly obeyed. Once crammed inside, they were locked from outside. Caged in like animals they saw with their own eyes barrels full of diesel being rolled toward them. They were burnt alive, all of them. Only then, with the barbecue smell of that holocaust, did the Baggāra come to their senses. The survivals were fortunate that they were *only* enslaved. Slavery was the common sense of that doomed day.

A booklet hurriedly prepared by two brave scholars [ʿUshāri Maḥmūd & Baldu, 1987] who stumbled on al-Di'ēn by accident the day after the massacre soon appeared, understandably with many a flaw if judged academically. The first reaction of the government was to condemn the booklet and meekly deny the incident, especially the part relating to slavery. The prestigmatic intellectuals, the enlightened ones particularly, accepted the fact that that was enslavement. However, they classified it as African traditional slavery confined to tribal feuds and wars. Then they turned their full attention to the deficiencies of the booklet in an attempt to discredit the whole case. The atmosphere became very tense, with the outside world awakening to the shocking realities in the Sudan. While snarling at any one who dared discuss the massacre, holocaust or the enslaving of the survivals from a point of view that did not agree with its own, the government declared the formation of fact-gathering committee. In Sudan it is known that if you want to kill off a case, form a committee to investigate it. Discussing the events was discouraged whilst the committee was doing its work. *Fortunately* for the elected government the coup of June 1989 took place.

The elected government was saved by the coup from the day of reckoning. The junta took from where the elected government left off; recruitment into the Popular Defence Forces was intensified with the clear intention of militarizing the whole society. Islam and Arabism were abused as never before. In the repercussions of the frenzy of the regime to recruit civilians in masses, the militarization of children was eventually adopted. In the period 1989-1999 only God knows how many massacres like that of al-Di'ēn took place.

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

The Genocide of the Janjawīd in Dar Fur

A decade later, i.e. since the Dinka massacre in al-Ḍi'ēn, the scenario of ethnic manipulation by the state has expanded to cover the whole of Dar Fur and most of Kordufan, i.e. the West. Riding their horses, the nomadic Arab tribes of Dar Fur have been committing genocide and ethnic cleansing against the African sedentary tribes. The era of terror of the infamous *Janjawīd* had been launched. The term is an appellation of terror with various connotations and meanings, the most famous of which the one we are citing. The term is a composite word that consists of two corrupted words: *jan+jawīd*. The word (*jan*) comes from machine guns (GM3) corrupted into Arabic *JīEm> Jīm> Jēn> Jan*. The word (*jawīd*) is from the Arabic word for 'horse' i.e. *jawād*, signifying the horse and its rider, engaged in the diminutive form *juwēd> jawīd*. As both the culprit and the victim are Muslims, the racist nature of the linear polarization, whether latitudinal or longitudinal, becomes very clear. At last the Apartheid orientation of the Arabs of Sudan have reached the point where they can no more tolerate to see the indigenous black Africans of Sudan living beside them. The absurdity is that, in the big circle of the so-called Arab world, those Arabs of Dar Fur will racially be relegated to the stigmatized status of black Africans.

News has poured from the mass media all over the world telling how villages are being razed to the ground, and how children and women are being killed with many cases of systematic rape. Based on the narratives related by the survivals, many observer organizations, regional and international, have come to accept the truth and point the finger of accusation toward the Islamo-Arab government of Khartoum. The regime of Khartoum has not only backed the nomadic Arab tribes, but has also armed, and fought by land and air along with, them. All through the decade of 1982-1992 skirmishes and limited killings were commonplace in Dar Fur. The Khartoum regime down played them as 'armed robbery'. In 1995 the massacres were launched first against the Masālīt tribe of the state of West Dar Fur. The governor himself was a Masālīt Muslim Brother who was given orders from Khartoum to let his sedentary people host a heavily armed clan of pastoralist Baggāra who were driven out of Chad to be welcomed by the regime of Khartoum simply out of bias to the Arabs. Believing the assuring words of their own son (i.e. the governor) that the Baggāra will in no way be allowed to violate the history-long conventional laws that regulate the relationship between sedentary and pastoralist people, the Masālīt innocently and generously welcomed the newcomers. Under the official eyes of the State

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

government which was headed by their own son thousands of the Masālīt were butchered in mid 1995.

The fact that the latest genocide in Dar Fur has been committed by Muslim Arab tribes backed by the Islamo-Arab State against Muslim African tribes shows that Islamo-Arabism in Sudan is an ideological consciousness that has nothing to do with Islam. Those are Muslim people killing Muslim people with the intention of cleansing the land they live in from non-Arab people just as they did towards the African Dinka in al-Di'ēn; the Arabs are killing the Africans. Where the assimilation seems to be a cultural process, its parameters are racial. Centromarginalization is based upon the processes of prestigma/stigma. The gruesome atrocities and genocide, which are being overtly committed by State-backed Arab tribes, have in fact been covertly committed in the South since 1955.

The Northern Nubians and the Completion of the Circulation of the Civil War

By 2003, with the semi-circular civil war spreading first from the South into Nuba Mountains, Ingassana Mountains, the East and the West, the awareness of marginalization among the Africans of Sudan and the necessity to fight it out have succeeded in securing the allegiance and moral support of the people of the whole margin, i.e. including the Nubians in the North. The Nubians were believed by many to be the last to join the struggle of marginalized people and the least to take to arms. However, that changed rapidly when in late 2003 news leaked out revealing that negotiations at the highest levels with the Egyptian government had taken place so as to facilitate the settlement of millions of Egyptian peasants, along with their families, in the triangle of the Nubian basin of Ḥalfā-ʿUwēnāt-Dungula. Offers on behalf of the Sudanese government were generously made for a similar settlement in the fertile deltas of Tōkar and al-Gāsh in the Eastern region, but were declined by the Egyptians who seemed at this stage to be interested only in the Nubian basin. The aim of this move is said to safeguard the Arab identity of Sudan against the growing awareness (*sic*) of Africanism in Sudan generally and among the Nubians in particular. The Sudanese delegation, which was backed by a Presidential mandate, was led by Arabist Nubians who belong to the centre ideologically, but not by all means to their marginalized people. A cover-up plan named the Four Freedoms, which theoretically allow the Sudanese and the Egyptians as well to own agrarian lands and settle in both countries, was officially declared. Both parties were too eager in their scramble to create a *de facto* situation before the Nubians become aware of what was going on. There is no agrarian

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

land to be owned by the Sudanese investors in Egypt. But there is land in the Sudan at which the Egyptians are looking with greed to acquire. Millions of fedans in the Nubian basin were announced to have been sold to the Egyptians with long-term leases, i.e. investment through settlement. There is no mention of the Nubians in all these deals, which seemed to have been made overnight.

Occupying the northern part of Sudan, i.e. the region of the Nubians, has been a declared goal of the Egyptians should the South secede. Under the pretext of protecting its national water security, nothing will stop Egypt from annexing the Nubian region just below the Shāygiyya land. Egypt has already been occupying the two triangles of Serra, north of Ḥalfa and Ḥalāyib on the Red Sea, for decades. The triangle of the Nubian basin of Ḥalfa-‘Uwēnāt-Dungula is what Egypt is after; it will be annexed to the so-called Toshka agricultural scheme. The truth is that all through history, Nubia (Sudan) and Egypt have been two separate States with the first cataract at Asuan as a natural divide and boundary. Occasionally they had been united by the material force of occupation.

A memo of protest [*cf.* the Nubian Memo to Kofi Annan, Khartoum 13 April 2004] has already been sent by the Nubians to the UN secretary-general, delivered at the Khartoum UN Office, asking for protection from the threats posed by the governments of Khartoum and Cairo and identifying at the same time with other marginalized groups of Sudan. They have not yet received any gesture from the international organization addressing the problem. Aside from the marginalized groups already engaged in their respective civil wars, no political organization in the Sudan has so far made the slightest comment on the issue. The Nubians have raised the alarm, but it seems that the world is waiting for them to get killed in masses before paying attention, if at all. It should not be a surprise if we hear in the news that they have taken to arms.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The war has become *circular*, i.e. it can only be described in terms of the margin vs. the centre. If there is any peace to be brokered, it should be inclusive in respect of all marginalized groups fighting alongside the SPLM/SPLA. However, the Naivasha peace initiative, which was brokered mainly by America and Britain, and which has just reached its final stages of signing by the government and SPLM/SPLA, is concerned only with the civil war in the South. Like the

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

rest of the West, America and Britain have persistently decided to deal with the civil war in Sudan as between the African and Christian South against the Muslim, Arab North.

It does not make sense in deciding to put an end to the war in the South and leave it to flare up in the Ingassana, Dar Fur, Nuba Mountains or Beja, especially when the causes of the war are the same and the fighting groups have achieved a kind of unifying body. It is much easier to deal with a single body that can help settle the whole conflict in one stroke rather than to have many parties to deal with. What is the wisdom behind telling the other parties to wait until the fight in the South comes to an end? It is like telling them to keep on fighting until you reach a deal with the biggest fighting group. Where the war is a circular one, Naivasha peace initiative is unfortunately a linear one.

Recommendations

People of the margins should come together. On the civilian political level they should have an alliance that represents their thinking. Before coordinating or uniting their military organs they need to have their civilian organizations united in a big alliance. The battle against the centre has had two fronts: military and civilian. So far the people of the margins have been faring very well on the military front, with nothing done on the civilian side. The two of bodies (civilian and military) are not to be necessarily conditioned by each other; although driving at one aim, the civilian battle, however, is virtually different from the military battle. This alliance of the forces of the margins is fundamental in peace and war. If it is war, then war should be fought properly; if it is peace, then peace should be well-guarded.

Bibliography

- Alier, Abel (1990). *Southern Sudan: Too many Agreements Dishonoured*. Exeter.

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights' Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org

- Deng, F. (1995). *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*. Washington.
- Fadl, Yusuf Hassan (1973). *The Arabs and the Sudan: From the Seventh to the Early Sixteenth Century*. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press.
- Ibrāhīm, Yahya (1985). *Tārīkh al-ta'lim al-dīni fil-Sūdān* [The History of Religious Education in the Sudan]. Cairo.
- Johnson, D. (2003). *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil wars*. Oxford: James Currey. Kampala: Fountain Publishers. E.A.E.P. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Khalid, Mansour (1985). *Nimeiri and the Revolution of Dis-May*. London.
- Lazarus, E. (1985). *The Dinka Resistance to the Condominium Rule*. Khartoum: Post-Graduate Faculty. University of Khartoum.
- Mahmoud, Ushari & Baldu, S. (1987) *The Di'ein Massacre and the Institution of Slavery in the Sudan*. Khartoum.
- Nagger (El), Omer (1970). *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa*. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press.
- Saḡhayrūn, Intiṣār (1999). "Asmā' wa ma'āni al-Sūdān al-qadīm wa dilālātuha al-jughrāfiyya wal-thaqāfiyya" [The Names and Meanings of Ancient Sudan and their Geographical and Cultural Implications]. In: *the 2nd National Conference on Geographical Names*, the National Committee for Geographical Names (Ministry of Survey & Buildings Promotion) in Cooperation with Sudan University for Science & Technology, 6-8 April 1999, Sharjah Hall, Khartoum.
- Shibayka, M. (1991). *Al-Sudan 'abr al-qurūn* [The Sudan through Centuries]. Beirut.
- Sīd (al-), Nāṣir (1990). *Tārīkh al-siyāsa wa al-ta'lim fil-Sūdān* [The History of Politics & Education in the Sudan]. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press.
- Sikainga, Ahmed [1996]. *Slaves into Worker: Emancipation and Labour in Colonial Sudan*. Austin. Texas: Modern Middle-Eastern Studies No. 18.
- Spaulding, J. (1985). *The Heroic Age in Sinnar*, Michigan: African Studies Centre. Michigan State University.



- Vantini, G (1981). *Christianity in the Sudan*. Bologna.
- Welsby, D. “ed.” (2000). *Life on the Desert Edge: Seven Thousands Years of Settlement in the Northern Dongola Reach of the Nile*. London: Sudan Archaeological Research society.
- Werner, R., Anderson, W. & Wheeler, A. (2000). *Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment: the History of the Sudanese Church across 2000 years*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Yamauchi, E. (2004). *Africa and the Bible*. Michigan: Baker Academic.

Primary Sources

- The Bible, Genesis.
- “The Nubian Action Group (2004) “The Government of Khartoum sells out its Nubian Subjects and their Land”, Memorandum to Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nation”, 13 April, 2004, Khartoum.
- Summer Institute of Linguistics, www.ethnologue.org

* In: Bankie, B.F. & Mchombu, K. (2006). *Pan-Africanism: Strengthening the Unity of Africa and its Diaspora*. From the 17th All Africa Students Conference (AASC). University of Namibia (UNAM). Windhoek. Namibia 28th-29th May 2005. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers. PP. 244-267.

A synopsis of this paper was earlier read in the Transport, Railways and Maritime Workers Union (RMT) Forum “What is happening in Sudan: an Educational and Solidarity Conference”, Wednesday 11TH August 2004, the Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London, N15

** **Dr. M. JALĀL HĀSHIM**, a Sudanese linguist, researcher in Sudanese cultures and languages.

2006

Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights’ Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity, 3rd Issue, July 2006



www.sudan-forall.org