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# SUDAN STUDIES

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## BISHOP COMBONI WRITES TO GIEGLER PASHA IN 1881

H.R.J. Davies

It was reported in *Sudan Studies* 19 (1997) that Daniel Comboni had received 'Beatification' from the Roman Catholic Church in 1995 for his Mission work in the Sudan and for his other contributions to the Church. One of his key ideas was that Africa could only be evangelised by Africans. He believed that Africans were quite capable of high intellectual achievement and would in due course become Bishops. Comboni first came to the Sudan in 1857, and was sent to the Holy Cross Mission Station in Dinka country in the Sudd. He was invalided out from here in 1859, and because of the high mortality among missionaries there, this Mission Station was closed down in 1862. Comboni developed his ideas in 1864 in a project he drew up entitled, *Plan for the Regeneration of Africa by means of Africans* (Vantini, 1981: 241). His experience at Holy Cross had convinced him that there was really no other way. Comboni returned to the Sudan, this time to Kordofan, and opened up a Mission Station at El Obeid in 1872. He was made a Bishop in 1877. He was to die of fever and exhaustion in Khartoum on 10 October 1881, aged 50.

Comboni wrote very many letters, mainly to raise funds and recruits for his Mission, but one of the interesting ones that he wrote within the Sudan, near the end of his life, was to Carl Giegler Pasha, Deputy Governor-General of the Sudan. The background to this letter is that in 1879 Comboni had gone to Italy to rally support and returned to Sudan accompanied by several other priests and sisters, including Father Ohrwalder, reaching Khartoum on 28 January 1881. Father Ohrwalder tells us that Bishop Comboni's 50th birthday was celebrated on 15 March 1881 with a party at the Roman Catholic Mission in Khartoum and that all the notables were there including Giegler (Ohrwalder, 1892: 2). Slatin had been appointed Governor of Darfur by Mohammed Raouf Pasha, Governor-General of the Sudan, and it was decided that Slatin and the Bishop's party should travel together as far as El Obeid. The party left Khartoum on 29 March 1881. Five days later they reached El Obeid. According to



Slatin, Bishop Comboni went off almost immediately to visit the Nuba Mountains, whilst Father Ohrwalder stayed in El Obeid (Slatin, 1897: 36). From the letter it would appear that Comboni went to Malbes.

Giegler had written to Bishop Comboni to complain about an article that had appeared in the German *Kölnische Zeitung*, the source for which article was one of Comboni's priest, Don Leon Henriot. The substance of the article was that slave raiding and slave trading were rife in the Nuba Mountains and that in spite of protestations to the contrary the government was doing little, if anything to stop it. Giegler and Governor General Mohammed Raouf [Hoccomdar in the letter] were irritated by such, as they saw it, uninformed criticism – as they believed they were doing their best under very difficult circumstances. Both Slatin and Ohrwalder believed that the control of slave raiding in Kordofan was much more efficiently organised in 1881 than it had been previously, much to the frustration of many merchants in El Obeid!

Bishop Comboni's letter in reply to Giegler is transcribed without alteration:

*VICARIATUS APOSTOLICUS*

*Africae Centralis*

*El Obeid, 5 May 1881*

*My Dear Pacha,*

*I received in Malbes, where I have been for my health, your honorable letter with the Article of the *Kölnische Zeitung*: Slavensjagd und Slavenhandel in Ägyptischen Sudan, in which I found with my great surprise the name of one of my missionaries of Nuba, Don Leon Henriot. I say with my great surprise, because from the year 1873 I have settled a law to all my missionaries of the Central Afrika, according to which every member of my Society is forbidden to relate and to send reports upon our missions in order to be published in the newspapers; but I ordered to all the*



*members of my missions that they send only to me, or to my general Vicar the relations of every thing that regards our missions. My orders and my law upon this subject have been till now performed always and perfectly executed.*

*I have read and perused the above-mentioned Article, and I have long spoken with the same Don Leon, who was here with me for his health, and I discovered all the truth upon this business; and I make haste to relate with confidence, and communicate openly to your kindness the truly history of this business.*

*Don Leon Henriot in the passed year wrote to Don Luis Superior of Khartum upon the business of the slavery of Nuba, and Don John Losi Superior of Nuba wrote to me in Europe upon the same subject.*

*Don Luis with the letter of Don Leon went to visit the Hoccomdar, and spoke long with him and with Mr. Marcopulos Secretary upon the same subject; and after he wrote to me in Europe that he was very satisfied and very content, because His Excellency promised to give the order to the Mudir of Cordofan to repair and remedy to the disorders of Gebel Nuba. I was very satisfied of this effect, and I have never spoken upon the relations of Don Losi nither in Cairo nor in Khartum. I was even informed that the orders of the Hoccomdar for Nuba have been executed.*

*But Don Leon in the same time that has ritten the paper above-mentioned to D. Luigi in Khartoum, he wrote even another Letter to the Consul Hansal begging of him the favour to addres himself to the Government upon this business to the end that the remedy be taken to the slavery of Nuba. Mr. Hansal answered to Don Leon that he is very glad to satisfy to his desires; and he praid and ordered to him to write always to him in Khartum upon the slavery of Nuba, and he will send his communications to Dr. Schweinfurth (who is the Author of the above-mentioned Article of the Kölnische Zeitung etc. etc.) in Cairo, who will speak with the General Consul of England, who will confer about this interest argument with the Khedive etc. etc.*



*In this intervening time D. Leon very satisfied of the answer of Mr. Hansal wrote another letter upon new adventures of the trade of the slaves in Nuba, with the promise to send always to him in future the relations upon this infamous trade. This letter was sent from Nuba in the end of the last February; and I believe that it will arrive in the hands of Dr. Schweinfurth, and perhaps it will be published in the Kölnische Zeitung, with the comments, of the same Dr. Traveler, as he made in the above-published communication.*

*I reproached and reprimanded Don Leon for his disobedience to my orders of 1873, but he was ignorant of my decree, because he came in the Missions only in 1879, as you know: and because he is very good and obbedient, he begged my pardon assuring me that in future he will communicate only to me, and never to the others, the relations of Gebel Nuba, and he will never write to the Consul Hansal upon this argument.*

*Therefore you will be persuaded, my dear Pacha, that the members of the catholic Mission are quite stranger to the publication of the Kölnische Zeitung; and Don Leon Henriot addressed himself not to Cairo, but in Khartum to our ordinary Authority the Austrian Consul in order that he provide by the local Authority the Governement of Sudan that is necessary and sufficient for the Gebel Nuba.*

*But you will be likewise persuaded that the Merchant of Khartoum to whom Don Leon has written from Delen, is the Consul Hansal, and the Letter that arrived from the Heart of the Mountains of Nuba, was sent from Consul Hansal to Dr. Schweinfurth in Cairo, who addressed himself to the English general Consul in Ägypt, and published the Article in the Kölnische Zeitung etc. etc. etc (So ist heute nach monatelanger Reise ein Brief aus dem Herzen der Mubarberge nach Cairo gelangt, den ein dort stationierter Missionar Leon Henriot an einen Chartumer Kaufmann geschrieben hat etc. etc.) [*'So to-day came a letter, after a month-long journey from the Heart of the Nuba Mountains to Cairo, that was written by a**



*missionary Leon Henriot stationed there to a Khartoum merchant, etc., etc.']*

*But in the next week I shall go to Gebel Nuba to visit this Station and all those Mountains; and after having examined every thing, I shall write to you a good relation upon the business of the trade of the slaves; and I hope that I shall may assure you for the suppression of the trade of the slaves in Nuba obtained by the strong and rigorous orders of H. Exc. Raouf Pacha; and my Relation you will may communicate to H. Exc. Blum Pacha in Cairo, and it will be published in the Kölnische Zeitung etc. etc. to the end of destroying and killing all affirmations of Dr. Schweinfurth.*

*The affirmation of Don Leon are truthful in every thing. But it is also true that the Hoccomdar by his orders to the Mudir of Cordofan has provided to the remedy of this disorder in Gebel Nuba.*

*I have the entire confidence in the Governement of the Khedive, and in the energy of our esteemed General Governor of Sudan, Raouf Pacha; therefore I shall always communicate my relations and observations upon the business of the slavery to the Governement and to the Hoccomdar. That is for me a duty of justice, gratitude and thankfulness; and I am profoundly convinced and persuaded that the Khedive's Governement has the good will and all the power to destroy with the God's help the infamous trade of the slaves, and to contribute powerfully to the civilisation of the Central Africa.*

*I pray your kindness to present my duty to H. Exc. Blum Pacha in Cairo and to Raouf Pacha in Chartum; and I am very glad to be always*

*Your affectioned friend*

*+ Daniel Comboni*

*Bishop and Apostolical Vicar*

*of the Central Africa*



### **Comment upon the letter:**

The letter is that of a sick man, but still full of determination.

Malbes: Part of Bishop Comboni's policy was to run protected agricultural communities of Africans demonstrating Christian virtues. Malbes was one such - located 9 miles south-east of El Obeid.

Delen: The modern Dilling in the northern Nuba Mountains. Ohrwalder says that it took him five days to get there from El Obeid in 1881 (Ohrwalder, 1892: 3). The Mission Station here was run on similar lines to Malbes. Not long before Ohrwalder's arrival at Delen in December 1881, the government had established a small garrison of Sudanese soldiers to counteract slave raiding and to protect the Mission (Ohrwalder, 1892: 4). The garrison was composed of 80 men of the 'slave guard' (Slatin, 1897: 79).

The Governor-General, Mohammed Raouf, whom Bishop Comboni claimed as a friend, seems to have replied to Comboni's letter to Giegler. With reference to the Bishop's forthcoming tour of the Nuba Mountains mentioned in the letter, Mohammed Raouf wrote:

'I beg you to examine the country and its administration that we may take the necessary measures for the welfare of those people. The question of slavery should be the object of close study. Being on the spot you will be able to discover the errors committed there and propose the remedy to be applied. You will receive from me the strongest support in the execution of H.H. the Khedive's orders'.

(Hill, 1959:

151)

According to Vantini (1981: 243) the Khedive Ismail had given Comboni permission to release all the slaves that he wanted to. Comboni set off for his tour of the Nuba Mountains on 24 June 1881.

Giegler says he left Khartoum for El Obeid on 27 June 1881 to investigate complaints against Mohammed Said [Mudir of Cordofan in the letter], Governor of Kordofan. According to



Giegler, Mohammed Raouf had particular personal reasons for not wanting to go himself to reprimand Mohammed Said (Hill, 1984: 165). Giegler does not say what the complaints were against the Governor. Were they about slave trading? Certainly this would have been one of the topics in Giegler's mind, because he had been up the White Nile to Fashoda investigating complaints of slave raiding there earlier in 1881 (Hill, 1984: 161-165). He does not appear to have met Comboni in El Obeid but he did have conversations with Father Ohrwalder as attested by both parties but neither mentions the meeting.

Don John Losi was captured by the Mahdist forces at Delen and taken by them to El Obeid where he died of dysentery during the siege (Toniolo and Hill, 1974: 27).

Don Luis [of paras. 3 and 4 of the letter] seems to be Don Luigi Bonomi

who was in charge of the Mission in Khartoum until Comboni arrived in 1881. He was captured, along with Ohrwalder, at Delen and taken to El Obeid. Ohrwalder tells us how intensely disappointed he was when the message reached Bonomi in El Obeid that arrangements had been made for his escape, but not for Ohrwalder. Ohrwalder was to find out, after his escape from Omdurman, that the rescuers had no idea that Ohrwalder was in El Obeid. Santoni who wrote in not altogether flattering terms about the missionaries redeemed himself in arranging Bonomi's escape (Ohrwalder, 1892: 178-193).

#### Government Officials:

Carl Christian Giegler first came to the Sudan in 1873 in charge of the telegraph system. He was responsible, under Gordon, for the substantial development of this and the postal service. Later, he was appointed Deputy Governor General of the Sudan. He says he was not appointed Governor General because the Khedive Ismail had decided that he wanted to appoint an Egyptian. In 1881 he was created a Pasha. He left the Sudan finally in 1883 (Hill, 1984: 151).

Marcopulos [Marcopoli Bey], a Greek, was Private Secretary to the Governor General. He had taken part in expeditions to the southern Sudan. Giegler had reservations about him (Hill, 1984: 46).



Mohammed Raouf was appointed Governor General of the Sudan in March 1880, and was the first native Egyptian to hold the position. He was relieved of his post in February 1882 when the system of Egyptian rule of the Sudan was re-organised.

Mohammed Said [Mudir of Cordofan] Governor of Kordofan had served for many years in western Sudan. Giegler considered him to be rather too easy going and certainly he seems to have made some serious errors. He eventually surrendered El Obeid to the Mahdi after a spirited defence. He pretended to the Mahdi that he had no wealth, but the Mahdi found a fortune belonging to him sealed in a wall of his house in El Obeid. Later, he was executed in El Obeid (Slatin, 1897: 84).

Blum Pasha, an Austrian, was Financial Secretary in Egypt. The Austrians seem to have looked after the 'diplomatic' affairs of the Comboni Mission. Slatin (1897: 1) describes it as the 'Austrian Roman Catholic Mission'.

#### Others:

Hansal [ Martin Ludwig] was the Austrian Vice-Consul in Khartoum. HE was organist at the Catholic church there. He wrote to the Mahdi in an unsuccessful attempt to ransom the Christian priests and nuns. He was murdered when the Mahdist forces captured Khartoum.

Dr. Schweinfurth [Georg] had visited the Sudan earlier in the century, and an account of his travels had been published in English in 1873.

#### Topics they discussed

Some indication of the slave raiding/trading situation on occasion in the Nuba Mountains is given by Father Ohrwalder. He describes a raid made by Baggara tribesmen against Ghulfan in April 1882. Captain Mohammed Suleiman in charge of the garrison at Delen was reluctant to turn out his men to deal with the raiders. Eventually, Roversi, Inspector of Slaves, at Delen, managed to muster 80 men who successfully caught up with the raiders and released the captured slaves (Ohrwalder, 1892: 22).

Slatin discusses the whole question of slaves and argues that life in northern Sudan could not



be sustained in its existing form without slavery. The Egyptian government in the Sudan had found that slaves were its only really reliable soldiers. He tells us that Mohammed Raouf had authorised him to do a certain amount of slave taking in order to build up his garrisons in Darfur. Slatin points out that suppression of the slave trade in the Nuba Mountains had a profound impact elsewhere in the country, away from such centres as El Obeid. Those involved with caravans, those living along the Nile in northern Sudan who needed their labour, and on northwards to Egypt: all these folk stood to lose by a cessation of slave raiding (Slatin, 1897: 33 and elsewhere).

That the campaign against the slave trade undertaken by Bishop Comboni and his fellow missionaries was not universally welcomed in the Sudan is demonstrated by Licurgo Santoni who, as Director of Posts, visited the Sudan in 1877. He records some of the criticisms made of the missionaries and includes some observations of his own. He writes in his journal:

'The missionaries' aim is to draw these Africans to the faith but I do not think they will succeed, at any rate they do not bother themselves much about it. What I do know is that these worthy priests, true disciples of Rome, eat and drink very lavishly'.

He goes on to report doubts about the chastity of some of the priests and nuns, though he does dissociate himself from this view. Later on he writes of Comboni:

'This prelate has lately been elevated to the episcopate, but his 'civilising mission' (as the newspapers put it): leaves much to be desired. Perhaps he himself has the resolve and capacity to do his duty but his priests certainly do not support him as they care for nothing except eating and courting the devout ladies who come to pray and confess'.

### **Some individuals referred to in the letter:**

#### Missionaries:

Don Leon Henriot: Unlike many of the missionaries at El Obeid and Delen, he avoided capture when El Obeid fell to the Mahdists in 1882. In November 1885 he opened a Mission Station at Suakin and in 1891 a shortlived one at Tokar (Toniolo and Hill, 1974: 28).



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## EARLY DAYS AT GEREIF (1937)

Phillippa Maghrabi

### Introduction

Phillippa Maghrabi (née Castle) went out to the Sudan in 1933 to work as a nurse for the Sudan Medical Service. She met and married Abdelfattah al Maghrabi (at that time a lecturer at Gordon College) and the following article details their early days (from 1937) establishing a home outside Khartoum.

Our little house was well built, convenient to run, and within easy access to Gordon College – but it was in the town and both of us really wanted to live outside. Fattah kept his eyes and ears open for news of houses or land within reach which were for sale. He found two. One was a well built house near the Blue Nile but rather too far out. The other was a ruin but on the Blue Nile and only about five kilometres from Khartoum. It had belonged to a British judge, Peacock by name, who had built it and planted a garden out there during the 1st World War. He had driven in and out of Khartoum in a dog cart. When he retired he hadn't sold it but neither had he left anyone to look after it, and no one ever got any reply from him if they wrote. The site was good and the ruined house had worthwhile features even though the roof had fallen in in many places, the doors were mostly stolen, and the floors deep in dust and earth. The only inhabitants since Judge Peacock had left had been goats, chickens, lizards and birds. The garden, apart from two date palms, had dried up and returned to sand and prickly weeds. The attached land consisted of about fifteen acres. In spite of all the work that would have to be done we both liked the site and felt that if we could buy it we would. I then took photographs of all the worst aspects and we wrote a letter to Judge Peacock, telling him of its sad state and saying that it was still known as 'Beit Peacock' (Peacock House) and that we would like to buy it from him and restore it to its previous condition. To our utter amazement we got a reply from him saying that he was willing to sell it to us for £50!! We felt that he had forgotten a zero, but not being very rich we sent off £50 by telegraph and so bought Beit Peacock.

\* \* \*



During the summer vacation we decided to go out and camp at the ruined house. Beit Peacock was located near the village of Gereif el Hagga and the house eventually became known simply as Gereif. To help us with the reconstruction we employed carpenters and builders to repair the house and three men from the village to start and plant the garden.

In those summer months, though it got very hot, we were very busy clearing the floors of earth and were rewarded with the discovery that all the rooms had tiled floors. Our good luck continued when the District Commissioner in Khartoum North, Jake Seymer, told us that the thief who had stolen the glass windows and the slatted outer doors (the *sheesh*) had been caught with them years before. They were still stored in the Commissioner's offices so that when we were ready to put them up we were free to go and fetch them. The house was six rooms long, with plenty of verandah space and a wide terrace round the front (south) and east. It had brick facing on the south side which took the main force of wind and rain (when it came) and was otherwise plastered with *zibla* – a mixture of sand, lime and manure. This hardens into an effective covering which is able to withstand the weather (though smells rather strong when being applied!). I learnt much in the ways of applying putty to window frames, the laying of tiles, and other useful skills during these labours.

The garden was another question altogether. Land near the river is sold by the Government in strips (about one kilometre long) but with a narrow frontage onto the river itself. This is to enable more people to have access to the Nile as all irrigation in the Northern Sudan is through controlled flooding. This in its turn requires that the land is dug up into rice paddy style partitioned areas (sing. *hod*). Each one has to be opened and shut to allow the requisite amount of water to flow in from the main irrigation channel (*jadwal*), which runs the full kilometre length of the land with branches off. The construction of these hods was a considerable task on which the three gardeners started while Fattah was looking for a suitable pumping engine. He found a Petter engine and lengths of 4 inch pipe but it was quite a feat to fix this all in place, especially when the engine needed to be moved at least twice a year (April & September) as the annual Nile flood is considerable. It ranges from a slow flowing river at the bottom of the river bed to a wildly eddying torrent about 1 1/2 to 2 miles wide and many metres deep! This was a task that only Fattah could manage successfully.



With this work completed we started planting our crops – bananas, oranges, limes, guavas, dates, millet, maize and burseem. The response was most encouraging (it must be remembered that this land had been left untended for almost twenty years) and the corn, maize and sorghum grew vigorously. However, it was all too good to be true. One dull and humid morning I heard the sound of banging and shouts. There were locusts everywhere. Everyone turned out, beating tins, rattling stones or throwing up sand to try and stop them settling. But as the day went by clouds of them kept arriving. One could even smell them, a sickly, sweetish smell. The banging noises came from all around as the other garden owners up the river made their own desperate efforts to scare the locusts off. But it was a futile exercise. For twenty four hours they just gorged on everything. When they flew off the next day they left everything stripped; the corn stalks standing bare and the new shoots on the trees all eaten away, a scene of desolation. But not everything had died and within a few weeks there was a gradual improvement. One unexpected opportunity came when our Dongolawi cook sent his three children out to collect dead locusts, which were fried (a Dongolawi delicacy) and some offered to us. We declined however.

\* \* \*

When the house had reached habitable status we moved our furniture and belongings out from Khartoum. There were no amenities, no water or light, so we had to go back to the more primitive methods. Water was brought up by donkey from the Nile in a leather skin bag (*khurg*) and poured into the large earthenware vessels (sing. *Zir*), which were placed on iron stands and are somewhat porous. The air blowing over the damp exterior surface of the zirs keeps the water inside cool. A smaller jar, covered in muslin, is placed underneath and the drips from above caught and filtered. This was one's drinking water and the effectiveness of the system is such that during the twelve years we were at Gereif we never had 'gippy' tummies. For our 'fridge' we placed a thick sack under the zir. This remained moist and cool for the same reasons as the zirs and vegetables placed on it stayed reasonably fresh. Lighting was at first by hurricane lanterns, then later we used petrolmax lamps. Cooking was done with charcoal, which was very efficient but could be messy with the ash blowing about. We also used a primus stove, for which I got a tinsmith to make me a little oven to go on top.



This was quite successful with cakes.

Fattah, in the course of searching through scrapyards in town, found a large metal barrel and this, fixed firmly onto the bathroom wall and with a douche nozzle and tap attached, made a perfectly adequate shower. The waste water ran onto the tiled floor and out of a hole in the wall to the flower beds in the garden. Those people who had tanks on the roof had to fill their baths at lunch time so that it would be cool enough to use by 4pm, the end of siesta. Otherwise, with a roof tank, water taken straight from the tap in the afternoon was almost boiling. Sanitation was by a four metre deep pit latrine in a mud walled room out in the garden – used with a sandbox it was most successful and full of fresh air! Our furniture was made in Omdurman, by Beshir the cabinet maker. He made our drawing room chairs and an eight sided writing desk using a combination of teak, boo and mahogany as materials. They were most attractive pieces. We enjoyed going around and finding all the other various bits and pieces we needed.

\* \* \*

Our situation was not unlike running a smallholding and this meant we needed some animals to assist in our daily work and needs. The first we acquired was a good Abyssinian donkey who did the 'fetch and carry' – humans to the village shop and cartage in the garden. Typical loads were sand and manure and so on, which were carried in a *guffa*, an open rush basket which moulded itself to the donkey's back with a pad underneath.

For milk we bought three large Darfur sheep. They have hair like a cow, rather than wool, and stand as high as an English goat. Their advantage is that they have huge udders and produce plenty of excellent milk. Sheikh el Banna, who was on the staff at Gordon College but also had a large farm in the Gezira, gave me a white cow in calf as a wedding present. The sheep saw us through until she calved, when one of the gardeners said he would do the milking. The Sudanese method is to tie the cow to a tree, as well as roping the back legs together, and then introduce the calf to suck at her teats until she 'lets her milk down'. The calf is then removed and one completes the milking. The cow remonstrates at this and the calf does not like it either. On odd occasions, if the gardener was ill, I did the milking, but it was a most uncomfortable affair. We also gradually accumulated a menagerie of dogs, cats,



chickens, rabbits and a rhesus monkey 'Baheit'. Near the animal enclosure there was a collection of trees which created some shade and it was here that we fixed up the monkey's abode. We put a belt round his waist and to that was attached a long fine chain with a ring at the end. This was threaded onto a wire stretched between two of the trees so that he was able to move pretty freely and without getting caught up. He was a gay little person. I used to take him with me on my shoulder when I did the rounds of the garden. He loved collecting the tamarahindi [*'ardeb*] pods from the trees as we passed by. If treated kindly they can become quite trusting but anyone teasing him made him angry and aggressive. We found that he made a good sentry. We put a shaded box near the entrance to the enclosure, pegging his line to a fixed spot. He would rush out screeching at any stranger coming in and they often fled away, not knowing what to make of him.

Our livestock increased. The white cow, Wurra, had another heifer calf, as did also her first calf – and so it went on, though not all our efforts were as successful. I had started turkeys and had two sets which were doing well and growing fast. One day I came home to find them all dead in their runs. The locals said it was probably due to a snake or a scorpion! I did not try again.

Scorpions were everywhere. On one occasion I saw one on the terrace and went to stamp on it, foolishly forgetting that I only had sandals on. Its tail whipped around the thin edge of my sandal and the sting went into my foot. It was a bit like a snake bite; I could feel the poison travelling up my leg. Quite an unpleasant twenty-four hours followed but then the effect started to wear off. There are injections for scorpion stings, which helps. It was often lethal for small children though, or if one were unlucky enough to be bitten near the heart. During the war I knew of two soldiers who died from scorpion bites when they failed to check the inside of their shirts after washing. Shock being the cause of death.

Another hazard was rabies, which was endemic in the country. Fattah and I were both bitten twice by mad dogs. The treatment is decidedly unpleasant as a large injection is made into one's stomach and a whole course of treatment is needed (fourteen large injections in my day). But such is the horror of how rabies kills, especially in its last stages of convulsion and paralysis, that any dog bite had to be treated as if it were potentially lethal. The dog's head



would be cut off and sent to the Stack Laboratories; we would go and get a first injection straight away. There wasn't time to 'wait and see'. If they found positive at the lab, word would be sent out immediately. If not, the relief was that one did not have to endure the full course of treatment.

\* \* \*

We sowed quite a large area of burseem, a clover crop. Being leguminous it also puts nitrogen into the soil, as well as growing fast. This allows it to be cut and recut; a very prolific crop which serves as one of the staple animal foods, though the first cutting must not be given to animals fresh as it has the effect of inflating them full of gas. It should be dried out first. We grew so much that we had a surplus and I was in charge of sales, using a home made pair of scales. Initially our principal customers were five men, all rogues, who came out with their donkeys and cut about a kantar (100 kilos) a day, which they took to Khartoum to sell in the market there. Later on we acquired an old, two-seater open Morris for the farm and I would get to the suk with the crop piled high in the dicky seat. Khartoum was about 5 miles away. There was a tarmac road for about 1 1/2 miles out of the town, going south along the railway line, and then it was a further 3 miles or so across the desert to Gereif. For this stage it was necessary to take a run at it, aiming to develop enough momentum to carry one across before the car boiled over. On one occasion I had been into Khartoum for the evening and was returning after dark in our little saloon car when it stopped just before the desert turn-off. I got out and was struggling to locate the fault when a lorry came along. The driver stopped of his own accord and asked if he could help (security was very good then – one could go anywhere at anytime without feeling threatened). His inspection established that the radiator was leaking and that the cure (or running repair) would be to crack an egg over the opened radiator cap. This, it seems, goes on to poach itself around the leak, so forming a temporary plug. Luckily the lorry was loaded with fruit and general produce and so had an egg available, for I certainly didn't. It was just one small example of how kind the Sudanese people are. Here was this woman, helpless in the dark, and the instinct was to help.

During this time my husband's mother had been staying with her daughters in Omdurman. She thought us quite made to want to go and live in such a place; a ruined house amid bare



sand as she saw it, even though situated on the banks of the Blue Nile. But my husband felt that he should look after her and so he built her a house with a small enclosure in the garden, within hailing distance of our house. She remonstrated at first but before long got used to it, enjoying her independence while at the same time being with us. She soon made friends with the village sheikh's family, who visited her frequently, and so settled down quite happily. She fixed up a collection of four gallon petrol tins on a wall to make homes for her pigeons and they were useful and successful. We used to go over to her every morning about 6.30am for her delicious coffee. Sudanese coffee is one of the best and is made from the Abyssinian bean. The beans are roasted in a wooden platter and when smoking and giving off their aroma are handed round to be smelt and appreciated by the guests – an Arab ritual. This ceremony is done by the women, usually on their own, with much chatter and friendly gossip. The roasted beans are then pounded with a mortar & pestle, special spice is mixed in and all of it heated again and eventually poured onto boiling water in a little tin pan with a long narrow spout, known as a *sherara*. It has to boil up three times before it's poured into the *gebenah*, an earthenware container which is round at the bottom with a long neck. Into this is stuffed date fibre, through which the coffee is filtered as it's poured out. The coffee cups are small and round and have no handles and the *gebenah* stands on a ring of embroidered beads. I have never tasted coffee to equal it.

\* \* \*

Gereif was soon running as a happy home. My husband's mother (who was addressed 'El Haja', a mark of respect as she had undertaken her Haj pilgrimage to Mecca), carrying her large white umbrella, went visiting to the Sheikh's house in the village and before long it became known that I had medical knowledge. Subsequently many requests came for me to go and visit the sick and this grew into a regular morning's work in and out of the village houses. Malaria and tuberculosis were the most common complaints and I was able to relieve quite a number as the Government gave me stocks of the more basic remedies. I found the people friendly and kind, despite the hardship of their lives in many cases. There were all sorts of problems: cripples, the mentally ill and various disfiguring conditions, afflictions often present since birth. Many of these people would never have been seen by any medical



staff, ever, and it was obvious that a tremendous amount of useful work could be done if there were a system of visiting District nurses, as in many cases simple and continuous treatment was able to produce marvellous results. I remember one such case, the son of a poor widow. He was a fisherman, aged about 20, very emaciated, coughing and with a temperature. I felt that he had not much longer to live but nonetheless gave him medicines for his cough, a course of malarial treatment and some nursing advice to his mother. About eight months later, one day when I was at home, our cook told me that there were people from the village to see me. It was the mother and her son and they had walked all the way from the village. He had filled out and was now upstanding and handsome. Their happiness and relief were marvellous to see. His illness must have been a case of long untreated malaria, with the possible complication of chest weakness. Anyway, it was most rewarding to see such a change and to feel that he was able to live and work again.

Another case was in the sheikh's family. All their children had been born with some malformation and had died in early childhood. His wife, Nafisa, though quite young was bitterly disappointed. On one of my visits she told me she was pregnant again. To ensure that the child would be alright she was wearing a dead scorpion in a little box around her neck. Her pregnancy went full term and a son was born, apparently normal. She was delighted. After a day and a half I had an urgent call as the baby had not had a motion passing meconium. I went to the house straightaway, taking a very fine rubber catheter with me, and found on examination that he had an imperforate anus. With great care I eventually was able to insert the catheter and gave the baby a small enema. The result was quite miraculous and from then on they had no more trouble. The child grew up normally and eventually married and had a family. Over thirty years later we had the need of an electrician and one came to do the work – Sayeed by name. While talking we discovered that he was Nafisa's son! (though I never mentioned how we had met the day after he was born).

A further case was of a man in his forties. I was called urgently to see him as he was suffering acute pain in his abdomen and vomiting. When I got there I found him lying in agony in the darkness of his little house. His temperature was rising and he showed all the signs of an acute appendix. It was imperative that he go to the hospital in Khartoum as soon



as possible. I returned home, got in the car and drove furiously into town. At the hospital I saw some of my old *termegis* and said they must send the ambulance out for him. The staff demurred a bit, suggesting a taxi as an alternative, but having seen the state of the patient I knew that would be dangerous and was insistent they fetch him by ambulance. Which they did, and only just in time as he barely missed having a burst appendix. The operation was successful.

\* \* \*

Time passed quickly and the garden recovered from the locusts. We had replanted peanuts instead of corn as it spreads out over the ground, is very green and gives nitrogen to the soil. When the time came to harvest them we found to our horror that the ground was infested with white ants and they had eaten quite a lot of the peanut crop. We were able to salvage about thirty sackfuls which helped to cover their cost at least. White ants – or termites – are endemic in the soil but pose just as much of a threat to buildings. If the inside walls of one's house were plastered it was necessary to keep an eye on any portion that was covered by pictures or wooden shelves. Many people lost china stacked on shelves this way. They would also come up between the tiles of the floor. We stood our furniture in bowls of turpentine to counteract this.

As the fruit trees grew up and our range of animals increased the pleasures of our garden attracted visitors from Khartoum, especially as now World War II had started. After a year or so we had developed a name as a place to come out to in order to escape from the restrictions of the town, several of our friends becoming engaged as a result of these relaxed visits. The garden's river frontage also meant that good fishing was available; catfish and large *bulti* [*tilapia nilotica*] were often the prize and made for good eating. One fished with a line and worms or, if skilled, with a circular net. Jack, our young gardener, was good at this though on one occasion he threw himself in with the net by mistake. Another time he caught a small crocodile. We put it into the swimming pool but it would not feed so we eventually gave it to the zoo. Other types of wildlife found on our land were long-eared foxes, jackals and hares – which were all chased by our dogs but were usually too swift for them. The dogs' chief hunting was done at night, when they cornered skunks, genet cats and mongoose (though



these often escaped up the trees). Of the snakes, the worst was the spitting cobra. As the name implies, their method of attack was to spit their venom into the eyes, nose or mouth of their adversary. If one of the latter two is hit the result is usually fatal. Contact with the eyes causes blindness. This happened to one of our dogs once and she was blind for about three months, though with careful treatment her sight gradually returned.

The old lady had about a dozen pigeons nesting in her boxes, but their numbers started to decline and she vowed it was my beloved tabby tomcat 'Daoud'. I was sure he was not the culprit and one day, when sitting outside her little house talking to Haroun our cook (a big, stalwart Baggara Arab), we both saw the head of a large snake coming out through a hole in the wall near the pigeons. Haroun picked up a large knife from the table and, as the head of the snake appeared again, he struck out and beheaded it. When extracted from the wall it must have been about 2 1/2 metres long. The pigeons increased again from that day on. Out in the river there were six crocodiles, which could often be seen sunning themselves on the small island opposite our bank. As we often bathed in the river (the Nile water is very soft and sweet) one always counted them before going in. When one (or more) of them entered the water it was time to come out!

END

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



## RACE AND IDENTITY IN THE NILE VALLEY

Richard Lobban

### Introduction

In recent years the debate about concepts of race and identity along the Nile valley has become intense. This is certainly manifest in the polemical and conceptual works of Molefi Asante, Cheik Anta Diop, Leonard Jeffries, Martin Bernal, and Mary Lefkowitz to name some of the leading figures. To a notable degree the debates are centred on competitive mythologies and perceptions as much as they might debate factual issues. Indeed one school or another seeks to undermine conflicting claims with volleys of "facts" which will never address the mythological and political nature of this ideological struggle. This paper and panel at the International meetings of the Sudan Studies Associations is trying to launch a new dialogue on this central topic of Race and Identity in the Nile valley. Despite how central this is to many of the ancient and modern problems it is rarely discussed in an open and systematic way. Perhaps this overdue conversation has now begun.

The societies of the ancient Nile have been a particular focus of these debates as this is the area in which ancient African people met the representatives of Greco-Roman society. The region where the sharpest definition of the discussion takes place is the relationship between ancient Egypt and ancient Nubia. Needless to say this quickly confronts the issue of Egypt being, or not being, an African society. The following reflections examine this debate relative to concepts of race and identity from varying viewpoints – including those which are Eurocentric, Hellenocentric, Egyptocentric, Nubianocentric, Sudanocentric, Africanist and Afrocentric.

The most notable feature of the summary chart below is that despite the common subject in land and people, the varying frameworks seldom agree or overlap. This suggests their ideological nature and that a battle of facts will not resolve the disagreements. The one area of overlap that does occur is with the Romanticism about ancient Egypt which is common to Eurocentrism, Hellenocentrism and Afrocentrism. However, this commonality has not led to agreements and intellectual collaboration whatsoever, since the romantic views are self-



contradictory and the result is only intensified competition for mythological claims.

Although these categories and characterisations are impressionistic they seek to reflect the multiplicity of views in the three main regions in question: Egypt, Nubia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Disagreement is fully expected in this exercise of consciousness-raising and self-criticism. Implicitly, the charts refer to the changing power relations between the peoples of the Nile valley over many millenia as their quite different relationships were adjusted and challenged.

Often the debate about situating ancient Egypt and Nubia is centred around the question of the "race" of Egyptians amidst the undeniable achievements of their ancient civilisation. However, it is now realised that this concept rests largely in social consciousness and is as much in the eyes of the beholder as it might be in biological reality. Moreover, racial concepts of today are not necessarily those which were held in the past. Complicating the discussion is changing terminology and the relationships which ancient or modern Egyptians had, and are having, with Nubia and the Sudan.

**Ancient Egyptians** were quite clear in their attitudes and relationships with Nubians. In both the celebrated Old and Middle Kingdoms this is abundantly illustrated in supplies and tribute which they either traded for, or looted from, Lower Nubia. Supplies of gold, cattle, and slaves are recurrent and highly suggestive of the Egyptian dominance. Even clearer still are the series of huge border fortifications which sharply demarcated and controlled access to the land of Egypt from the land of the Bow-People or Nubians. In the case of the great Kerma kingdom, the Egyptians had to tolerate a major rival state on the Nile. It was in the New Kingdom that the relationship with Nubia was even more apparent as Nubia became the colony of Kush. Many New Kingdom pharaohs constructed monumental works in Nubia at the time and a common theme was to show Nubians bound and defeated. The full force of Egyptian soldiers was often unleashed upon "uppity and vile" Nubians, who were distinct in nomenclature, and physiognomy.

**Nubians** had their own deities and many aspects of cultural and linguistic uniqueness in antiquity and at present. Whether in the egalitarian regional relationships in pre-Dynastic times, in the powerful rivalry in the case of Kerma, or in the détente between Christian Nubia



and Muslim Egypt one can see Nile valley competition having very ancient roots. Naturally, Nubians portrayed themselves favourably and with great pride and celebration. Hardly a better case would exist than in the huge grave tumulae and the defuffa of Kerma which have no Egyptian counterpart. It is important to reflect that when Egyptian pharaohs lost their unified control during Intermediate dynastic periods along the Nile it was a time of despair and discouragement from their viewpoint. From a Nubian point of view, this would be a time of national liberation or at least a time of getting Egyptians "off the backs" of the Nubian people. Nubians might note that it was during a little over half of Egyptian dynastic history that Egypt was unified. The Nubian-Hyksos alliance in the Second Intermediate period or the varying cases of Nubian refuge of Egyptian royalty are all proofs of this alternative perception.

The most significant case of Nubian power along the Nile is quite fascinating in this respect. During the XXVth dynasty in the Late period, five Nubian pharaohs rose from their capital at Napata to become the rulers of all of Egypt for almost a century. Ironically, they did not celebrate their Nubianess so much as they used the mythology, theology and icons of Egypt to legitimate and justify their presence in Egypt. This was similar to the model employed by the Greeks and Romans who were to follow. Subsequent pharaohs regaining the Egyptian throne made great efforts to deface and erase the Nubian presence in Egypt, while Nubians went on until the 4th century of the Christian era to frame their mythologies in Egyptian terms, even well after Egyptian religion had vanished there.

Essentially, **Greco-Roman** civilisations, late-comers to the Nile, had little difficulty admiring and emulating the already ancient Egyptians as it assisted in their need to legitimise the presence in that land. A parallel Ptolemaic and Egyptian iconography illustrates this point. Their argument was something like that the greater were the Egyptians, the greater were the Ptolemies to be able to rule such a marvellous land. The greatness of Egyptians was so profound that any ideas of racial inferiority could not develop or flourish. Concepts of race were very different for the Greco-Romans whose southern borders of Egypt stopped in Nubia, "The Ethiopians" or the people with the 'burnt faces'. Generally Greco-Nubian relations were complementary while Romano-Nubian relations fought to a military standoff.



<b>Perceptual Framework</b>	<b>PERSPECTIVES ON THE PEOPLES OF:</b>		
	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Nubia</b>	<b>The Sub-Sahara</b>
<b>Nubianocentrism (Kerma times)</b>	Aggressive, Ruthless, Corrupted, Disunited	Authentic, Autocratic, Powerful, Self-Reliant	Insolent Savages, Threatening, Exploitable
<b>Egyptocentrism (New Kingdom)</b>	Imperial, Original, Religious, Unitary	Vile, Exploitable, Slaves, Subjects	Despicable, Fantastic, Mythological
<b>Nubianocentrism (Dynasty XXV)</b>	Troubled, Threatend, Disunited	Legitimate, Reverent, Saviors	Bothersome, Rebels, Slaves
<b>Hellenocentrism (classical times)</b>	Admiration, Romanticism, Legitimizing	Romanticism, Mythological, "Ethiopians"	Fantasies, Curiosity, Savages
<b>Ancient Nilotes (New Kingdom)</b>	Fantasies, Racist, Aggressive, Strangers	Egyptian agents, Slave Raiders, Victimizers	Honorable People, Proud Herders, Victims
<b>Islamocentrism (medieval)</b>	Center of the Dispersal of Islam in Africa	Christian holdouts	unbelievers, pagans, slaves
<b>Eurocentrism (19th century)</b>	Romanticism, Orientalism, Degenerate, Curiosity	Barbarians, Peripheralism, Servants, Paternalism	Racialism, Darwinism, Colonialism, "Natives"



<b>Perceptual Framework</b>	<b>VIEWPOINTS ON THE PEOPLES OF:</b>		
	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Nubia</b>	<b>The Sub-Sahara</b>
<b>Egyptocentrism (modern)</b>	Arabs, Muslims "World Mother" Cultural Center	Divisive, Quaint Archaic, Patronizing	Uncivilized Pagans, "Tribal"
<b>Eurocentrism (modern)</b>	Romanticism Orientalism Tourism	Primitivism Romanticism	Tribalism Racialism
<b>Afrocentrism (modern)</b>	"Black" Africans Inclusivity, Romanticism	Black Africans Kushites Classical and Heroic	Black Africans Diasporic Links Mother Land
<b>Africanist (modern)</b>	Irrelevant Marginal Multi-ethnic Non-Black	Afro-Arabs Sudanic people Hybrid	Black Africa Negroes Traditional Backward
<b>Sub-Saharan Africans</b>	Non-African Arabs, Mideast Rich	Slave traders Riverine Victimizers Merchants	Victims, kinsmen, communalists farmers/herders
<b>Nubianocentrism (modern)</b>	multi-ethnic Patronizing Dominating	Minority group Traditional Authentic	Non-Nubians "southerners" Oppressed
<b>Sudanese Islamocentrism (modern)</b>	Decadent, Corrupted Pro-West	Purity, Martyrs True Believers, Mahdists, Danagla	Slaves, Pagans Unbelievers, Rebels,



Nineteenth century **Eurocentrism**, and its modern variants were fascinated by the marvels of ancient Egypt, especially after the age of modern Egyptology had begun and hieroglyphic translations and archaeological excavations began to reveal more about the ancient times. Eurocentric mythologies hinged upon the greatness of Greco-Roman civilisation, even though the distance in linguistic and geographical space, and time is considerable. For the Greeks or Romans to stretch their search for great antecedents to other circum-Mediterranean societies was as reasonable as for northern Europeans to seek their spiritual and intellectual origins to ancient European societies, although racist models in the 19th century were careful to break this linkage between modern northern Europeans and 'swarthy' and volatile Mediterranean types of today. The idea that Greco-Romans thought highly of Egyptians was of some interest, but certainly was not to be taken with any seriousness, as the endless critiques of the works of Herodotus were to show.

**Modern Afro-centric** scholars have an interest in homogenising Africa, and particularly celebrating its claims to greatness by its antiquity, resistance to Europe, and its medieval savanna empires. The minor hunting and gathering people of Africa, and African collaborators in the slave trade are understandably neglected in the otherwise integrating sweep. The main mythological need is to redress the grievance of American racism and consistent denigration of people of African ancestry who were encouraged to believe that Africa has no history. By simply defining Egypt as just another African country these objectives can be fulfilled. This school of thought is resistant to the view that Africa is, and was, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, and that processes of state formation, especially in the Nile valley, often had brother Africans in not very harmonious relations with each other. In extreme forms, claims of the Blackness of Cleopatra and Nefertiti are made when it is most likely that neither were, while many Egyptians and, of course, the XXVth Dynasty certainly were "Black". Classicists and Egyptologists are particularly upset about these Afrocentric views as it can be perceived as a rival perceptual framework.



## Conclusions

This cursory review of "racial" and ethnic concepts along the Nile has revealed a remarkably small degree of agreement about what is projected as "objective" and is truly a reflection of subjective categories which primarily serve the construction of mythologies and justifications of social constructs. Efforts to "win" one argument or another are doomed to failure because the epistemologies of "science" and "mythology" are not easily reconcilable. The conceptualisation and categorisation of ancient or modern Egyptians and Nubians has been harnessed to missions other than ethnographic, linguistic, or historical precision. Confusion about this will add much heat to the discussion of Nile valley identities but little light. For light to emerge on this emotional topic the first step might be to open the discussion on our disagreements, then to determine the cause. This is a modest goal, but anything further seems premature and not likely to succeed.

This paper was presented in a Panel Chaired by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban – at the International Meetings of Sudan Studies Associations in Cairo, Egypt, 11-14 June 1997



## DETECTIVE STORIES WITH A SUDAN TWIST: THE "MAMUR ZAPT" NOVELS OF MICHAEL PEARCE

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I came upon the detective stories of Michael Pearce quite by chance. While taking a break from my thesis-writing one Spring day in 1997, I found myself browsing among rows of novels in Princeton University's Firestone Library. The title of one book in particular caught my eye: *The Mamur Zapt and the Men Behind: A Suspense Tale of Old Cairo*. I read the book, and then read another in the series, and then another. I was struck by the historical authenticity of the novels, and intrigued by a comment on the dustjacket, which stated that the author was born in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Curious about this Sudan connection, I wrote a letter to the author, care of his publisher.

Michael Pearce was born in the Sudan in 1933. In his reply to my letter he explained, "I was in the Sudan on and off during childhood, sometimes for long periods, and then returned there for a year when I was seventeen to teach in a local school – for young (British) children in Atbara, where my father worked for the Railways."<sup>1</sup> He is a member of the SSSUK, and retains a strong interest in Sudanese affairs.

His novels, however, deal primarily with Egypt. Between 1989 and 1995, Pearce published nine detective stories set in Egypt during the British Occupation (1882-1914). His novels do not resemble the civilized mysteries of Christie or Sayers, nor do they belong to the hardboiled school of crime. Instead, they spin tales of politically-motivated murders that take place in historically credible settings: in Egypt, and usually in Cairo, circa 1910, when Sir Eldon Gorst was Consul-General, though the spirit of Lord Cromer lingered on.

Pearce's sleuth is a Welshman named Gareth Owen, better known to Cairenes by his job title, as the "Mamur Zapt". The Mamur Zapt is the head of Egyptian secret police, responsible for investigating crimes that have political overtones. In Egypt under the Occupation, many crimes have political overtones, involving the intrigues of hotheaded young nationalists, corrupt officials and landowners, or Khedive's sons. Because the Mamur Zapt often finds it difficult to identify political motives in a case from the start, the "Parquet" (the Department of

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Michael Pearce to Heather Sharkey, dated London, May 3, 1997. In my letter of April 6, 1997, I asked Mr. Pearce for permission to write a piece about him and his novels for the newsletter, and he agreed.



Prosecutions of the Ministry of Justice) is frequently called in to investigate murders with him. Therefore the Mamur Zapt usually finds himself working with his friend from the Parquet, Mahmoud el Zaki, an Egyptian patriot, a firm Muslim, and an idealist, who prefers to work by the book (and not by bribery) to get things done. Other recurring characters include Zaynab, Owen's liberated Egyptian girlfriend; and Georgiades, a jolly, cunning, but tactful Greek intelligence official on whom Owen relies to extract information. Cairo being what it is, there are always witnesses when suspicious deeds occur; the trick is finding the right watchmen, street boys, or coffee sellers who have information to share, and then persuading them to speak.

One can read a Mamur Zapt novel in a single afternoon. As light and entertaining as these stories are, however, they often convey a sense of Egypt under the British Occupation more vividly than history books can do. Pearce is careful to explain the political structures and the social tensions, the nationalist frustrations and the jockeying for power among political elites. He describes the European and American tourist scene, ways to evade the law through the Capitulations, the social function of cafés, and so on. And he evokes the setting of Cairo's twisting alleys and crowded markets.

Sudanese characters or situations appear only marginally in the novels. I asked the author about the influence of the Sudan in his works. He explained that during his time in the Sudan he was aware of the rise of nationalism and the hopes for independence. He wrote, "I didn't understand it then but I do now. That is how it is with most of my memories of the Sudan. I took in an awful lot of impressions and it is only now, with a lot more political experience, that sifting through them, I begin to understand them. They govern my Egyptian books but I have not yet felt ready to write directly about the Sudan. As a writer one needs (or at least, I need) distance as well as closeness. I did, though, write a novel for children based on the Sudan. It is called *The Hostages* and was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1987 under the name of Michael Smith. It is all about the civil war in the Sudd – from a child's point of view. It was well-received but is out of print now." His memories of the Sudan consist of raw, sharp impressions: how the sun and the moon looked, how the sand smelled and the tea tasted, and so on. Though he has not been back to the Sudan in many years, his work with Amnesty International has kept him in touch with events.

Reflecting on his Sudan childhood and his literary career, Michael Pearce writes, "It will be obvious from the Mamur Zapt books that my interest is in what we now call multi-cultural relations, nationalism, and what was then the colonial predicament – keeping order in a



changing society. I write about it with humour but would defend that on the grounds that humour brings proportion into politics. Just because it's funny, doesn't mean it's not serious... I suppose that my attitude to the ruling British is coloured by my experience of the administration in the Sudan – decent men, on the whole, trying to make sense of an anomaly."

**The Mamur Zapt Novels by Michael Pearce:**

*The Mamur Zapt and the Night of the Dog* (1989).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Return of the Carpet* (1989).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Donkey-Vous* (1990).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Men Behind* (1991).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Girl in the Nile* (1992).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Spoils of Egypt* (1992).

*The Mamur Zapt and the Camel of Destruction* (1993).

*The Snake-Catcher's Daughter: A Mamur Zapt Mystery* (1994).

*The Mingrelian Conspiracy: A Mamur Zapt Mystery* (1995).



## SUDAN PEACE PROSPECTS

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### *Context for the talks*

Throughout the 1980s I was becoming increasingly concerned that Sudan was in deeper political trouble than ever before and was in danger of becoming a collapsing state. In 1987 I published an article entitled 'Is Sudan Governable?' and in 1990 a book, *Sudan 1898-1989: the unstable state*. The thrust of both publications was that under successive governments, civilian and military, Sudan had failed to develop governmental institutions and a political system compatible with three major dimensions of society. Firstly the country's religious affiliations, not only Muslim and Christian, but the competitive political manifestations of the former community in particular – Ansar/Umma, Khatmiyya/Unionists, and Muslim Brothers/National Islamic Front (NIF). Secondly the distribution of economic resources between rich and poor, both nationally and regionally, a process in which the state itself had played a central role. Thirdly, and partly emerging from the first two, regional and ethnic assertion, which had brought the country to two civil wars in the south and growing self-consciousness in parts of the north, especially east and west.

These views had been formulated before the coup of 1989 which brought the present government to power. They did not foresee that the new government would involve taking a harder grip on the state than had been achieved by any of its predecessors. It swiftly penetrated the state personnel, including repeated purges of the military, civil service, judiciary etc. It also reorganised the state into a federal administration; the replacement of a competitive party system by a pyramidal hierarchy from Popular Committees at the bottom to the National Congress at the top; and the creation of a Popular Defence Force to assist the military. Its policies emphasised: *sharia*; Arabisation and Islamisation; vigorous prosecution of the war in the south; the repression of northern opposition; economic liberalisation; and an active Islamic foreign policy. The overall aim was the declared evolution of an Islamic state. Its supporters declare that it has been progressing in that direction; while critics either



doubted its claim from the outset, or believe that it has lost its way over the past nine years.

My particular concern, in the light of my feelings of the 1980s, was whether the drift towards state collapse had been maintained or reversed. The literature of comparative politics, including events such as former Yugoslavia and Somalia, has increasingly thrown up a check list of symptoms of a collapsing state. One central definition of a state is its ability to control the territory within its borders. By this criteria the government by 1998 appears to control less than in 1989, and arguably less than any government since independence. An indicator of the legitimacy of government lies in the operating of the legal system; and on this the repeated reports of the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Sudan throw many doubts. The ability of the economic system to sustain incomes is also relevant: while the IMF sees hope in Sudan's recent performance, for many people real incomes have deteriorated for most of the past 20 years, while the quality of state services in areas such as health and education has fallen similarly, although the numbers in education have increased. The extent to which a population identifies with a state is another indicator of strength or weakness, and one rough measure is the extent of any 'exit'. Many hundreds of thousands, and probably millions, have left Sudan since the 1970s, initially largely drawn by the 'pull' factor of opportunities in oil-rich states but increasingly 'pushed' by internal repression. Open conflict is another obvious sign of collapse, and the area of conflict now includes both south and east as the various opposition groups have united into the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). States do not exist in isolation, and their international position contributes to their strength. In this regard Sudan has been very isolated in recent years, largely due to the perception that it seeks to promote radical Islamic movements internationally. Overall it seems that by many of the indicators of state collapse what has happened is that a hard grip has been taken on what has always been a comparatively weak state. The outcome is that the state does not appear to have been strengthened significantly, and in several regards the strong grip may have itself contributed to the weakness. In particular the unsuccessful attempt to win the civil war has probably contributed to its recent intensification and spread.

The textbooks on state collapse naturally advise governments in such situations to stop digging their holes deeper and try to go into reverse. That was certainly a message I received



from ministers when I was invited to visit Sudan in December 1997. One step is an attempt to reduce international isolation by active diplomacy. This has been aimed at neighbouring states adjudged as potentially receptive, especially Arab states with Egypt to the fore. Efforts to 'normalise' relations with Egypt have been actively, if not wholly, successfully pursued. Europe has been another area in which moves to improve relations have been actively taken, with the result of greater European involvement in peacemaking attempts. Another political initiative has been the internal settlement. The southern factions with which the internal settlement were signed in 1997 were in reality already allies of the government, but the agreement was intended not only to formalise their relationship but to offer a potential route to a wider peace process. The writing of a new constitution, officially ratified in 1998, has been an associated development. At the same time as being a national constitution, apparently with the prospect of a more open political system, it also has as an annex the internal settlement with its offer of self-determination for the south. Also in 1997 the government appeared more ready to enter into peace talks with the Southern Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) fighting mainly in the south.

### *Peace Talks*

Peace talks are of course nothing new in Sudan. The first, the Round Table Conference of 1965, was probably the best known of the many failures. There is nothing peculiarly Sudanese about repeated failures: the settlement of civil war by negotiation between the parties is the exception rather than the rule. But of course Sudan did do it once, in Addis Ababa in 1972, and in consequence that has been a much studied event (Assefa, 1987). The last serious attempt was by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1994, but it failed mainly on the issues of secularism and self-determination.

As indicated, by 1997 the government at least appeared to have a more positive approach to peace and IGAD (now without 'Drought') tried again. The first round was in Nairobi in October-November. While the government put much emphasis on the terms of the internal settlement, the SPLA came with its own new plan. In particular it proposed a confederation of north and south to take immediate effect for an interim period until a self-determination exercise on independence could take place in the south. It also proposed that the area of the



south include areas north of the 1956 boundaries of the then southern provinces. It was agreed to meet again four months later.

The April 1998 talks, again in Nairobi, did produce a measure of agreement: there would be self-determination for the south under international supervision. While any agreement was to be seen as a sign of progress, it was not in itself a large step for either side. The internal agreement had already committed the government to self-determination; while the SPLA plan at the previous round of talks had also included it. The only new element was international supervision, which both sides appeared quite ready to accept. However there was no agreement on the question of the border of north and south, with the government wishing to recognise the 1956 province boundaries; nor was there any timetable agreed. On the interim period, the sticking point was the SPLA's wish for a secular government pending self-determination. It was agreed that more talks would be held in Addis Ababa after a further three months.

Addis Ababa made little progress at a brief meeting. The disagreement on the border of north and south persisted; while the government rejected the SPLA's call for a secular state prior to self-determination for the south. It was agreed to meet again in six months. The only measure of optimism lay in the acceptance by both sides of a ceasefire in the famine area of Bahr al-Ghazal. There were international hopes that the ceasefire could be extended in area and duration and facilitate more progress at future talks. However the lack of strong international condemnation of the US missile attack on the chemical factory in Khartoum north shortly after the Addis Ababa talks reduced the immediate impact of international pressure for peace.

Amidst all the uncertainty on peace efforts, it may be useful to keep in mind the general conditions required for negotiated settlements. (Deng, 1991) Both sides need to arrive at a position in which there is recognition of effective military deadlock, with neither side thinking that victory can soon be achieved. Both sides need to be internally united so that they are capable of negotiating without internal factional fragmentation capable of aborting peace talks; they also need sufficient overlap between the sides for negotiation and compromise to take place. Finally the international community must support peace



negotiations, and deny any significant help to either side to return to conflict if talks fail. By these general conditions Sudan still faces considerable obstacles to be overcome before successful peace talks seem likely.

Without a peace agreement, what alternatives face the country: a military victory for either side; a de facto division with a contested border; or continued conflict and likely further debilitating processes towards at least partial state collapse? As Zartman wrote, 'State collapse is a long-term degenerative disease. However it is also one whose outcome is not inevitable: cure and remission are possible.' (Zartman, 1995)

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This article is a summary of a talk given to the Royal African Society in London, 20 May 1998, and has been updated following the August round of peace talks.



## FOOD, WILDLIFE AND WAR

A proposal to re-survey two protected areas in Sudan in order to evaluate their resources and to devise sustainable conservation strategies with the communities around them

Philip Winter

### SUMMARY

The wildlife resources and protected areas of South Sudan were on a par with those of Tanzania, before the civil war resumed in 1983, after an eleven year intermission. Despite the huge international relief operation which has been taking place in the war zone of South Sudan since 1989 – costing now over \$1 billion – no assistance has been given for conservation of wildlife or the resources of once-protected areas. The humanitarian operation demonstrates that it is possible to work in South Sudan, despite the civil war, since fighting is localized. It is therefore proposed that repeat aerial and ground surveys now be made of two former parks, Boma and the Southern National Park, to assess their remaining resources, the status of five key species within them (northern white rhino, giant eland, white eared kob, tiang and elephant) and the degree to which the surrounding populations and their livestock make use of the former parks.

No realistic conservation action can be taken in the absence of such information. The surveys would involve local authorities and communities, conservation scientists and former relief workers. They would for the first time combine an updated version of the original scientific survey methodology used in systematic reconnaissance flights over the parks in 1980 with the newly-developed "food economy" methodology now in use in a growing number of countries. Taken together, these two approaches would give a full picture of the conservation status of the areas, after which a second phase is envisaged, both to repeat the surveys in other areas and to identify feasible community conservation opportunities.

It is estimated that Phase I, the two surveys, would cost \$150,000 and would require a team of nine to work in the field for two months, with a further six weeks for interpretation and report production by the team leaders. The surveys would be carried out in the 1999 dry season, between January and April, in order to replicate the conditions under which the 1980 surveys were done and because of the better visibility and concentrations of people and animals in the dry season. The overall coordinator would be Philip Winter, the Food Economist Tanya Boudreau and the Scientific Coordinator Dr. RCR Olivier, of Ecosystems Ltd.

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SUDAN STUDIES: Number 22 (November 1998)

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The survey reports would then be made available to donors, local authorities and community leaders so that a Phase II could be planned, to survey other areas, and a Phase III to fund conservation and sustainable resource use in once-protected areas by means of a conservation trust.

Philip Winter

P.O. Box 47796

Nairobi

KENYA



## SUDAN RESEARCH

Peter Woodward

At the beginning of 1998 I circulated a letter to those listed in *A Directory of Africanists in Britain*\* as having a research interest at some time in Sudan. The replies are listed below, and it is hoped that researchers not listed here will contact *Sudan Studies* so that this becomes a regular feature.

**Dr. John Alexander**, St. John's College, University of Cambridge, is working on Islamic Archaeology in North-East Africa, especially on the Ottoman Frontier. He is also an officer of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society.

**Tim Allen**, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics, is interested in Forced Migration and Humanitarian Intervention. He has been researching among groups migrating from Sudan into Uganda.

**H.J.R. (Jack) Davies**, Department of Geography, University of Wales Swansea, is interested in: Human Geography – environment, rural development, desertification and drought; Historical Geography.

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\* Anne Merriman and Richard Hodder-Williams (eds), *A DIRECTORY OF AFRICANISTS IN BRITAIN* (Third Edition), University of Bristol for The Royal African Society, Bristol, 1996.

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**Dr. David Edwards**, St. John's College, University of Cambridge, is at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge, where his current projects include the long term social history of pottery in the Middle Nile.

**Dr. M.C. (Chuck) Jedrej**, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh, is working on the Southern Fung and the Sudan-Ethiopia borderlands.

**Dr. Melissa Leach**, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, is working on a DFID project on 'The Impact of Training on Women's Micro-enterprise' with colleagues in ACORD (Judy el-Bushra) and Intermediate Technology. Sudan provides one of the five case studies – an ACORD programme in Port Sudan.

**Prof. Peter Woodward**, Department of Politics, University of Reading, is interested in Sudan's political development and regional relations; and is editing the *Foreign Office Confidential Print: Africa*, (University Press of America, Maryland) which mainly concerns North-East Africa. He has completed 35 volumes thus far, covering 1914-45.



# SUDAN STUDIES SOCIETY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

## MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 26 SEPTEMBER 1997

Professor Woodward called the meeting to order at 12.05 and welcomed members to the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom.

Apologies: Gillian Lusk, Alan Kunna, John Udal, J.W. Kenrick.

The minutes of the annual General Meeting of 28 September 1996 were read. There being no corrections the Chairman signed a copy as a true record of the 1996 meeting.

### 1. Matters arising from the AGM of 28 September 1996

No matters were arising.

### 2. Chairman's Report

The Chair reported that the executive committee had met twice during the year since the 1996 AGM and that a membership drive had been put in place by committee members.

A number of SSSUK members attended the 4th International Sudan Studies Association Conference in Cairo in June.

He requested information from the floor about the Anglo-Sudanese Association which was reported at the last AGM to have been reviving.

### 3. Secretary's Report

The Hon. Secretary reported on the membership drive the committee had instituted in November 1996. The drive consists of updating the membership form; linking up with networks of Sudanese in Britain (Sudanese Engineers', Doctors' and Academics' Associations); inviting new members from the personal networks of the Society's members; and encouraging more contributions to the Newsletter. Since its start the membership drive



had been partially successful in that the number of paid up members had increased from some 70 in September 1996 to 119 in September 1997.

The Society supported three Sudanese researchers living in the UK to attend and present papers at the International Sudan Studies Association in Cairo in June 1997 with grants of £300 each. The researchers and their respective titles of the papers they gave at the Conference were Nada Mustafa Ali, Ordesse Hamad (on the NSR Islamisation of the Public Sphere Some Remarks on Media and Social Control); and Al Bagir al Afif Mukhtar (Two Approaches to Islamic Reform in Contemporary Sudan: Crisis Management and the Real Thing).

As the International Conference organizers had not planned publication of conference papers SSSUK had arranged with a number of speakers publication through the Society's Newsletter. Thus several papers would appear in Issues 20, 21 and possibly 23.

The Society's committee had met on two occasions during the year.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

The Hon. Treasurer spoke to the attached accounts for 1996 and reported that the audit had been successful and done on a gratis basis. He did not anticipate the audit for 1997 being free but thought that it was unlikely to exceed £10. With the rise in paid up members he hoped that there would be a surplus in 1997.

#### **5. Newsletter Editor**

The Hon. Editor invited submissions of papers and articles for the newsletter from the members attending the meeting and anyone with an interest in Sudan studies, known to them. He also stressed that the newsletter relied on submissions of notes, reports and papers from members and invited suggestions from the floor for particular areas that members would like to see covered. Several members suggested that it would be interesting to have articles on



life for Sudanese in the UK.

## 6. A.O.B.

Members were asked whether they agreed that those members who had not paid in 1996 and had not responded to several reminders in 1996 and 1997 could be deleted from the Society's database of current members. It was decided that deletions should be made at the end of 1998 for 1996 non-payers.

Professor Woodward informed the meeting that the committee had received a request that the Society held its AGM and One Day Symposium in the north (perhaps Manchester or Leeds) where a large number of Sudanese live. A vote on whether members favoured a meeting in the north was inconclusive – it being considered that there was probably greater attendance of members from the south at the meeting. It was decided to refer the matter back to the committee with a recommendation that the Society should work towards holding a meeting in the north early in 1998 to enable members with restricted capacity to travel to the south to meet while still retaining the location of the Symposium and AGM in London.

Professor Woodward thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 12.45.



## ACCOUNTS 1997

### SUDAN STUDIES SOCIETY OF THE UK

INCOME	£	
Membership dues 1997	1051.00	(541.59)
Back Membership dues	195.00	(72.00)
Future Membership dues	199.00	(9.00)
Sale of Publications	37.17	-
Interest on Bank accounts	37.89	(52.45)
1997 AGM/Symposium	402.00	-
1996 AGM/Symposium	-	(400.00)
Deficit for year	828.72	(85.35)
	<b>2750.78</b>	<b>(1160.39)</b>

I have examined the accounting records kept in relation to the above period and certify that this income, expenditure and assets statement is in accordance with them

.....  
E. J. M. Inglis., F.C.C.A

*E. J. M. Inglis*  
14<sup>th</sup> Sept 98.



Accounts 1 January - 31 December 1997  
(Figures for 1996 in brackets)

EXPENDITURE	£	
Printing	534.93	(166.46)
Postage	216.84	(0.0)
Administration	64.47	(50.00)
1995 AGM/Symposium	-	(199.00)
1996 AGM/Symposium	-	(489.63)
1997 AGM/Symposium	519.74	-
Committee Travel	512.30	(155.30)
Auditor's Fee (94,95)	-	(100.00)
Bank charges	2.50	-
Surplus for year		-
Assistance for 97 Cairo Conf.	900.00	
	<b>2750.78</b>	<b>(1160.39)</b>

**Assets**

Bank balance on 1.1.97	2773.63	(2858.98)
Bank balance on 31.12.97	1944.91	(2773.63)

D. K Lindley  
Hon. Treasurer  
06-Sep-98



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### Notes for Contributors

The Sudan Studies Society welcomes notes and articles of any length. The normal maximum is 5,000 words including footnotes (longer articles can be accommodated usually in more than one issue). Ideally, articles should be typed in double spacing on A4 paper in Times 14pt.

Manuscripts are not normally returned to authors though original material such as photographs will be returned. The Society retains the right to edit articles for reasons of space and editorial consistency only, e.g. UK spelling. **Sudan Studies** aims to follow the editorial style of *African Affairs*, Journal of the Royal African Society.

It is helpful to have, very briefly (2-3 lines), any relevant details about the author - post held, time recently spent in Sudan, etc. and the history of the article or paper submitted, e.g. if prepared for presentation at a conference or seminar, please give the date, location and title of the meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> Single issues and available back numbers can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary at the rate of £8 per copy.