



SUDAN STUDIES

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SOCIETY NEWS

By Tony Trilsbach, Secretary of SSSUK and Editor of SUDAN STUDIES.

This is the last newsletter of the Society's first year, and it is a pleasure to report that the future looks very optimistic. The Society was launched blindly, without any indication of its likely appeal. A year on, the membership stands at 350, the Society has produced its first Occasional Paper, the first One Day Conference and AGM was almost too crowded and, as will be explained later, we have arrived on the international scene. These comments do not mean that we can sit back and let things happen of their own accord. Sudan Studies is still seeking more articles on Just about any Sudanese-related topic, the conclusion of the first financial year is a time for reflection and re-evaluation of our costs, the Society's charity status needs to be confirmed, and there is a need to recruit more widely in the business world.

One new SSSUK initiative enclosed with this volume is a questionnaire, which will help us to create a large database; this is also being sent to the Sudan Studies Association, who will distribute it throughout the North American network. If everyone who receives the questionnaire completes it, then we should have a database exceeding 500. The data should prove to be valuable for many of our members and other 'sudanists'. In these circumstances, may I please encourage you to take time and complete the forms as thoroughly as possible.

A separate enclosure with this volume is the 1988/89 membership form. Please note that, although the basic membership fee has been retained at £5, the committee has been forced to add extra fees for overseas postage and for cheques paid either in a foreign currency, or issued from a French bank in any currency (including £ sterling). When we launched the Society we did not expect to have over 100 overseas members and the consequent costs of postage and currency conversion have become prohibitive.

I conclude this section by mentioning the very successful conference on 'Sudanese Studies. Past, Present and Future', which took place in Khartoum in January. The details are mentioned elsewhere in this issue (pp.10-11), but of particular note were the opportunities which emerged for SSSUK to cooperate with various other similar organisations. The committee is meeting in mid April to discuss these more fully and details will be announced in the next newsletter. Of additional note, was that SSSUK was very well received by people and organisations from around the world and, in particular, the Prime Minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi commented to me that he was pleased to see that the organisation was embracing the natural and physical sciences as fully as the arts and social sciences. This balance is an essential element of SSSUK and, significantly, it is reflected in the range of articles in this volume.



THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN KHARTOUM

Ian Cliff describes some of the role; of the British Embassy in Khartoum.

In December 1984 the British Embassy in Khartoum moved from the 'temporary' offices it had occupied in the Aboulela Building for nearly 29 years to new permanent premises behind the Ambassador's residence. The old Embassy, situated above the Shell offices, had become shabby and rat—infested and it was an apt commentary when the initial 'S' of the 'Shell House' nameboard fell off.

The new Embassy with its glass octagon, is a belated symbol of the importance Britain still attaches to the Sudan. Despite paltry media coverage within Britain (as opposed to on the BBC World Service), the Sudan is a country of strategic significance and features as such in Foreign Office thinking. It is a Red Sea littoral state and the neighbour of eight states of remarkably varied importance and political allegiance: Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, Zaire, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. The deep personal and historical ties between Britain and the Sudan are, however, the mainstay of the relationship. Large numbers of Sudanese visit the United Kingdom every year; there are numerous Sudanese studying in Britain, many on British Council scholarships, and there are some 2,000 British citizens living in the Sudan, many of them working as English teachers in the provinces (see *Sudan Studies* 2, pp.13-15). The formation of the Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom is itself evidence of the continuing closeness of the relationship.

Apart from its own very necessary Administration Section, the Embassy is divided into four sections: Chancery, Commercial, Aid and Consular.

Chancery deals with the political relationship. This was not always easy in the last days of Nimeri, but has improved since the April Uprising in 1985, and the subsequent restoration of parliamentary government. Chancery's main task is to monitor political developments among the Sudanese political parties and between North and South and to report back to London. A considerable amount of Chancery's time recently has been devoted to organising official visits in both directions. The Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Richard Luce (son of Sir William Luce, Governor of Blue Nile 1951-53 and subsequently Constitutional Adviser to the Governor-General), visited the Sudan shortly after the overthrow of Nimeri in April 1985. His successor, Tim Renton, visited in September 1986. The then Minister for Overseas Development, Timothy Raison, visited the Sudan in 1985 and 1986. Princess Anne has also visited the Sudan recently in her capacity as President of the Save the Children Fund. Both the transitional Prime Minister, Dr Gizouli Dafallah, and Sadiq al Mahdi have paid official visits to London, as have several of their Ministerial colleagues.

The Embassy Commercial Section provides guidance for British business in Sudan. Its task has not been easy of late because of the Sudan's financial and economic problems. One has



only to compare the White Morris Minor 1000s which still buzz around the Gezira Scheme with the German and Japanese cars which choke Khartoum to see that Britain has lost out. Nevertheless, Britain is still the Sudan's second largest supplier of goods and services (after the United States) and there is still a large market to be tapped, particularly in aid—related projects. The Sudan exports agricultural products, gum arabic and cotton to Britain and it is a healthy sign that British imports from the Sudan in the first eight months of 1987 were worth £16.3 million, nearly double the figure for the first eight months of 1986.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the importance of the Sudan for British Foreign Policy is the size of the Aid programme, administered by the Embassy Aid Section. During my own time in the Sudan (1982—85), the Sudan was the second largest recipient of British overseas aid (after India). Although its place in the league table has slipped with the completion of the Khartoum power station projects, the Sudan is still the third largest recipient of bilateral aid in Africa. It also receives aid through British contributions to multilateral organisations, such as the World Bank and the EEC. It was, for example, largely at the instigation of the British Embassy that the EEC funded the rehabilitation of six North British steam locomotives and ten English Electric diesels to provide additional motive power for grain trains to Darfur during the recent drought. The bilateral aid programme has in the past included such projects as the construction of the new Khartoum North power station and the erection of a twenty mile radio-controlled aerial ropeway to carry stone from the quarry to the Nile at the Maspio Cement Works, Atbara. The emphasis is now on agriculture, with contributions to development of the Gezira Scheme, renewal of irrigation pumps between Shendi and Atbara and assistance for the Western Savanna Development Corporation in Darfur.

The main burden of the Consular Section is the issue of visas to Sudanese wishing to visit Britain, a task complicated by a plethora of Home Office regulations, which often appear baffling and insensitive to outsiders. The Consular Section also deals with British (and unrepresented Commonwealth) citizens in distress, ranging from the hapless businessman who has left his passport in a taxi to the missionary taken hostage in Southern Sudan. There have been several cases of hostage taking in recent years; so far all have ended happily.

The Embassy therefore plays a significant part in fostering the ever—changing relationship between Britain and the Sudan.



THE MAN FROM THE MINISTRY

If I ever have a meeting with the Foreign Secretary (which I regard as improbable), I could tell him of an incident in the Sudan which made me think of the Foreign Office in a kindlier way. I happened to be in El Obeid not long before Independence - it must have been late in 1955. At the Mudiria they were expecting a visit shortly from someone in the Foreign Office who was to give them guidance about what to do with their files - what to keep, what to destroy, what to hand over to the soon-to-be-independent government. Some officials were saying, "oh, I suppose he'll be some toffee-nosed bureaucrat." In the event he turned out to be a tubby little man who chuckled, and kept telling us funny stories. Since then I have always felt better about the Foreign Office - it has a human face after all.

by Professor Roland Stevenson.



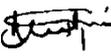
الهيئة النقابية للأطباء السودانيين
بالمملكة المتحدة وإيرلندا
SUDAN DOCTORS UNION
U.K. and IRELAND BRANCH

Sudan Medical Aid is a registered charity founded by the Sudan Doctors Union in England. It's aim is to promote medical services and help the sick in Sudan.

WE believe that it is one of our prime responsibilities in the medical profession to rebuild our Health Care System which should be our pride and joy.

We are planning to initiate a major campaign within the next few months. At the moment we are in the process of establishing contacts here and in the Sudan and to link with other charitable organisations, and to gain from their experience.

Please contact me if you can help or would like more details.



Dr. A. Gislam.
President, Sudan Doctors Union.

31 St Edwards Gardens
Eggbuckland
PLYMOUTH
(0752-778489) PL6 5PB



DIVING THE SUDANESE RED SEA

Jack Jackson continues his series of articles on the Red Sea Region with some comments on diving.

INTRODUCTION:

Many top divers, such as Hans Hass and Walt Deas, have commented that the Sudanese Red Sea has as much variety of fish life as anywhere in the world, plus the bonus of exceptional visibility.

Virtually all diving in Port Sudan is organised from Europe and uses boats which go down to the Port Sudan during the Winter season. However, this is not always the best time for diving in the Red Sea; the Summer months are best, if one can withstand the heat. Fortunately one boat remains in Port Sudan throughout the year, so it is possible to dive at this time.

Because of Sudanese security, it is advisable to take all equipment personally (including compressor) or else to arrange things in advance through an experienced shipper (like myself!). If you are just passing through, there may be a boat free for a week or just a few days if you can afford to wait for it. The best way to find out is to contact the Hamido Tourism Corporation (PO Box 274) Port Sudan. A small diving club operates through the Red Sea Club, which is a British club but accepts all nationalities, so if you just want the odd dive, check with them. This is also the cheapest way to go snorkelling on a Friday.

Permission for non-residents to visit the coral reefs or Suakin must be obtained from the Port Sudan Government Tourist Office. This will be done for you if you use Hamido, or an organised boat. There is a local tax of \$3 US per day for going onto the boats.

THE DIVING:

There are thousands of coral reefs along the Sudanese coast, mostly uncharted and many never dived upon. The reef fish life is prolific and bigger fish abound where there are points and currents. In general, south of Suakin the weather is colder and rougher (there are even whales) and the visibility is worse, especially around the few islands which are sandy and are havens for sea bird colonies and turtles laying eggs. To the north the diving gets even better and is only limited by the need for sheltered anchorages and the logistics of fuel, food and fresh water from Port Sudan.

The fringing reefs have poorer visibility. There is no coast road and there are military encampments, so most diving is from boats and on the outer reefs, such as Sanganeb and Sha'ab Rumi, both of which are well out to sea and combine sheltered anchorages with easy



access to Port Sudan. Both are several miles long with steep sloping gradients from the surface to over 90 metres and give excellent all round diving.

Living at sea on a boat or on a reef reduces heat, dust, flies and mosquitoes. It can also be cool enough to allow diving through the Summer. However, in Winter, if the wind gets up it can be uncomfortable, so it is best to avoid December through to mid February.

Although this article can only generalise about diving in the Red Sea, it is possible to highlight a number of particularly suitable locations.

Wingate Reef - Wingate Reef is just outside Port Sudan Harbour and gives protected anchorage for shipping. It is popular with divers who cannot reach the outer reefs as it has plenty of fish life. However, shipping reduces visibility somewhat and there is also a lot of dead coral. Much of the fish, such as tiger and white tip sharks, are attracted by rubbish dumped from the ships. Dolphins frequent the large ship channel and manta rays are common in bad weather, especially in December when there are strong north winds.

The 'Umbria' - Just outside Port Sudan Harbour, but still within the ships anchorage sheltered by Wingate Reef, lies the wreck of the 'Umbria'. This Italian cargo ship carrying munitions was scuttled by its crew when the British boarded her on the day that Italy entered the Second World War in 1940. She now lies in 28 metres of water with her davits just breaking the surface. It creates a superb dive, and this activity happens so frequently that fish immediately surround you. Half moon angelfish and various butterfly fish follow you around, waiting for your passage to disturb food for them, and some of the fish are so used to being fed by divers that they will nip your fingers, ears and other protrusions. Most of the world's top underwater photographers have made a 'pilgrimage' to this wreck, and it has appeared in books and films.

Towartit Reef - The Towartit Reef complex is south of Port Sudan. It has less shipping movement and better visibility than Wingate Reef and there is an outside barrier reef where the visibility is better still. All the smaller fish are there, but not so many of the larger ones.

Sanganeb - Sanganeb is a large atoll 26 km north east of Port Sudan. It has a British-built lighthouse and is now designated as a Marine Park. There are many good dive sites on the reef, mostly in deep water alongside steep gradients. The prevailing wind and current are north to south, giving drift dives of several kilometres along the east face and sheltered diving at the southern end in Winter.

The south west point would give a typical Sanganeb dive; either side of the point the gradients go down to some 70 metres then shelve-off deeper. White tip greys and



hammerhead sharks are common below 45 metres on these gradients. Below the point is a sandy shelf at 20 metres, which shelves out to 36 metres some 60 metres south west towards the sea. Here there is a good current and lots of white tip greys and hammerhead sharks. Anchoring on the point you kit up and drop into the water. The first people into the water spot large groupers scurrying across the sand into holes in the coral. Large inquisitive Napoleon fish come to inspect you. Above the sand is a shoal of several hundred schooling barracuda. You drift down into the sand in amongst the barracuda which circle around you. Trigger fish guard nest holes in the sand and make attacks. You head out south west to the end of the point followed by the barracuda and here you see white tip greys and hammerhead sharks. You have to be aware of your oxygen supply at this point because adverse currents can make your return arduous. Nearer the surface at the point there is an abundance of colourful fish and coral: blue spotted sting ray; surgeonfish; clown fish; lionfish; caranx; barracuda; eagle ray; tuna; double headed parrot fish; puffer fish; angelfish; butterfly fish; sling jaw wrasse; rainbow wrasse; fusiliers; unicorns; soldier fish; moray eel; cleaner fish; goat fish; gaterinus; nudibranch, stone fish; scorpion fish; red coral trout; chromis; goldfish; anemones; stag horn coral.

The north point gets most of the bad weather, so it needs a relatively calm day to dive there, but then it's a superb dive. Like the south west point, the shallow waters offer plenty of variety for divers.

The south face is well sheltered from all but the occasional south wind and can be easily reached from the south jetty of the lighthouse, so it can be dived in almost all weathers and also makes an excellent night dive. Tiger sharks and leopard sharks have been seen below the south jetty but very deep down.

Bottlenose dolphins circle Sanganeb and Sha'ab Rumi constantly but are hard to approach. Schools of common dolphins come into the lagoon in rough weather, as do sometimes sailfish. Turtles are plentiful but tend to be shy.

Sha'ab Rumi - North of Sanganeb lies the atoll of Sha'ab Rumi, where in 1963 Jacques Cousteau's team performed a number of experiments. The habitats were removed, but the submersible garage, a tool shed and fish pens still remain on the sand at nine metres. When I first dived there in 1975 there were plenty of large fish, but Italian dive boats anchored in the lagoon have spear fished it out.

The north point of Sha'ab Rumi is very colourful with large shoals of the smaller fish, but the south point is on a par with Sanganeb, teeming with fish life in the shallower water and large



white tip, grey and hammerhead sharks. Some shark feeding has been tried there, so they come in very close.

Arous - North west of Sha'ab Rumi on the beach at Arous, there is a poor copy of a Club Mediterranean type beach complex. There is no proper road to it and fresh water has to be brought in by road tanker on the dirt track from Port Sudan. Unfortunately the early management encouraged spear fishing so the nearby reefs were soon fished out and are now poor diving. However, it is a base for getting to the outer reef of Sha'ab Su'adi which has many good dives and the wreck of the 'Blue Belt'.

CONCLUSION:

The Sudanese Red Sea is one of the best and clearest waters in the world for divers. There is no appreciable tide and few currents to worry about, so the diving is safe if the rules are followed. There are plenty of shallow water dive sites but the best visibility is over deeper water. The top ten metres have prolific coral, and fish life of endless variety. There are plenty of sharks, but they are usually below the thermocline which varies between 30 metres in Winter and 45 metres in Summer. The water clarity can be a hazard, as it is easy to become absorbed and lose track of time. It is important to remember that there are no useable recompression facilities in the Sudan, so dives need to be planned well, and it is important to stay within the tables. If you are feeling a bit down, it is best to take the day off.

Jack Jackson runs a travel company which specialises in travel to the Sudan. In particular, he is a specialist photographer, diver and railway expert.

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ONE DAY SYMPOSIUM AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 1988

The Symposium and AGM will be held on Saturday September 24th 1988, at the Sudan Cultural Centre, 31-32 Rutland Gate, LONDON, SW7 1PG.

It is hoped that the programme will be wide-ranging and will appeal to all our members. Bearing this in mind, papers of general interest and which are non-technical are welcomed on any subject relevant to the Sudan. If you would like to present a paper, please write to the SSSUK Chairman, at the address below, by June 15th.

Professor G.N. Sanderson,
(Chairman, SSSUK),
2 Alder Close,
Englefield Green,
EGHAM,
Surrey,
TW20 0LU.



SUDANESE STUDIES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Peter Woodward was one of a handful of SSSUK representatives at the recent conference on Sudan Studies: Past, Present and Future.

Back in 1963 the Sudan Research Unit was established as a department within the Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum, and in 1972 developed into the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS). It was appropriate therefore that in January 1988, twenty five years later, scholars from Sudan and around the world should meet and discuss 'Sudan Studies: past present and future'. The conference was jointly organised by the IAAS and the Faculty of Arts and held in collaboration with the Sudan Studies Association (SSA) of the USA.

Much work had been done by the steering committee, Mahdi Amin El Tom (Vice-Chancellor of the Omdurman Islamic University), Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim (Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum), Sayyid Hurreiz (Director, Institute of African and Asian Studies - IAAS), 'Usman Hussan Ahmed (Khartoum International Centre for Arabic, ALECSO) and Mom K.N. Arou (Head of the Afro-Asian Department of the IAAS). In addition, Constance Berkley, James Sulton, David Sconyers, James Hudson, Mahjoub El Badawi and Ahmed Kheir also served as the American coordinating council. The founders of the SSA, Richard Lobban and Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban were also involved with the organisation. Contributions of various kinds were also made by the Minister of Finance, Chevron, UNHCR, the American Ambassador, USAID, USIA, and the British Ambassador.

The conference was opened in the splendid new Sharjah Hall by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Khartoum, and former Director of the Institute, Professor Yusuf Fadl Hassan; and the conference was honoured with the delivery of the main opening address by the Prime Minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi. As the opening speeches rightly remarked, there were indeed many achievements to recognise.

In reviewing the state of the art, the conference began by looking at the spread of Sudanese studies around the world including as well as the United States and Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, Egypt, France and Australia (Norwegian studies at Bergen were regrettably not represented). The number of centres represented and the range of activities showed how widely interest in Sudan has spread around the world. Tony Trilsbach ably described the way in which studies in Britain were seeking to continue, in spite of the cuts in higher education in the field of African Studies generally. There was considerable interest in SSSUK and many new members were recruited from around the world, most especially from France.

The other main theme in the review of the art was that of the state of different disciplines. Following a general overview of studies in Sudan by Mohamed Omer Beshir, those disciplines specifically reviewed included history, geography, social anthropology, linguistics, law and politics. There were additionally a wide range of papers on all these



subjects, together with some topical themes such as drought and refugees. Particularly practical was the inclusion of a very useful panel on documentation on Sudan. Plans are afoot for publication and it is hoped that before too long a selection will appear in print.

As always at conferences at the Institute the reception for foreign participants was of a kind that embarrasses those of us who invite guests to conferences in Britain. Accommodation was provided in the Sudan Hotel and at the Chevron Guest House, while USAID loaned comfortable transportation. An excellent programme of receptions and entertainments was organised, including of course a memorable Nile cruise.

All was not entirely rosy, however, for the conference was repeatedly made aware of the problem of resources, especially library materials, which the shortage of foreign exchange makes so difficult to obtain. Any donations or contributions which members of SSSUK may be able to make with regard to useful library materials will be much appreciated. A concern nearer home was the limited contribution Britain was able to make by way of attendance. In addition to Tony Trilsbach and myself, the only others able to make the journey were Richard Hill and Tim Niblock, while Roland Stevenson was already on the ground in the Institute. Several of SSSUK's overseas members were also present. There was unfortunately no support available from official sources, which was a sad note in view of Britain's past involvement with both the Sudan and the University of Khartoum. The British contingent was vastly outnumbered by the Americans, and once more by the French whose rising interest in Sudanese Studies continues. However, what the British lacked in numbers was made up for in quality, for I doubt if anyone who attended will forget Richard Hill's marvellous recounting of the story of the Sudanese Battalion in Mexico, 1963-1867; it was one of the highlights of the conference.

There are two pleasing notes to end on. The first was the reception in the Friendship Palace Hotel given by the Sudanese-British Friendship Society. After a dormant period in the later years of Nimieri, when the government tried to oversee all such groups, the society has emerged once more. The second was the award of a medal to the SSSUK chairman 'Sandy' Sanderson for his work in helping the establishment of the Sudan Research Unit twenty-five years ago; he was the only non-Sudanese honoured in this way.

Dr P Woodward is Lecturer in Politics at the University of Reading and is the current Deputy Chairman of SSSUK.



A WALK IN JEBEL MARRA (Part Two)

David Else continues his three part story of a walk in Jebel Marra in December 1984.

Scrambling down on to the crater floor, we discovered that the water in the lake was stagnant, sulphurous and definitely undrinkable, but there was a tiny spring in some marshy ground where animals had come to drink, and inconsiderately fouled. It didn't look very good but, having little choice, we filled our bottles from the spring and added a liberal dosing of purification tablets!

Then things began to get difficult. The walk across the crater floor was harder than we had expected. Looking down from the rim it had appeared smooth, but it was covered in pumice stones and crossing it was like walking along a storm beach. Then, when we did get to the far side, we couldn't find the path out of the crater. After following a number of false trails, it began to get dark, and we were still nowhere near finding a way out.

Suddenly, a white-robed figure on a donkey loomed out of the darkness and then just as suddenly seemed to disappear again into a crack in the rock. We went towards the crack and found the donkey tethered outside the entrance to a low cave and the man we'd seen about to go inside. He was a Fur, but by using very bad Arabic as our common tongue we explained where we were heading. He made it clear that it was much too dark to go climbing up sheer cliffs and said he would show us the path out of the crater in the morning.

His name was Mohammed, and he told us that he lived alone in this cave watching over a few cows and a herd of goats that grazed upon the tough grass growing against the pumice. How old he was, or how long he'd lived in this isolated place, was impossible to guess. We shared our dates and lentils with him while he gave us fire-blackened potatoes to eat, and as it got colder we drew closer to the fire, Mohammed wrapping himself in an old blanket and us crawling fully-clothed into our sleeping bags.

As the fire burned low it got colder still. The full moon rose up over the rim of the crater, bathing the mist-covered floor in a weird ethereal light. A gentle wind blew shrouds of mist across the lake hiding all but the very tops of the trees. Strange sounds startled us: the occasional goat called out in the night, and on the cliffs above us baboons stirred in their branches. Mohammed had obviously seen and heard it all many times before and snored untroubled in his blanket. But for us - cold, tired and footsore - being unable to sleep easily was a small price to pay for the opportunity to experience this timeless environment.

David Else completes his story in the next issue. He is a former teacher of English in the Sudan and is the author of the No Frills Guide to Sudan, published by Bradt.



SUDAN RAILWAYS

Simon Bush updates his article on Sudan Railways which appeared in the last edition of *Sudan Studies* (Number 3, pp.5-7).

The Sudanese press has recently started to attack the Sudan Railways Corporation for the poor service offered to the travelling public and this adds to the information supplied in my previous article on the Corporation.

Recent years have witnessed an overwhelming deterioration in the standard of all passenger carriages. Cleanliness, cold water and complete illumination and soap and towels no longer exist. Sophisticated buffet services have disappeared. The poor passenger is left alone with dust and darkness!

The passenger cars themselves are in bad shape. Left as skeletons the doors and windows are broken with light fittings non-existent. Drinking water is not available and passengers now carry supplies of water with them. Toilets are broken and in any case because of overcrowding are used as passenger accommodation.

All this has been the result of absence of maintenance work. The Corporation used to send all passenger cars for major maintenance in Atbara every two years. This stopped in the mid 1960s. Regular and casual maintenance was also performed in Khartoum. Today decent carriages are cannibalised for fittings because of a shortage of spare parts. Khartoum has become a graveyard for carriages. Thieves have also meddled with carriages stealing metal and timber from the frames.

Most of the carriages now in service are more than ten years old. The newest are carriages imported from Hungary and put into service in 1978. These form the mumtaz (excellent) stock on long distance services and are now in very bad condition. The majority of carriages in regular use however, are more than sixty years old and have been working for that time.

The length of line owned by the Sudan Railways Corporation is now 5,500 km, being the third longest in Africa after South Africa and Egypt. According to contemporary engineering standards Sudan rails are the worst in the world. They are narrow (only 3.5 feet apart) and the rails themselves are only 90lb. These factors limit the average speed of trains to 60 km/hr.

Most of the information in this article was obtained from Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reports (Arabic Weekly Reports Section).



ATTACK ON THE SOBAT

R.O. Collins reproduces a short extract from his forthcoming book Jonolei: A History of the Hydropolitics of the Nile describing the attack on Sobat Camp on 10th February 1984 by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA).

On 30th November Joseph Oduho wrote to the Egyptian ambassador to Kenya in which he gave specific reasons for Garang's decision to have the SPLA terminate the excavation of Jonglei. The abrogation of the Addis Ababa agreement was the cause for the resumption of the civil war, but the stoppage of work on the canal was the result of the unkept promises to the Southern Sudanese, and the failure to install the pipes for drinking and irrigation water led the list.

Work on the canal must remain stopped until these and other grievances - the failure to build schools, dispensaries, and bridges- were satisfied otherwise no work need take place till our control of the Sudan is complete (Joseph Oduho, Chairman of the Political and Foreign Affairs Committee of the SPLA to H.E. Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Kenya, 30th November 1983). On 7th December he prepared a second letter to Chevron, Total Oil Company, and CCI (the French Company responsible for excavating the canal) demanding that CCI cease operations immediately, assuring the company 'that it (SPLA/SPLM) had no grudges and had no intentions to renegotiate agreements to replace CCI.

"Although we are aware that your firm was only hired to excavate the canal, you will however realise that there are parts of the agreement that deal with the welfare of the people whose life would be affected by the canal as well as the wildlife of this region of our country."

These issues had not been resolved.

"In the meantime agricultural projects, hospitals, towns and model villages that were to be carried out in the canal zone will only remain in the text of the agreement never to be executed after you have completed your works on the canal. You can therefore see our determination to see to it that the work on the canal stops" (Joseph Oduho to Chevron, Total, and CCI companies, 7th December 1983).

Meanwhile the Bucketwheel excavator had already reached kilometre 267, having excavated 65.5 million m³ in five years. The construction of Jonglei was ahead of schedule and its completion by 13th March 1985 seemed more than assured.



The presence of an unfilled canal cutting across the Nilotic plain was a dramatic symbol of the changes rapidly descending upon the peoples of the canal zone whose herds, as well as wildlife, were already having to cope with the presence of a big ditch without water whose steep sides at canal level presented an insurmountable obstacle. Moreover, the fragile structures which marked the beginnings of the Kongor integrated rural development project, the frustrated efforts to promote fishing in the remote regions of the permanent swamps, and the failure of the mechanised farming at Penykou all seemed a pathetic response if not betrayal of the promises made by Abel Alier in his ringing speech before the regional assembly in November 1974 “to drive our peoples to paradise” by the economic and social development of the canal zone. The Jonglei Canal was no longer a daring engineering project in the hydrologic development of the Nile Valley, but the symbol of all the frustration and resentment produced by the failure of the national council and the Jonglei Executive Organ to match the success of the canal builders. No one was more aware of this than Colonel John Garang, the student of Jonglei and resident from the region who perceived that to terminate construction of the canal would not only embarrass the Sudan government but would be popular among the people upon whom he was dependent for the local support and success of the Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Movement in the Upper Nile.

In fact the Bucketwheel had already come to a halt, following the abduction of CCI personnel in November 1983. Most of the remaining French and Pakistani engineers and technicians were then withdrawn to Sobat Camp; wives and children were quietly returned to France. At Sobat the French began to dismantle the camp with the intention to move it to Bor, a project which had been previously scheduled by CCI but which could now be facilitated while the Bucketwheel was shut down. Reinforcements from the Sudan army appeared to support the platoon assigned to protect the installation. The French had no further warnings, for unfortunately the letter from Joseph Oduho was too little too late. In an interview on the BBC during the first week of February 1984 Benjamin Bol Akok, the representative of the SPLM in Great Britain, indicated that a letter had been written to CCI via the French embassy in London. It reached the Khartoum office of CCI on 14th February, four days after the SPLA had attacked the Sobat Camp, driven off the defenders, and destroyed much of the facility on Friday 10th February. The previous evening an ominous silence had settled over the camp.

“We (Mme Vidal, M. Ben. M. Reynaud, and Peter Clarke) were eating on the verandah. There wasn’t any noise. There was a silence to which we were not accustomed....and the dog too, she was worried. So when we finished eating we



took the dog, and we walked Peter (Clarke) to his bungalow and then returned. But it was all so strange because (there was) nobody, nothing, not a noise, just an agonising silence. And suddenly around a quarter to four (in the morning), I heard a loud “BOOM”. I got up and put on a jellabia and began to make coffee. You could hear the mortars firing in both directions. A bullet went through the bungalow; the rebels were in the garden and the government troops were behind it (in the bungalow). Bullets were going through in all directions banging on the saucepans. We were caught in a crossfire. I was thinking “When the day comes, they will stop”, but No! They kept on shooting until 9 (a.m.).” (Mme Lucette Vidal to the author, 12th January 1987).

The SPLA had in fact infiltrated themselves between the Sudanese guards stationed on the perimeter and the installation itself so that the stores and living quarters were caught in a crossfire which cut down Peter Clarke, the Australian bush pilot, near his plane on the exposed runway. The SPLA took six hostages indiscriminately, two French, a Scot, a Kenyan Englishman and his pregnant German wife, though they specifically sought the camp doctor without success. Having routed the Sudanese guards, the SPLA did not remain long. One drank coffee with Mae Vidal; others liberated the bar and told the French to leave immediately for they would return that night. Then they disappeared as silently as they had come.

Upon their departure pandemonium broke over the camp like a thunderstorm, and there was a general rush for the motorised barge, the Biarritz, under the command of Captain Eugene Chevrolleau which had fortuitously arrived at Sobat Camp from Dor about eight o'clock to see the smoke rising from the burning stores and commissary before docking to take on the camp personnel as the SPLA departed with their hostages (Mme Claire-Lise Chevrolleau to the author, 12th January 1987). Most rushed to the barge with only the clothes they had hastily donned; there were others with more presence of mind to return for a dog, the cash box, spare parts. By midday the Biarritz was steaming for Malakal where Chevron at the request of CCI had hastily mobilised its fleet of aircraft to fly out the evacuees. CCI immediately announced the termination of all work on the canal leaving behind the ruins of Sobat Camp to join the lone, stark dead tree as the landmark of the confluence of the Sobat and the White Nile.

Bob Collins is Professor of History at the University of California (Santa Barbara). He has published several books and articles on the Sudan, mainly about the South.



NEW RESEARCH

Helen Wood summarises work which she will be carrying out over the next two and a half years as part of her Ph.D. at the University of Durham. Her provisional title is “Water Supply Management in Semi—Arid Sudan”.

The problems associated with water supply in semi-arid Sudan are well known, especially since the drought of 1994 which became a focus of world attention. The particular aspect of water supply being studied in this research is its management, mainly with reference to the area around En Nahud. There are many dimensions to the work, but two themes will be studied in greater detail: the capacity of people to migrate, and a comparison of the value of traditional and modern sources.

The capacity of people to migrate - The effectiveness of rural water supply relates to the initial input (especially precipitation), managerial decisions (such as those relating to well digging and deepening, pumping hours, and water charges) and the demand (linked to population mobility). Previous work has identified migration to be the ‘pressure valve’ in the relationship, but the capacity to migrate has been influenced by factors such as the acquisition of household property; expansion of the secondary and tertiary sectors; desire for wealth from dry season employment; the symbolism of progress afforded by sedentarism; and aspirations. This raises a number of specific questions which will be addressed in the field. The most important of these are:

- 1) Has crisis—movement from a sedentary base replaced planned patterns of movement (ie traditional nomadic and transhumant) within the area?
- 2) Is full sedentarism a lifestyle goal, or are traditions of movement still considered important? - How much has sedentarism been a short-term expedient?
- 3) On what basis, and by whom, are decisions made to move and relocate.

Traditional versus modern sources - Recourse to ‘traditional’ sources has been viewed as a positive management option when water is abundant, conserving pump fuel at ‘modern’ sources and maximising the usage of available water supply. Generally, however, this is conceived as a negative consequence of over-stress of the modern sources, resulting from pump-breakdown; fuel shortage and insufficiency to meet demand (relating to population concentration and source preference). A number of related questions to these points will be investigated in the field, such as:

- 1) To what extent is the informal social order responsible for patterns of water usage?
- 2) How much are formal management practices providing opportunities and constraints upon usage?

These questions will be considered in relation to migration patterns, sociological factors, problems of transporting water, rainfall characteristics, the range of water source types available (with particular emphasis on geological variations) and operational constraints.

Helen would be pleased to discuss/exchange ideas on the subject of this article. She can be contacted at the University of Durham, Department of Geography, Science Laboratories, South Road, DURHAM, DH1 3LE



SAILORS OF THE DESERT

THE MARITIME TRADITION OF THE NUBIAN NILE

Stephen Kontos investigates traditional maritime trade on the Nile north of Dongola.

The Sudan is not a country known for its mariners, and for an area so chronically poor in transport, it is remarkable how little the Nile River serves as a means of travel. Only in the Twentieth Century, however, has the Sudan fallen far behind the rest of the world in its transportation capabilities, particularly the movement of goods. In effect, it has neglected the old modes of transport, such as camels and boat, for new modes which it is not yet able to support. In a country once spanned by trans-African trade routes, this is a sad irony indeed.

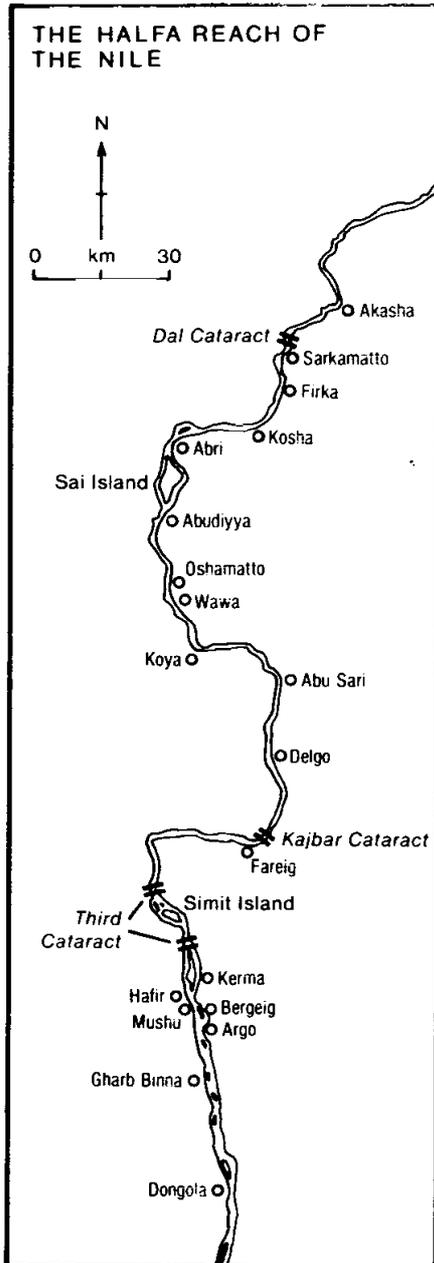
Nowhere has the decline been more pronounced than on the river. Sudan's River Transport Corporation or 'RTC' (a government entity) notwithstanding, the Nile is now virtually unused as a means of moving cargo. The neglect of river transport long predates the present civil war in the south; moreover, navigational barriers such as cataracts and shallow water are, in most places, not so great as to block passage by low draft vessels. As recently as a generation ago, wooden sailboats of a traditional design still carried on a substantial trade along the river. Such boats can still be seen up and down the Nile, even new ones under construction near Omdurman, but they are, with few exceptions, small versions used for fishing and ferrying inhabitants of the Nile's many islands to and from the 'mainland'. Only in the Northern Province near the town of Dongola and occasionally on the White or Blue Niles, can one find the larger, long-distance cargo boats once common on the river.

The traditional Sudanese boat called a markab (pl. marakib), is unique to the Nile between Wadi Halfa and Kalakal. It is distinguished from its Egyptian counterpart primarily by the huge rudder which is up to one third the length of the entire boat and improves manoeuvrability in fast current. As described by one of the officers who accompanied Lord Wolseley's relief force in 1884/5 the markab is "like half a walnut shell in shape", made entirely from wood, and propelled by a single square sail. Each boat is built by hand, from the shaping of individual planks to its final assembly. Though crude and heavy, it is well suited to the Nile, able to withstand blows from rocks and sail in depths as shallow as two feet. To guide a markab, the boatman must negotiate wind and current, usually no problem in areas where the flow of the river and the prevailing winds move in opposite directions. The boat merely moves with the current downstream and, to return, sails upstream with the wind behind it.

Until the mid 1960, the marakib supported a profitable though geographically limited trade in the area from Dongola north to Egypt. The trade arose from the fortunate coincidence of the date harvest in September with the peak of the annual Nile flood, normally from August through October. Boats ranging from thirty to a hundred tonnes in capacity would make their way down the river picking up newly harvested dates as well as crops from the previous spring harvest, notably beans and fennel. At flood stage, the Nile rises seven to ten metres above its normal level (depending on topography) submerging virtually all obstacles. The boats were therefore able to sail without difficulty down to the head of the Second Cataract. The Second Cataract, however, presented too formidable a barrier at any stage of the river, so



cargoes were off-loaded and carried overland the remaining twenty kilometres to Wadi Halfa and from there by boat again to Aswan. The strong winds which begin to blow from the north at that time of the year enabled the boats to return quickly up river with loads of imported goods and then to pick up more dates. Depending on the duration of the flood, one boat could complete several trips before low water made passage over the cataracts too risky. At its height in the early Twentieth Century, the riverain trade in dates to Egypt (or to Khartoum via the railhead at Wadi Halfa) probably reached a volume over 20,000 tonnes per year.



The history of the Nubian river trade can be traced to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, during which time all of Nubia came under the political and economic domination of the pharaohs. Archaeological finds from the Second Cataract up to Karma (near Dongola) indicate that the river was heavily used for transportation of goods between Nubia and Egypt. Although passage was restricted by the level of the river, the ancient Egyptians extended their navigational season several months by constructing barrages at several key points and, at the Semna Cataract, a slipway over which boats could be dragged around the most difficult part.

Boats remained the primary means of transporting goods in the Nile Valley until the first millennium BC, when camel caravans began to play a greater role in trade. William Adams in his book *Nubia: Corridor to Africa*, argues that this innovation fundamentally changed trade patterns in the Sudan:

“The advent of the caravans ended the age-old dependence of trans—Saharan commerce upon the Nile. While the river route remained important for centuries to come, it no longer monopolised the traffic in products of tropical Africa. From that moment, we can trace the decline in Nubia’s economic fortunes which has continued into modern times.”

(p. 304)

From then on, though the bulk of the trans-Sudan trade bypassed Nubia via the Korosko road (from modern Abu Hamed to Wadi Haifa), goods to and from Nubia itself still went by the river route. The rough, rocky terrain prevalent in that area (the same geological strata that give rise to the numerous cataracts in the river) makes it unsuitable for camels, whose soft feet are adapted to sand.



Hence, boats remained important to local trade -primarily the export of high quality dry dates from the Mahas and Sukkot districts in upper Nubia. Even the advent of motor vehicles did not alter the situation much, as truck transport was (and is) not only uneconomic but severely hampered by the rugged landscape and the absence of roads.

Over the centuries, Nubian boatmen carried their skills to other parts of the Sudan, partly in the course of trading and partly in search of timber for boat-building. The father and brothers of Mohammed Ahmed ed-Dongolawi, the Mahdi, were all boat-builders and are said to have migrated from Dongola to Omdurman and, later, Aba Island to be closer to sources of timber. Nubia, however, still retained its pre-eminence as a maritime centre, its boatmen reputed up and down the Nile for their skills. Lack of timber in the north did not hinder Nubian boatmen, as many boats -particularly the larger ones- were built in Omdurman or farther south and then, during the flood season, piloted down river to Nubia where they saw regular service.

Even during the first half of the Twentieth Century, the marakib still played an important role in Nubian economic life. But as the pace of change increased, particularly with the establishment of a rudimentary transportation network centring on Khartoum, the overall pattern of the Sudanese economy began to shift. Without roads, rail service, or a modern barge service (the regular RTC route stopped at Dongola), Nubia became even more of a backwater. Increasing numbers of its youth migrated, farms deteriorated, and the government devoted its resources elsewhere. Nevertheless the date trade to Wadi Halfa and Egypt carried on, the marakib still unchallenged in their inhospitable domain.

The trade came to an abrupt end in 1964, after the completion of the Aswan High Dam. The headwaters of the dam (Lake Nasser/Nubia) flooded lower Nubia's settled areas, including the important transit point of Wadi Halfa town. Because the dam displaced the entire population to new settlements far away (New Halfa in the Sudan and Kom Ombo in Egypt), it disrupted the trading network and the close ties which had existed among the Nubians on both sides of the border. Egypt and upper Nubia were now divided by an immense, uninhabitable no-man's land traversed only by several aging steamers operated under a Joint Egyptian—Sudanese monopoly. These served exclusively between Aswan and the railhead above the submerged town of Wadi Halfa, about one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest inhabited village located beyond the south end of the lake.

The marakib themselves were blocked by the lake as surely as they had been by the Second Cataract. Where the river flowed into the lake, the current stopped, leaving the boats unable to make further headway against the northerly winds. With 240 kilometres of boulder-strewn hills on the east side of the river and vast sand dunes to the west, an overland connection from the beginning of the lake to the new Wadi Halfa 'harbour' was simply not feasible.

Moreover, Nubian boatmen were in no position to modernise their profession, by acquiring motorised vessels. Apart from the fact that modern barges were not readily available anywhere inside the Sudan, the boatmen lacked both the capital and necessary mechanical skills. More important, private entrepreneurs had little incentive to invest in river transport. The government-owned RTC held a monopoly of the commonly used routes, and the Northern Province as a whole lacked the infrastructure -i.e., docks, repair facilities, sources of fuel and spare parts, etc- to support a modern shipping network. Consequently, after 1964, the use of marakib quickly declined, but no viable substitute materialised to replace them.



Thus, along with the disruption of the old trading network in lower Nubia, the inability of the marakib to sail into the lake cut off virtually all exports of dry dates from upper Nubia (Mahas and Sukkot Districts) to Egypt.

The management of the RTC was sufficiently aware of this problem to consider extending its regular Karima-Dongola route as far north as the Sukkot District during the flood season. Although an RTC steamer with two barges successfully completed a trial voyage in September 1966, the extended service never started. Not even a trial voyage took place between Sukkot and Wadi Halfa or Aswan, however; nor was any effort made to establish either a water or land transportation link from Halfa to the south end of the lake.

The demise of Nubia's trade to the north, combined with government neglect; hastened the decline of its economy. While it had been a net exporter of agricultural products, even wheat, in the 1920s, by the 1980s it was dependent on imported food paid for largely out of remittances from immigrant workers in Khartoum and the Gulf countries. The loss of the river trade no doubt contributed to decreasing agricultural production in upper Nubia and the growing exodus of young men seeking employment (thirty five per cent of the male population by 1973, according to a European Community report).

The present lack of connections between northern Sudan and Egypt has shifted the orientation of Nubia's population towards the central Sudan. Today, the gateway to Nubia is, for all intents and purposes, Khartoum. Most goods shipped to or Nubia move by lorry over a desert track to the Nile at Korti and northward into Nubia (the rail link to Karima and RTC connecting service on to Dongola are generally avoided because of their poor service). A small volume of dates is still exported to Egypt, but these go by way of Khartoum and the railway from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa, eschewing both the overland route through Mahas and Sukkot as well as the Dongola-Karima-Halfa river and rail connection. In effect, Nubia - not to mention the Sudan as a whole- has turned away from a potential market of fifty million people for its dates and other agricultural products. Whether this has resulted more from political design or from economic circumstances it is not clear. What is clear, however, is that until the Sudan can find a way to restore its competitive advantage as a link between tropical Africa and the Mediterranean, its economy will continue to suffer.

Stephen Kontos is manager of the International Development, Western Management Company (USA). Between 1982 and 1986 he was based in Dongola where he managed the Tenneco Sahara Agricultural Venture, of which the Nile River Study was part.

A list of relevant references in support of this article is available from the Editor of *Sudan Studies* for £1 (unfortunately other currencies are not available unless a supplement to the value of £3 for currency conversion is also included).

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CURRENT AFFAIRS IN SUDAN

Charles Gurdon continues his series on contemporary political and economic issues in the Sudan. The column is based on reports prepared for the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), but the author stresses that this column presents a personal viewpoint and does not necessarily reflect the views of the EIU, SSSUK or anyone else.

THE POLITICAL SCENE:

Since the collapse of the coalition government on August 22nd, Sudan has, in theory, been running on autopilot. While most of the ministers have remained in their posts there has been no formal renewal of the agreement between the government coalition parties. Despite Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi's rhetoric, the reality is that Sudan is currently ungoverned and perhaps ungovernable. Instead it appears to be a collection of insoluble and interlocking problems which are covered by the veneer of a formal government and state structure.

It may be, however, that the lack of a formal coalition agreement is preferable to the rigidity and inflexibility of such a government. Last year the cabinet was dissolved twice because of unimportant differences between the two main coalition partners, the Prime Minister's Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Now, however, ministers are perhaps more independent and are less tied to party policy and are probably therefore more efficient. The cabinet, which in theory is divided along party lines, appears to be acting in a more technocratic and non-party manner. It now tends to be divided between hawks and doves rather than between Umma and DUP members. Unfortunately this means that, while the cabinet is unlikely to be split along party lines in the immediate future, it also seems incapable of taking any decisive action. It reacts to events rather than has any clear policies.

It is likely that this situation will continue because the parties cannot resolve their fundamental policy differences. Although there are some minor differences of economic and foreign policy, the major problems centre on how to end the civil war. This in turn hinges on the proposed role of Islam in such a heterogeneous society as Sudan. There are two polarised positions and the government vacillates between them.

The influential opposition National Islamic Front (NIF) is determined that the role of Islam should not be weakened and therefore opposes any dilution of Islamic sharia law, particularly in northern Sudan. By contrast the southern parties insist that in such a heterogeneous country there should be no dominant religion or legal system. The government has proposed a form of dual legal system whereby sharia law would only be applied to Muslims while the previous



secular laws would apply to non-Muslims. In reality, however, such a system would be unworkable since the country cannot be divided on such a basis because today Muslims, Christians and animists are often neighbours. If three neighbours are caught drinking beer, is it right that one can be flogged because he is a Muslim while the others are free to do so? Furthermore, Islam in Sudan is not homogeneous. While the Arab Sudanese may be orthodox Sunni Muslims or members of Sufi orders, amongst some non-Arab tribes in central and western Sudan religion is combined with pre-Islamic and animist ritual.

Although the government recently made some amendments, including the increase of the minimum age for the death penalty from 13 to 18, there is no indication that Islamic sharia law will be scrapped. Unfortunately the Prime Minister seems more concerned with appeasing the more fundamentalist elements of his Ansar movement rather than putting the interests of the whole population first. This is particularly important because in March he was going to try to become the new Imam or spiritual leader, as well as the political leader of the Ansar. It is also true, however, that both he and other Umma and DUP leaders are acutely aware of the potential threat from the Islamic fundamentalist NIF which might steal their own traditional conservative supporters.

In fact Sadiq may encounter some problems in achieving his aim because of the splits within the Ansar. His chances were not helped by the reaction of his influential second wife, Sarah, and others to the fact that last year Sadiq married a third and younger wife. One of the major reasons that he did so was that he hopes to unify the Ansar under him by marrying his cousin who is also a direct descendent of the last Imam el Hadi ml Mahdi.

The escalation of the civil war into northern Sudan has meant that there have been few other recent political developments. The wave of strikes and demonstrations ended in November and a number of policemen were charged with responsibility for the death of a few demonstrators in Atbara and a small town in North Kordofan. Although the majority of the political parties signed two charters as precursors for the proposed constitutional conference, they are meaningless unless the SPLA is prepared to join in. The veteran Nuba leader, Father Philip Ghabboush, has been expelled from his own Sudanese National Party because of his unilateral actions and lack of consultation. The government was deeply embarrassed and angry when an influential anti-government Iraqi Shi'a leader was assassinated in Khartoum, almost certainly by Iraqi agents, while attending an Islamic conference.

THE CIVIL WAR:

It is now five years since the southern garrison mutinies which led to the creation of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the current civil war. Tragically it seems no



closer to a political settlement than at any other time in the past five years. It seems to have settled into an annual cycle, whereby the army and the SPLA try to capitalise on their military advantage during the dry and wet seasons respectively, which are interspersed by half-hearted negotiations.

Every time it looks as if the mediation efforts might be successful, an event occurs which sets them back to square one. This has included the SPLA's shooting down of two civilian aircraft in August 1986 and May 1987 and its temporary capture of towns in northern Sudan. The border towns of Kurmuk and Geissan, which are too close to the Roseires Dam for comfort, were only recaptured from the SPLA after a major campaign. The SPLA later captured Kapoeta in eastern Equatoria and the army is now mounting a campaign to recover the town. On each occasion, northern public opinion has been outraged and the government feels obliged to end the dialogue. It has also been accompanied by a backlash, which has often been orchestrated by the NIF, against the southerners who are living in the northern towns.

Unfortunately the government managed to engender a patriotic spirit of 'defending the motherland' when Kurmuk was captured. It may decide to continue to tap these jingoistic and hawkish feelings rather than make any concessions to the SPLA. At the same time the

SPLA appears to believe that if it can extend the war into northern Sudan, as it has done in Blue Nile Province, the government will eventually collapse and it will pick up the spoils. The reality is that while it can maintain its campaign for many years it is unable to win an outright military victory, even with the support it is receiving from Ethiopia. Despite the fact that the government has been prepared on numerous occasions in the past to make concessions, the SPLA has cynically decided to hold out for its total demands. The result is that the suffering of the southern Sudanese civilian population, who the SPLA claim to represent, is being exacerbated week by week. The reality is that the government and the SPLA are equally reprehensible and are both guilty of prolonging a totally unnecessary conflict for their own selfish and deplorable reasons.

FOREIGN RELATIONS:

At the moment Sudan's foreign relations largely revolve around the civil war. Relations with Ethiopia have deteriorated sharply during the past quarter because of its escalating support for the SPLA.

Khartoum accused Addis Ababa of actually fighting alongside the SPLA in its capture of the border towns. Sadiq el Mahdi immediately cancelled his plans to visit Addis for an OAU conference. Later, however, a bilateral committee was formed to try and resolve the



outstanding problems between the neighbouring countries. Unfortunately a dispute over the location of the first meeting has delayed its progress.

Meanwhile, as the war moved into northern Sudan and has become increasingly portrayed as an Arab-African conflict, the government has managed to win the military support of a number of Arab countries. Libya increased its assistance and provided four MIG-23s, two of which have subsequently crashed or have been shot down. Its support is partly linked to the government apparently turning a blind eye to Libya's continuing use of Darfur as a springboard for its operations in Chad.

While not wishing to harm its gradually improving relations with Ethiopia, it is believed that Egypt persuaded Iraq to supply Sudan with military equipment in return for increased Egyptian military supplies in the Gulf War. Baghdad therefore supplied and ferried over 1,000 tonnes of equipment in 29 flights to Khartoum in November and December. Iran is now trying to match Iraqi assistance while Jordan and Saudi Arabia are also helping the government with military and financial aid.

THE ECONOMY

A major consultative meeting, which will be attended by all of Sudan's creditors and donors, is scheduled for April. It is hoped that the government will be able to unveil its new four year economic programme which will outline the way in which it hopes to tackle the economic crisis. Although no details have yet been revealed its general direction can be anticipated. Its general theme will be to try and walk a delicate tightrope between undertaking a full scale IMF-directed economic recovery programme, while ensuring that it is not so austere as to threaten the political stability of the country.

On the revenue side of the equation the government will try and maximise exports revenues, encourage remittances from expatriate Sudanese and increase the efficiency and scale of its tax collection system. This should be facilitated by the numerous devaluations which have led to a more realistic exchange rate. It will, however, also increase the cost of imports and thereby affect the balance of payments. At the same time, past experience has shown that it is world commodity prices, rather than exchange rates, which determined the performance of the export sector -after all, the Sudanese pound has been devalued by more than 500 per cent in the past decade but the volume and value of exports has not increased significantly in that period.

The government will attempt to reduce public sector expenditure in a variety of ways. The size of the civil service will be reduced and public sector salaries will be cut in real terms wherever possible. Unfortunately the war, which at about \$1 million/day is the largest



element of current expenditure, is unlikely to end in the coming year. Meanwhile, as with any country undergoing such an austerity programme, the financing of development projects will largely be left to the international donors. Consequently they will be undertaken on a project-by-project basis, as and when the finance is made available. This will continue the process of turning Sudan into a totally aid-dependent economy.

The most contentious economic issue is that of the proposed removal of government subsidies on basic foodstuffs. Recognising that this is a particularly controversial issue, which acted as a catalyst for the overthrow of former President Nimeri, the government will remain very cautious. Although it has already reduced some subsidies it will not remove them totally.

The development element of the new four year economic programme is likely to concentrate on the agricultural sector in general, and in the production of export crops in particular. There are already signs that both the 1987/88 sugar and cotton crop sales will be good, the latter partially because of the problems in the Egyptian cotton sector. The programme will concentrate on the rehabilitation of existing projects rather than the start of any major new development schemes. As with other IMF-directed economic recovery programmes, it will emphasise the need to encourage small scale farmers to increase production by increasing producer prices. The government will concentrate on reducing the obstacles which have hindered the agricultural sector in the past. However, since Sudan has always concentrated on agriculture it will not so much return to, but revive the sector.

Provided that the four year programme marks a major step in the right direction it can be expected that the international community will provide Sudan with financial assistance. This will help it to overcome the rigours of the austerity programme and reduce the hardship which is likely to affect the urban poor. Much of the aid will also be spent on improving the production, transport and marketing of export crops. The rehabilitation and improvement of the transport links, particularly to western Sudan, will also be a primary aim.

Charles Gurdon is a researcher in geography at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London. He also prepares quarterly political and economic reports on Sudan for the Economist Intelligence Unit.



BIRDS LIFE AT SANGANEB

Jack Jackson concludes his series of articles on the Red Sea Region with an introduction to the bird life. This theme will reappear in later editions of Sudan Studies with different authors.

Birds of the Sudanese Red Sea can be listed under two headings, those that reside and breed there and those that pass through, either on migration or by using the region as a wintering area.

In the Red Sea area, the resident birds are mostly found around human habitation and include crows, pigeons, turtle doves and black kites, together with Egyptian and other vultures. Birds that nest and breed locally, usually do so amongst the mangroves along the deserted parts of the coast or on the small islets; these often contain large colonies of terns and sooty gulls together with a single osprey nest. The osprey prey on both the gulls and the terns as well as fish, and the gulls prey on the tern chicks and eggs.

Many migrating birds, however, collapse of exhaustion along the coast; this situation can prove to be ideal for observing birds, and one particularly good location is Sanganeb.

Sanganeb has a lighthouse which attracts many migrating birds at night. Many of these die, although some stay a while to regain their strength. Some predators, such as kestrels and ospreys, stay for long periods, finding the weakened birds easy prey. Bee eaters fly noisily around the light all night before finally collapsing. Amongst the more surprising permanent residents are two small owls, one large owl which flies and feeds in daylight and a male osprey who never leaves but is visited each Spring by one of two females who then disappear, presumably to nest near Arous. Brown boobies, sooty terns and sooty gulls are also very common.

A comprehensive list of the Sanganeb bird life is not possible here, but the following lists may prove to be of interest:

Birds that breed locally include osprey; reef heron; crab plover; common noddy; greater crested, lesser crested, bridled and white checked tern; sooty and white eyed gull; brown booby and sooty falcon.

Birds that breed nearby include goliath herons (thought to breed in Saudi Arabia); grey herons (which breed in the Dhalak Islands), European spoonbill (which breed in the Farasan Islands) and Pelican (which breed in various parts of East Africa).

In May 1984 Don Smith set up mist nets at Sanganeb for two days at the tail of the migration. Over 100 birds were caught including 23 blackcaps; 15 garden warblers; 10 willow warblers; 16 yellow wagtails; 4 sand martins and 12 swallows. Also found was a new species of Red Sea cliff swallow - *Hirundo perdita*.

Also seen at Sanganeb have been house martins; golden orioles; European nightjar; turtle doves; grey plover; sanderling; various ducks; curlew; greater flamingo and black winged stilt.

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DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION IN THE SUDAN

Dr Gerald Wickens attempts to clarify some of the misconceptions which still hinder an understanding of many current environmental problems in Sudan.

There still appears to be some misunderstanding as to the cause of the recent poor harvests in the Sudan, being variously blamed on the 'lower than average' rainfall, deforestation and so forth. Unless the causes are properly understood, both short -and long- term projects will fail to alleviate the situation and may even do more harm than good.

Drought is a natural climatic phenomenon, as yet beyond the control of man. It is suspected but unproven that the increased albedo resulting from desertification may lead to a suppression in convective shower formation; increased wind erosion and dust transportation may have a similar effect (Grove, 1985). The cyclic nature of the rainfall has been discussed in an earlier paper by Mike Hulme (1987).

In contrast, desertification is man-made. It can be controlled and in a number of cases reversed. It is the combined effect of deforestation, overgrazing and overcultivation, whereby wind erosion, surface run-off and surface temperatures are increased, leading to a lowering of the water table, a decrease in available soil moisture and a reduction in both plant population and productivity.

The natural productivity of an environment is finite but may be improved artificially by fertilisers, irrigation, water harvesting techniques and so forth. As a short-term investment such improvements may be uneconomical but in the long-term extremely beneficial.

Since the natural productivity is finite then the carrying capacity of the environment for both man and his associated livestock is also finite and can only be maintained above the natural carrying capacity of the environment by imports of food, fuel and fodder. Desertification reduces the carrying capacity, and if allowed to proceed unchecked must inevitably result in famine and death.

The present conditions in the Sudan (and elsewhere) were predictable. The insidious process of desertification could have continued unchecked but for the impact of drought in the late 1960s dramatically accelerating the process. Without the drought it could have been early in the next century before the present effects were obtained, permitting opportunities for adjustment and amelioration. The drought provided no warning of the need to adjust and control desertification.

Unlike climatic changes, which act on a more-or-less broad front, desertification advances by the merging of expanding concentric circles of increasing aridity centred on townships, water sources and favoured grazing areas. Its southward progress has been variously estimated at 10-20 km/year, but as the pressure on an ever decreasing area of available arable and grazing increases (a process not helped by a population that is doubling itself every 25 years) so will



the rate of desertification accelerate. Indeed, I estimate that unless unchecked desertification will affect the rainforests of the Zaire Basin by the year 2050!

What are the causes of desertification and how can it be controlled? Not one but several factors are involved and the order of their importance may vary from place to place, although ultimately they arise from the problems of accepting the benefits of stabilised governments during the present century.

Improved medical and veterinary care has meant higher birth rates and increased life expectancy for both man and stock. There should now be no need to seek high birth rates as a means of ensuring population survival against such diseases as smallpox and rinderpest, tribal warfare and so on.

Increasing populations mean increased pressure on the environment for food, fodder, fuel etc. They also require water, utilising both renewable and fossil sources. With the establishment of schools, hospitals and other amenities, people naturally tend to congregate around the townships. The available arable land in the vicinity of such townships are cultivated under shorter and shorter fallow periods, fertility decreases and soil erosion increases. Similarly with livestock, they too demand more and more grazing and water as their numbers increase, an expansion partly encouraged by the opening up of previously ungrazed areas by additional watering points. Since the watering points were largely uncontrolled, overgrazing became more and more extensive. By the mid 1960s stock were actually dying from starvation when it was popularly believed that the cause was thirst.

The former bush fallow rotation was also a source of firewood. Without local plantations for fuel and timber townships have been more or less forced to destroy the trees in the immediate environs, and over the years, at ever increasing radii. What the people have not destroyed have died or been weakened by drought wherever the available soil moisture is depleted.

The problems of soil erosion were discussed by the Soil Conservation Committee in 1944 and the dangers of overgrazing by Harrison (1955). Immediate post-war financial restraints and the ending of British rule prevented the necessary research and training in desertification control and the provision of the necessary legislation for the implementation of the necessary measures throughout the Sudan. The former Conservation and Extension Department of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland is an outstanding example of what can be done in this field.

Regrettably some areas have been so devastated that they will never recover; elsewhere recovery will be slow and will only succeed if the people and the government cooperate in balancing the needs of the people and their livestock with the environment. The causes of desertification must be recognised by all.

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Dr Wickens has just retired from the Economic and Conservation Section of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

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WOOD ENERGY ECONOMICS AND MECHANISED FARMING

Tony Trilsbach reviews: SUDAN: THE ECONOMICS OF WOOD ENERGY PRODUCTION ON MECANISED FARMS, by Derek E. Earl, Sudan Renewable Energy Project report No.8, Energy Research Council and USAID (1985), 116pp.

This is the eighth report in a series produced for the Sudan Renewable Energy Project (SREP). It considers the current problems of rapid woodland destruction in Eastern and Central Sudan, where much of the wood is effectively lost for economic and energy purposes, merely as a consequence of trying to clear land for a fast expansion of mechanised food production. The report makes a number of suggestions as to how the clearance can be managed more efficiently, in particular discussing how the wood can be used for charcoal energy production and for environmental conservation. There is also comment that, during the emergency conditions of early 1985, efficient land husbandry helped to provide wood for a vast number of the refugees who had arrived from Ethiopia.

Much of the report focuses on 'practical' ways of dealing with an integrated land use programme, including consideration of factors such as the need for full land clearance prior to the cultivation season, problems of securing credit in advance, transportation bottlenecks and (in)efficiencies, and the effects of increased charcoal production on the energy economy as a whole.

It is clear that the report is successful in raising a number of issues and in putting forward proposals, but it does leave a number of questions unanswered. In particular, there is a notable lack of consideration about people. Much of the report concerns economics and environmental factors and, important as these are, one feels that situations are considered to be too ideal. There is insufficient consideration of 'apparently' irrational behaviour on the part of labourers and others who may feel they have rights of access to the lands discussed. There are comments about charging taxes for inefficient land use practices, but who would be responsible for policing and law enforcement? How should projects be planned when there is a high turnover of administrative staff, both within the projects themselves and at government/civil service level? Also, how useful are the costings factors when inflation is very high?

The fact that the report was completed, written and distributed in less than four months probably explains why many of the social issues were not fully addressed (if at all), but they could have been listed as factors for further consideration. However, it is easy to be too critical and, considering the speed at which the study was done, it does raise many interesting questions and makes a number of suggestions which may very well prove to be fruitful.

A limited number of copies of this report are available from Derek Earl. For details, please write to the SSSUK Secretary.

In addition to being the SSSUK Secretary and Editor of SUDAN STUDIES, Dr Tony Trilsbach is Temporary Lecturer in Geography at the University of Durham.



NATIONALISM AND FACTIONAL CONFLICT

James Chiriyankandath reviews: FACTIONAL CONFLICT IN THE SUDANESE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT 1918-1948, by Afaf Abdel Majid Abu Hassabu, University of Khartoum Graduate College Publications No.12, Ithaca Press (1985), 3 appendices (including biographical notes), no index, 179pp. ISBN: 0-086372-050-1.

This monograph, a 1980 University of Khartoum Ph.D. thesis, makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge about the evolution of modern Sudanese politics under the Condominium. Though it is based primarily upon the archive collections in the National Records Office, Khartoum, and the Public Records Office, London, Afaf Abu Hassabu has also made intelligent use of diaries, autobiographies and other published Arabic sources. Some of these, like Khidir Hamad's Mozakkarat Khidir Hamad: Al-Haraka al-Wataniyya al-Sudaniyya, al-Istiqlal wa ma Ba'dahu (Sharjah, 1980) and Ismail al-Azhari's diary (published in the *Al-Ayam* newspaper in June 1957), have not previously been utilised, at least not by scholars working in English. This, and the information she has gleaned from interviews with prominent participants in the nascent nationalist movement, enables Abu-Hassabu to add to what her predecessors in this field, Moddathir Abdel Rahim, Mohamed Omer Beshir, Gabriel Warburg and Peter Woodward, have already written. As the daughter of a veteran Unionist Party politician of the post-independence era, she was close to some of the personalities involved in the events she discusses yet manages to maintain a dispassionately objective tone which commands respect.

The study provides an interesting contrast to two more ambitious recently published works that cover the same period - Martin Daly's Empire on the Nile (reviewed in *Sudan Studies* 2), and Tim Niblock's Class and Power in Sudan: The dynamics of Sudanese Politics. 1898-1985 (reviewed opposite).

The focus of Abu-Hassabu's treatment will be particularly welcomed by those inclined to criticise Daly for the insufficient attention he pays to the Sudanese response to colonialism. However, while she brings forward much important detail about the developing politics of the new Western—educated townspeople in the 1920. and 1930s, her analysis would have benefited from both greater rigour and, paradoxically, a broader scope. Dismissing class analysis as unsuitable for application in the African context, she nevertheless retains the concept of an elite. However, this elite is never properly placed in context and its character and function within Sudanese society is inadequately explored.

Consequently, when, as in the case of the 1924 mutiny, groups on the periphery of the elite are involved, the question of how the different social forces interacted cannot be addressed. (The mutineers included many non-Arab soldiers from southern and western Sudan.)

To overcome this methodological problem, Abu Hassabu could have pursued an approach similar to Niblock's. He adopts a modified form of socio-economic class analysis which allows him to make better use of some of her material in his chapter on Sudanese nationalism.



Abu Hassabus research leads her to conclude that factionalism in Sudanese politics is, in part, a colonial heritage since,

'instead of eliminating them, the Sudan Government strengthened elements of factionalism and even created new ones' (p.155)

It is a judgement that serves to remind us that the ethnic, regional and sectarian problems that bedevil Sudan today are not just of the Sudanese' own making.

CLASS AND POWER IN SUDAN

Martin Daly reviews: CLASS AND POWER IN THE SUDAN: THE DYNAMICS OF SUDANESE POLITICS, by Tim Niblock, MacMillan Press, Basingstoke (1987).

There has long been a need for an economic history of the Condominium, and there is surely scope now for a political history of the Sudanese Republic. While Tim Niblock's Class and Power in Sudan is neither, it provides much useful information on both periods and subjects.

About two-thirds of the book (chapters 1-5) concerns the Condominium. Chapters 1 and 2 survey the development of the Sudan's economy up to 1956, and chapter 3 identifies and analyses social groups. Chapters 4 and 5 concern social and political movements and the drive for independence. On the political and administrative side there is little new here (although chapter 4 is entitled "Social Movements, Regional Movements and Administrative Organisation, 1898-1956", the section on "the administrative system" occupies less than a page), but the economic gloss is a welcome interpretation, and the tables will be useful.

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with post-independence politics. Chapter 7 especially, on the Nimieri regime, will be of interest as one of the first detailed studies of the period. Curiously, however, there is very little on the economic development of the republic.

The book will be useful as a source for economic and political statistics. There is no bibliography. The copious notes might have been reduced, full details are frequently repeated, not always consistently (one University of Khartoum thesis is given two variant titles, authors, dates, and even degrees), and there is a tendency to cite unpublished theses rather than their eventual published versions. In other cases, citations are incomplete, and number 58 in the text for chapter 1 finds no corresponding entry in the Notes. The previously unpublished information tabulated on pp.61-81 should surely have been relegated to an appendix. More importantly for a book that is bound to be cited in further political and economic studies, reliance on secondary sources for some statistics lengthens unnecessarily the historiographical paper-trail.

Dr M W Daly is Assistant Professor of History at Memphis State University (Tennessee).



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CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUDAN STUDIES

All members of SSSUK are invited to contribute to SUDAN STUDIES. The Editor is always pleased to receive short articles (c.350-500 words) on any subject related to the Sudan and its affairs. Original factual, research or philosophical articles can be accepted to a length of c.1500 words (longer by negotiation with the editor). Requests for specific information can also be included in the 'CAN YOU HELP' section.

Please note that the Editor is looking for members to contribute to regular features, such as DATA SOURCES IN THE UK, RESEARCH PROFILE, SUDAN MEMOIRS and TEACHERS IN SUDAN. Volunteers to write BOOK REVIEWS and design the CROSSWORD are also wanted. Please inform the Editor of Sudan publications noted in any discipline for inclusion in the regular list of references.

If members have any ideas about SUDAN STUDIES, for example with respect to format, length, new features and so on, please write to the Editor indicating whether or not you would wish your letter to be published (possibly in summary form).

All contributions to the newsletter should be typed or written in legible handwriting and sent to the Editor at the following address:

Dr A Trilubach (Secretary and Editor)

Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom

c/a Department of Geography

University of Durham

Science Laboratories

South Road

DURHAU CITY

DH1 3LE

UK



SIR CHRISTOPHER COX MEMORIAL FUND

Sir Christopher Cox, GCMG (1899-1982), was briefly a soldier, then a Classical scholar, an archaeologist and Fellow of New College, Oxford. He was also Director of Education in the Sudan (1937-9) and Principal of Gordon College. He later became Education Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and in 1946 helped to establish the Inter-University Council.

The Sir Christopher Cox Memorial Fund was established in 1983 in order to assist students in the United Kingdom from those universities in (24) developing countries associated with his name.

The Fund can be used to enable the presentation of books, the payment of grants for conference or seminar attendance, and the disbursement of modest awards to cover other legitimate expenses related to the student's course of study. It is not possible to meet the cost of tuition fees, maintenance or accommodation.

Half of the Fund has been raised from individual donations and half from the residual funds of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas.

The trustees are concerned that there have not yet been any applications from Sudanese, but they would very much like to receive some.

If you would like to receive more information, please write to:

The Hon. Secretary, Christopher Cox Memorial Fund,

74 Noah's Ark Lane, Lindfield, HAYWARDS HEATH, West Sussex, England, RH16 2LT

OMDURMAN AHLIA UNIVERSITY

Professor Mohamed Omer Beshir has asked SSSUK to announce that Ahlia University is now functioning (see *Sudan Studies* 2, p.32). The University will offer degrees, diplomas and certificates to a variety of students, including adults following full-time, part-time or extra-mural courses. Training will be given in educational, technical and professional subjects. Staff at the University are being encouraged to initiate and to participate in consultancy, as well as other 'normal' activities such as research and publishing. The University hopes to host academic conferences, seminars and workshops.

TAIL-PIECE

Mr A K (Freddie) Markland contributes another anecdote from the Condominium.

In the South I had occasion to write a letter to a court clerk telling him of a rise in his salary. But due to a regrettable error on my part the unfortunate clerk learned that his new salary was to be rather lower than that which he currently enjoyed. Back came the reply by return of cleft-stick: "Sir. Greetings. Every year until now the Government has given me increment. Alas, Sir, Why now am I to receive excrement?"