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# Power, Land and Ethnicity in the Kassala-Gedaref States: an Introduction

Catherine Miller<sup>1</sup>

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## The relevance of Regional studies

Sudan like many other countries has been torn up in the last two decades by political and regional conflicts. The future of the country is often questioned particularly concerning the increasing trend toward regionalism and politicization of ethnicity. The Sudanese political and humanitarian situation has been widely analyzed in both national and international circles and the relevant literature (books, articles, reports, etc.) are quantitatively impressive. However, due to the difficulties of field work researches in Sudan, many recent political studies lack a deep understanding of the regional societies and are based on written accounts (newspapers, political decrees, NGOs and UN reports, political parties memo, etc.). This type of analyses can prove useful to understand the general national and international context but they often cannot assess the complex reality of the local ground. And in Sudan, the 'local' or 'the regional' represent extremely vast areas whose history and societies remain relatively little known. In order to really understand the transformations of the Sudanese society it appears particularly important:

- a) to analyse what is really going on at the local and regional levels and to undertake 'bottom-up studies'
- b) to adopt a multidisciplinary approach showing the interaction between different processes
- c) to take into account the historical depth that may highlight the continuity and changes of those processes.

Area studies are often accused of sticking to a 'culturalist approach' and of lacking the theoretical contribution of social sciences. However regional-based studies can bring pertinent analyses in such a complex and diverse country and may help to better understand the fabrics of the Sudanese society and the reasons of the apparent dilution of so many regimes. Regional studies may also help to escape the bias of many analyses that too often stick to a centralised perspective and develop a dualistic perception based on simplified dichotomies (such as the centre versus the periphery, the educated elite versus the traditional tribal leadership, the modern economic sectors versus the traditional sectors, etc.). As pointed out by Stiansen and Kevane (1998), there is now a need 'to shift from a focus on central state and central institutions to a focus on the interaction between state and non-state institutions at the local level'. Regional historical and anthropological studies appear to be of the utmost importance in areas where ethnic conflicts are often fuelled by ideological distortions of a complex historical reality<sup>2</sup>. By linking the past to the present, regional studies break away from too many reports that stick to a purely factual and contemporary approach and tend to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Richard Lobban, Gerard Prunier and Endre Stiansen for their careful reading of this introduction and their comments. All the remaining errors are mine, of course. Special thanks also to Mustafa Babiker who wrote a preliminary paper entitled 'Resources Competition and the future of Pastoralism in the Butana Plain' which serves as a basis for the writing of the paragraphs dealing with changes in agricultural and pastoral systems (see below).

<sup>2</sup> Like everywhere, the history of the country has been subjected to many distortions. In Sudan there has been a tendency to emphasize the historical, cultural and social role of the Arab groups and to neglect the history of the other Sudanese groups. By reaction, the 'neglected groups' are now involved in trying to present 'their view' of the Sudanese history and some of them may fall in the same 'nationalist trap'. This crucial debate focusing on the Arab versus African contribution in the Sudanese History has been and still is the topic of many publications for the worse and the better. This is why detailed studies on local history are of the utmost importance.

situation in terms of disintegration, rupture, catastrophe, etc. Regional studies may not only help to better understand national realities but they may also bring their stones to more widespread issues. It may be relevant here to mention that some of the most important anthropological theoretical references were relying on Sudanese data.<sup>3</sup> Today the issues of regionalism, federalism and ethnic mobilization are a world-wide trend and became the favourite topics of many recent publications.

Concerning the now fashionable topic of ethnicity, ones may note here the change that occurred in Sudan (but also among so many countries) since the mid 1980's in both the academics studies and the public arena. While socio-economic studies framed in a Marxist theoretical approach and focusing on class formation appeared to have been dominant during the 1960s-70s and early 80s, most recent studies are focusing on ethnic and identity conflicts. The factors leading to this focus on ethnicity are well known (civil war and regional conflicts leading to increasing ethnical boundaries and ethnically-based fights) and we will not go into details on this subject. The civil war in Sudan had had a dramatic impact on ethnic mobilization all over the country and led to a vivid debate concerning the nature of the Sudanese state, the issue of national integration and the struggle between the dominants and the marginalized groups. Most recent studies on ethnicity in the Sudan<sup>4</sup> focus on conflict areas (Southern Sudan, Dar Fur, Nuba Mountains) and tend to indicate that ethnicity and its representative structures ('tribes')<sup>5</sup> emerge as the consequence rather than the cause of conflicts. To sum up, conflicts may help the coalescence of clans and lineages into larger political units with unified leadership, usually labelled 'tribes'. While in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century 'tribes' or ethnic groups were considered as old 'traditional' and 'stable' entities, the present perception is that ethnicity is a modern phenomenon demanding accommodation within the political life. The historical point of reference of contemporary ethnicity in Africa is often considered to be the colonial period (Salih & Markakis 1998:127) when people were obliged to react and adapt to radically changed circumstances. That ethnic groups or tribes are fluid social constructs that evolve according to the historical and political context as well as to the interactional settings is now a well established fact. The specific role of the colonial power and the supposed 'invention of tribes' by the colonial administrators remain however controversial issues.

Nowadays the Sudanese administrative reforms of 1994 (federalism and re-implementation of a native administration system) raise many questions. Do the administrative reforms try to adapt to the local social reality or do they participate in a kind of ethnic manipulation? At the time of our research (1995-1998) each group of the research area was involved in producing reports or memorandum aiming at showing its history, role and local legitimacy. This general context has no doubt influenced the researchers' awareness and make them paying due attention to ethnic construction and interaction. However, we need to remain sensitive to the influence that the general socio-political context can play on our academic orientations in order to distinguish between contingent and structural factors. It appears that the same types of conflict (involving mainly land competition) that were described in socio-economic terms (pastoral population versus farmers, big owners versus small farmers, tenants versus share croppers etc.) are now described in terms of ethnic competition. The issue of the relationship between, on the one hand, ethnic affiliation and, on the other hand, class, religious or political affiliations clearly needs more situational investigations taking into accounts the plurality of affiliation according to the contexts.

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<sup>3</sup> To quote two famous references that had long standing influence in anthropological studies : Evans Pritchard (1940) and its theory of the acephalous society relying on the Nuer example, Barth (1969) and his still relevant theorisation of ethnic boundaries

<sup>4</sup> See for example Fukui and Markakis (1994), Harir and Tvedt (1994), Lesch (1998), Salih and Markakis (1998).

<sup>5</sup> The term 'ethnic group' is often preferred to that of tribe because it is supposed to convey a more universal approach without the specific historical, geographical or evolutionist references of the term 'tribe' often associated with the racist theories of the nineteenth century evolutionist anthropologists. However, in Sudanese Arabic the term *gabila* (usually translated by the word tribe in English) is the most common word used by the people themselves to refer to ethnic grouping. This is why the contributors of the present volume use alternatively the terms tribe or ethnic group without any evolutionist connotation

## The Kassala-Gedaref Area in perspective

Until the agreement signed between the NDA (National Democratic Alliance)<sup>6</sup> and the SPLA (Southern People Liberation Army) in Asmara in June 1995 and the starting of the eastern military front in 1997 and in spite of its strategic border localisation, the Kassala-Gedaref Area was not considered as one of the main conflict zones of Sudan. But most recent events (the occupation of the Hamashkoreb Province by the NDA and the SPLA between March 1999 to November 2000, the attack of Kassala Town in November 2000, the tense relationship with the Eritrean government) have put the region under the spotlights. The contributions of this book do not address those recent political events but yet provide a detailed background of the area and discuss many relevant political, economical and anthropological issues such as the following.

The Kassala Gedaref area, formerly known as the Kassala Province up to 1994, appears very challenging because of its complexity and duality. When taking into account the relationship between the state and the region and when referring to a classical representation of a periphery politically and economically dominated by the centre, the area can be labelled as both 'central' and 'peripheral' with the characteristics of both the 'rich' and 'poor' regions of the Sudan. The sole tarmac road connecting Khartoum to Port Sudan crosses Kassala and Gedaref States, a fact that enhanced the commercial and agricultural development of the area since the late 1970s. Mechanized agriculture covers about 80% of the total arable lands and the expansion of mechanized and irrigated agriculture have attracted many migrants from different parts of the country. Associated with the expansion of mechanized agriculture is the development of a mercantile class, which monopolises the grain trade. According to economical criteria (Per capita income and Annual Family Income) the Kassala-Gedaref area ranks second or third in the country after Khartoum and the central region (Galal al-Din 1973, Niblock 1987). Other economic and demographic indicators (rate of schooling, health etc.) clearly indicate that Kassala and Gedaref States rank generally high in the national scale but with important internal disparities. At the same time extensive herding and semi-nomadism remain two important features of the region in spite of a very active process of sedentarization. And the problems related to land tenure (encroachment of grazing land and dismantling of animal corridors) have been among the main reasons that led many local actors to call for the revival of a kind of Native Administration in a region where ethnic entities are effective social and political structures in spite of population changes.

Kassala State is the fiefdom of one of the most important Sudanese *tariqa* (brotherhood), the Khatmiyya and is now the biggest centre of the Jama'at Ansar Al Sunna, a competitive force for both the National Islamic Front and the Khatmiyya. It is therefore a key region for the study of the impact of the 1989 Islamic regime (officially known as the National Salvation Revolution Government, *Inqadh*) and to analyse the interactions between the state and the local institutions in a country where rural areas constitute the support base of the main traditional political parties, i.e. Umma and DUP. Moreover the Kassala-Gedaref area is a strategic region bordering Ethiopia and Eritrea and throughout times groups of each side have crossed the border to find political asylum. Nowadays the area still hosts a large number of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees while a number of Sudanese opposition groups are based in Eritrea and occupy intermittently some parts of Kassala State. The oil pipeline, connecting the Sudanese oil fields to Port Sudan since 1999, is without any doubt an additional attractive strategic target.

The complex pattern of settlement (with many ethnic groups coming at different times and having different history and different ways of life) makes it a particularly interesting area to analyse the formation of ethnic and tribal entities and to study the interaction between different types of affiliations (such as political, religious, class or ethnic affiliations) in order to understand the factors of cohesion and division at both the regional and national levels.

The contributions of this volume have been divided in three parts and are presented here, in a rather conventional way, under three main themes:

- The political context and the interaction between the state and the local elites

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<sup>6</sup> The NDA gather all the northern political parties opposed to the 1989's regime and was created in October 1989. After many successive agreements (1990, 1993, 1994) it succeeded to sign together with the SPLA an important accord during a conference held in Asmara in June 1995. For more details Lesch (1998:187-209).

- The socio-economical context and the transformation of the agro-pastoral system
- The Population Profile and the issues of ethnic interaction and ethnic reprocessing

This thematic presentation aims at progressively shifting from a more general overview to detailed case-studies. However most of the papers deal with issues related to the social structures of the area, the sources of social and political legitimacy, the struggle for resources and power, the dialectical dynamics between local and national processes. The issue of the native administration system (its history, legacy, impacts, contradiction, abolition, revival) as well as that of ethnic formation are two of the federative themes cutting across most papers. This focalisation on Native Administration may appear as a kind of ‘archaism’ at a time when cellular phones are penetrating the area. However the concepts of native lands and native (or local) groups remain important bases for social and historical representation and are subjected to many historical reconstruction and manipulation. Ignoring this fact may lead to miss-understanding in the analysis of the current political and social struggles.

## The Political Context

### The Native Administration System : the phoenix of the Sudanese political life.

The Sudanese state may be described as a ‘segmentary state’, i.e. a state partly articulated to the regional society through the tribal structures and the tribal leaders.<sup>7</sup> The former kept important powers in spite of numerous political and administrative changes and in spite of the presence of other powerful institutions such as brotherhoods, political parties, associations, unions etc. The political and social influence of the ‘tribal leaders’ has often been considered as a remain of the legacy of the British colonial system of ‘indirect rule’ (native administration) and the question remains to assess if the present socio-political structure is still tributary of that system, especially in areas like eastern Sudan.

Since Independence, Sudanese Northern political life has been dominated by a fluctuation between military regimes (the ‘Abud regime from Nov. 1958 to Oct. 1964; the May Regime of Ja’afar Al Nimeiri from May 1968 to April 1985 and the *Inqadh* regime of Omar Al Beshir from June 1989 - up to time of writing) and short periods of ‘democratic rule’ (1956-1958; 1964-1969, 1985 -1989). Each democratic periods witnessed the re-emergence of the two leading parties (Umma and DUP) strongly connected with the religious brotherhoods (Ansar and Khatmiyya respectively) and believed to be deeply rooted in the rural areas as well as the presence of other parties<sup>8</sup>: SCP (Sudan Communist Party), NIF (National Islamic Front)<sup>9</sup> and regional based parties. Among those parties, the SCP<sup>10</sup> and the NIF are often labelled ‘modern parties’ characterised by their urban base and a strong ideology attracting the educated and/or urban working class. Regional based parties (such as the Beja Congress, the Dar Fur Front, the Nuba Mountain Front and the various Southern Sudanese parties)<sup>11</sup>, are characterised as indicated by their name by their regional base and agendas. They mainly attract the non-Arab educated elite of the ‘peripheral regions’ who criticises the economical, political and cultural

<sup>7</sup> For the theoretical development of the concept of segmentary state see Balandier (1967)

<sup>8</sup> The other very important party, the SPLM (Sudan People Liberation Movement created in 1983 by John Garang), the political wing of the SPLA was never allowed in Sudan and its leaders are all abroad. They never participated in any elections within Sudan.

<sup>9</sup> NIF was known as ICF (Islamic Charter Front) up to 1985 but his leader remains Hasan Al Turabi.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed history of the Sudanese Communist party see D. Fawzi (1981, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> The Beja Congress was created in October 1958. The Darfur Development Front and the General Union of Nuba Mountain were created in 1964. Those regional parties participated in the 1965’s parliamentary election. They were dismantled in 1969 by Nimeiri and officially re-emerged in 1985. Thirteen Northern and Southern parties then federated into the Sudan Rural Solidarity (SRS) which was again dismantled in July 1989. See Nur al-Din (1982), Bechtold (1976), Morton (1989) for an analysis of their parliamentary representation

domination of the Nile-Riverain elite and the marginalization of the periphery and calls for the accommodation of Sudanese ethnic plurality<sup>12</sup>.

An important aspect of the military regimes (both *May* regime and present *Inqadh* regime) has been their strong ideological stand, at least when they seized power. The May Revolution followed a pan-Arab, socialist ideological trend close to the Nasserists in Egypt and received the support of the SCP up to July 1971.<sup>13</sup> The *Inqadh* regime was closely connected with the NIF up to December 1999.<sup>14</sup> Both military regimes officially claimed their intention to transform the political and social structures of the Sudanese society and aimed at weakening the rural institutions and bases of the two leading traditional parties, the Umma and the PDU. The Nemeiri regime, following the nationalist trend, considered that the British Native Administration<sup>15</sup> was the main obstacle for a true reform of the rural society and officially abolished it in 1971 (1971 People Local Government Act). On the opposite, the *Inqadh* regime acted for the revival of the Native Administration structures and made it one of the pillar of its Islamic mode of governance.

The contribution of C. Delmet (this volume) reviews the history of the British Native Administration since 1922, its abolition in 1970 and its partial re-implementation in Kassala State in 1994. This issue of the Native Administration (N.A.) is particularly important for two main reasons:

- N.A. has been and still is widely criticised in the nationalist circles and some academics circles
- N.A. does not only regulate the control of the state over the local population but it has important consequences at the economical level (land rights) and at the social level (the formation of contemporary ethnic structures).

Since the Funj regime (al-Hakim, 1976, Spaulding 1985) and the Turco-Egyptian period, albeit in a less centralised form (Hold & Daly 1979), the state has always relied on local political structures to control vast areas. The tribal leader were thus recognised as the local owners and rulers of their tribal lands. The most important change brought by the British Native Administration (but this change was already in process during the Turco-Egyptian period) was the shift from a fluid hierarchical structure based on kinship ties to a fix and long-term established structure of authority (Delmet 1989). Most of the *nazirs* (paramount chiefs of big tribal groups or confederation) of the Kassala-Gedaref area appointed by the British belonged to well-known and historically (at least since the Turkiyya) dominant tribal ruling lineages such as the Abu Sin for the Shukriyya, The Weililiab (actual Tirik family) for the Hadendawa, the Wad Zaid for the Dabaniyya.

But in many areas of the Kassala Province the British faced the problems of the ethnic fluidity and the lack of correspondence between the administrative units and the tribal lineages. Most ethnic groups had been dislocated during the Mahdiyya, new groups had settled and the British had to create ad-hoc tribal leadership. The Condominium Administration spent thus a great deal of efforts and time in order to delimit and categorise people in tribes, sections and sub-sections and to establish stable socio-political entities associated with demarcated territorial units. To reach their goal, the British administrators reactivated, reunified or amalgamated dispersed entities and sometimes tried to establish new tribal entities. They therefore participated and sometimes played a decisive role in the

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<sup>12</sup> As pointed by S. Harir (1994), the northern regional-based parties have been disregarded as mainly 'tribalist' or 'racist' by the northern elite and accused of acting against the national unity. However their agendas were in many ways close to the SPLM and most of them joined the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) after 1989.

<sup>13</sup> After the showdown with the SCP in July 1971, Nimeiri wielded absolute power and set up the SSU (Sudanese Socialist Party) as the only party in 1972. In 1977 he set up a reconciliation with the Northern Political Forces and started an Islamization policy in 1980 (the famous September laws of 1983).

<sup>14</sup> The official bodies of the *Inqadh* regime (RCC, Revolutionary Command Council as well as all State institutions) are believed to have been completely dominated by the NIF through shadowy institutions. Tense relations between Bashir, the president of the state, and Turabi, the NIF leader, started to be clear in 1996 when Turabi became the speaker of the national assembly. In Dec. 1999 Bashir dissolved the National Assembly and Turabi officially entered the opposition.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of the British native administration (its causes, ideology, successive phases etc.), see Bakheit (1971) and Daly (1986:360-378) .

formation of contemporary tribal structures, i.e. the coalescence of some clans or lineages into larger political units with unified leadership.<sup>16</sup>

The tribal policy of the colonial power was far to be always coherent and systematic (Daly 1986). According to different administrative or political priorities small sections were either considered as autonomous groups or dependent sub-groups and the British Condominium Records clearly show the fluctuation in this matter.<sup>17</sup> An important postulate was that 'local tribes', i.e. groups that can pretend to have an historical antecedent in the area were entitled to 'native land' and 'native tribal political representation' (*'umudiyya* or *nazirat*) while minor groups or non-local groups (i.e. that settled after the Mahdiyya) had no such rights and were affiliated to local *'umdas* and *nazirs*.

Much has been written about the British Native Administration policy, its goal and its impact at both the political and social levels. One of the main critics was that the Native Administration system had been established by the colonial power in order first to weaken the influence of the religious brotherhoods and later on to marginalize the emerging educated Sudanese elite and to weaken the Sudanese nationalist movement (Daly 1986,1991; al-Effendi 1991). It supported or even created a class of tribal leaders granted with many privileges and therefore obedient to the colonial power. Those privileges in terms of land rights and access to administrative position had far-reaching impacts on post colonial Sudan.

The abolition of the Native Administration system was thus advocated since the forties by a growing number of Sudanese nationalists who were particularly critical about the merging of judicial and administrative functions. In this respect the 1971 administrative reform followed this nationalist aspirations (Abu Shouk 1998, Bakheit 1971).

But the abolition of the British Native Administrative system in 1971 had important consequences in eastern Sudan as in other rural and nomadic areas of northern Sudan. The 1971 new administrative system proved quickly its inefficiency in dealing with the most crucial issue of these areas: the handling of ethnic conflicts linked with competition over resources (land and water). The enacting of new laws concerning land rights (1970 Unregistered Land Act, see below) sharpened the tense ethnic competition. Therefore a decision first thought as a nationalist one that will break away from an old colonial system became a source of discontent in rural areas.

As early as 1980s, voices were calling for a reconsideration of the 1971 policy. In 1984, just before the fall of the Nimeiri's regime a proposal for the re-implementation of the Native Administration was approved in the fourth national conference of the SSU (Abu Shouk 1998). The following political events did not change the trend. In 1986, the Prime Minister, Sadiq al Mahdi, announced the revival of the Native Administration throughout the country. This policy was supported by the *Inqadh* regime which enacted the Native Administration Ordinances of 1991 and 1992. Interestingly enough, the *Inqadh* regime, while claiming its *Islamist* revolutionary principles, but in need of local support, came to officially revive the colonial structures. Re-implementation of a native administration system officially took place in Kassala State in 1994, under the new federal system of the *Inqadh* regime.<sup>18</sup>

The re-implementation of the Native Administration system was one among many other administrative and political reforms such as the abolition of all former political parties and trade unions, the division of the former Eastern State in three states (Kassala, Gedaref, Red Sea), the set up of new organs such as the popular committees, the local and provincial councils, the local and regional Congress, the creation of new unions and associations<sup>19</sup>, etc. The multiplicity of the administrative and political institutions whose functions often overlap makes it difficult to know exactly who is doing

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<sup>16</sup> cf. see in particular for the Arab nomadic tribes of Northern Sudan Abbas (1980), Abd al Ghaffar (1974), Asad (1970), Casciarri (1997), Cunninson (1966)

<sup>17</sup> A perfect illustration of the colonial internal contradictory positions in defining stable ethnic entities is provided in Sikainga (1991) for the Bahr al Ghazal

<sup>18</sup> The actual federal system has been launched with the 10<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Decree of 1994 and the Local Government Act of 1995. The 1994 decree divided every former region into three separate states (with the exception of the Northern Region divided in two and the central divided in four), thereby increasing the then nine regions into twenty-six states.

<sup>19</sup> Such as *Shabab al Watan* (the Nation's Youth) and many para-Governmental Islamic Associations such as *Munazzamat ash-shahid* (Martyr' Association) etc.

what and who really exercises power. It is often considered that the real power is not held by the official organs but by shadowy committees (Ahmed this volume, Lesch 1998).<sup>20</sup>

The federal system and the re-implementation of the Native Administration system are therefore mainly perceived as governmental manoeuvres of a 'divide and rule policy' and facades of a mass base and electoral legitimacy (Lesch 1998, Lavergne 1997). The fact that Khartoum appoints the governors, ministers, commissioners, civil servants and members of the judiciary qualifies the autonomy and the independence of the new regional states. In the meantime the federal system fosters local ethnic competition in the local organs. The appointment by the government of the same traditional tribal leaders, has been analysed as 'an ironic contradiction for a new and modern Islamic state' (Kevane and Gray 1995). And as pointed out by C. Delmet (this volume), the tribal leaders are called upon by the state to bring their support to the state political initiatives, including recruiting from their own tribe for the Popular Defence Forces.

However, the new federal and native administration system opened the door to numerous dynamics of inter and intra ethnic re-composition and competition among groups which were formerly excluded from the high ranks of tribal political representation and are now acting for a reconsideration of their status (cf. the contribution of Bushra, Khalid et al, Casciarri, Miller and Abu Manga in this volume). Those groups try to penetrate all administrative organs (popular committees, local and regional councils, regional and national assemblies, farmers and pastoral unions, etc.), a fact that indicates the deep interlocking between the so-called traditional and modern institutions. From a purely political perspective (Daly 1986; al-Effendi 1991; Lesch 1998), native administration (both past and present) is mainly a 'divide and rule policy' fostering ethnic divisions to weaken active modes of mobilisation (either political parties, religious brotherhood, unions etc.). But studies dealing with pastoral societies and pastoral production in eastern Sudan<sup>21</sup> have shown the devastating effects of the abolition of the British native administration and have acknowledged the necessities to incorporate local institutions (including customary courts, lineage's heads, etc. ) in order to properly manage the complexity of the pastoral system.

## **Interaction between the state and the local elites**

The interlocking of politics, religion and trade in the fabrics of Sudanese history and in the emergence of a national and regional Sudanese elite has been one of the most recurrent and favourite topics of historical and political analyses.<sup>22</sup> More recently two concepts have been dominating political analyses: the concept of the decay of state and administrative institutions and the concept of a growing polarization between the northern elite and the other ethnic groups.<sup>23</sup> The political decay was exemplified by the ravaging war, the drought and famine which prevailed in many parts of the country since the mid eighties, the economic deterioration, the state of insecurity and the presence of paramilitary groups (tribal militia and then Popular Defense Forces) etc. This decay was attributed to the incapacity of the Sudanese state and Sudanese northern elite to drop away from a restrictive conception of the nation-building which privileged Arabism and Islamism and in fact served the interests of a narrow-based elite.

One of the questions concerning the 1989's coup d'état backed by the NIF (National Islamic Front) was to evaluate if the new regime brought radical political changes or if it was more or less a

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<sup>20</sup> For instance Ahmed indicates that in Kassala "the real political authority is vested in the General Secretariat of Kassala, which is the political organisation of the regime". At the national level, Lesch (1998 :115) pointed out the primacy of the Council of Forty behind the official bodies in the first years of the *Inqadh*.

<sup>21</sup> To quote a few : Abu Sin (1982, 1989, 1990) ; Delmet (1997); Kirk and Mai (1994); Manger et al. (1994); al-Shazali (1988, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> The close relationship between political rulers, religious leaders and prominent merchants since the 16<sup>th</sup> century has been particularly emphasised by historians such as Spaulding (1985), Bjorkelo(1989), O'Fahey (1971,1980), etc. For the collusion between Sufi leaders, tribal leaders, merchants and civil servants in the formation of the northern national elite during and after the Condominium period see among others Khalid (1990), F. Mahmoud (1984), Niblock (1987).

<sup>23</sup> see for example Woodward (1990), Harir & Tverd (1994), Lesch (1998).



continuation of the same trends with a more radical agenda. The socio-political situation of Kassala-Gedaref area between 1995-1998 attested to the maintenance of old strategies together with the emergence of new groups or new forces. It indicated a continuous process of negotiation, interaction and mutual co-option between the state and the local institutions. In fact, the state and the local society interpenetrate each other very deeply. The local institutions proved their ability to adapt to a changing economical, political and ideological context and to evolve in order to remain effective social institutions.

However the concept of a 'local elite' related to the notion of local institutions is quite problematic in an area that witnessed different waves of settlement and where the criteria for being 'local' or 'indigenous' vary among the different ethnic groups of the area. The interaction between the different regional groups appears to be thus as much important as the interaction between the state and the local institutions in order to understand the dynamics of social and political changes. This interaction, characterised by a high degree of competition, cannot be restricted to a dual competition between the Arab groups versus the non-Arab groups or between the Riverain elite versus any other group. Competition involves here many levels of inter-ethnic and even intra-ethnic struggle as will be shown in various papers of this book.

### **The state and the local political elite**

Einas Ahmed (this volume) analyses the strategies followed by the NIF between 1989 and 1997 in order to establish its local leadership in the Kassala state, a region where the Khatmiyya religious brotherhood and its political wing, the DUP, were deeply rooted among the 'local elites'. Her analysis tends to indicate a clear polarisation between the NIF and the DUP/Khatmiyya and the monopolisation by the NIF of all political, financial and economical institutions. She describes how the NIF aimed to weaken the social and economic basis of the Khatmiyya by a dual process of co-option and eviction. The regime co-opted the tribal elites by ensuring their participation in a number of 'new' political institutions such as the Council of Native Administration and the Congress of Kassala. At the economical and financial level the NIF enhanced the monopoly of the Islamic societies through a policy of privatisation, the implementation of an Islamic banking system and the facilities given to INGOs (Islamic non-Governmental Organisations) involved in both charitable activities and parallel economic activities. At the religious and social levels, the NIF overtly supported INGOs that became major actors of the relief system in the area and attracted the support of the poor segment of the population.

Ahmed's paper shows that the regime in Khartoum has succeeded to a large extent in co-opting and thus neutralising many of the local tribal leaders because the latter lack their own economic resources to ensure their influence on their groups and had no other choices of political survival. If we follow Ahmed's analysis the 1989-1996 situation is quite similar to the situation described by Daly (1986,1991) concerning the objectives of the Native Administration during the early colonial period (i.e. the weakening of the main brotherhoods). However the situation today in Kassala State is far from being limited to a dual conflict opposing the NIF (i.e. the state) and the Khatmiyya and it would be restricting to conceive the tribal leadership as mere puppets in the hands of the state policy. Many actors played different cards and the state is often obliged to rely on the same notabilities, whatever its ideological trend (socialist, islamist, etc.). The political 'loyalty' of the local leaders is far from being achieved. The temptation to co-opt *tariqas* and tribes so as to ease the implementation of state policies and increase legitimacy is an old governmental device. But by pursuing this co-optation policy the government strengthens non-state institutions to the point they can begin to challenge the supremacy of the executive (Stiansen and Kevane 1998). The future of the Khatmiyya and DUP in the Kassala region, as well as that of the NIF, will depend on the rising influence of some other forces such as the Ansar Al Sunna and of course other opposition movements such as the Beja Congress and the NDA.

The Ansar Al Sunna seems to have a strong influence on 'the new economic actors', among whom are some local groups such as the Rashayda and Bani Amer. A number of ethnic groups (like the Rashayda until recently) or sub-lineages (which seems to be the case among the Bani Amer) that were once evicted from traditional tribal representation are nowadays using, among others, the Islamist

platform (NIF or Ansar Al Sunna) to get more political and economical power.<sup>24</sup> More information is needed concerning the relationship between the Ansar Al Sunna and the NIF in the Kassala region, on the one hand, and between the Ansar Al Sunna and the opposition, on the other hand. The success of the Ansar Al Sunna seems partly linked with the impact of the Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees' presence in the area (El Obeid, this volume). The Ansar Al Sunna were able to provide relief aid to both refugees and Sudanese in time of drought and war while the Khatmiyya and other *tariqas* were unable to fill this need. While the NIF is often assumed to be mainly a 'modern political party' lacking rural base, the Ansar Al Sunna in Kassala State appears to fit with the long tradition of Islamist militancy that always prevailed in eastern Sudan (al-Affendi 1991).

### The brotherhoods

Amani El Obeid (this volume) provides a detailed account of the history of Sufi *tariqas* in Kassala and Gedaref States. She attempts to answer the question regarding to what extent Sufi *tariqas* still maintain their influential socio-political role in the area by analysing the relationship between ethnicity, politics and religion. The predominant role that Sufi *tariqas* have played in the history of the northern Sudanese society since the Funj kingdom has been largely studied (cf. among others al-Hassan, I. 1993; Karrar 1992; al-Karsani 1985, Mc Hugh 1994, Spaulding 1985, Trimmingham 1949, Voll 1969, etc.). However in each region, Sufi *tariqas* have been confronted to the dialectic processes of both incorporation and localisation. At the rural level they have been a key factor of supra-local incorporation but they had to adapt to the local context and they quickly created local institutions.

Sufi *tariqas* played a more important role in Kassala area than in Gedaref area because Kassala town was established earlier (1840). From the beginning the town was to become the centre of the Khatmiyya *tariqa* which became the regional political and religious pole, attracting many followers.<sup>25</sup> The early presence of Sufi *tariqas* in eastern Sudan is attested at least since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of the Qadiriyya among the Hadendawa followed by many others. In this respect the situation of the Kassala region is quite different from that of Kordofan where *tariqas* did not play a prominent role until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (al-Karsany 1998). A clear mark of adaptation to the local Beja context is the status of female Sufi *shaykhs* who are not to be found in central Sudan. Unlike central Sudan and in spite of their prominent socio-political influence in eastern Sudan, Sufi brotherhoods did not succeed to overcome ethnic affiliation. The Khatmiyya *tariqa* is mainly rooted among the Beja groups and the Nile riverains (Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin) that came to settle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while the Tijaniyya recruit mainly amongst West African and Western Sudanese. Even within the same *tariqa* (cf. the Qadiriyya in Kassala) ethnic division seems to prevail. But the Khatmiyya centre in Kassala consolidated the relationship between its disciples in Sudan and in Eritrea and this paved the way for mutual political influence in the recent politics of the area.

However the early presence of *tariqas* did not exclude other forms of Sufism such as the individual *fakis* (not linked with a specific *tariqa*) that still played an important role as can be seen with Ali Bitai's movement in Hamashkoreb Province. The example of Ali Bitai, an 'individual faki' who became a prominent Sufi preacher in the 70s, provides a perfect illustration of the ambivalence of the state co-opting policy. Ali Bitai was strongly supported by Nimeiri's regime and then by the 1989's regime as a competitive force to both the Khatmiyya and the tribal Hadendawa leadership (the Tirik family) and his order became extremely influential in the Beja region of Hamashkoreb.<sup>26</sup> But since 1996-1997 a number of his followers joined the eastern opposition front. The same ambivalence

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<sup>24</sup> It is well known that both Rashayda and Bani Amer, being bordering groups, are cautious enough to deal with both the government and the opposition (see Bushra for the Rashayda).

<sup>25</sup> In fact some authors considered that the early establishment of Kassala goes back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century when a number of villages on the east bank of the Gash united. See Cumming (1937), al-Arifi (1972), Salih (1982), Steewinkle (1980). Kassala was then chosen as the eastern administrative centre by the Turkish in 1840 and since then remained the most important administrative centre in the area (capital of Kassala Region in 1950, capital of the Eastern Region in 1980, capital of Kassala State in 1994)

<sup>26</sup> The movement of Ali Bitai started in the 1950s and had considerable influence among the Jamilab section of the Hadendawa. Through its influence many of them gave up herding and became traders. Under Ali Bitai's influence, the region of Hamashkoreb developed and its *khalwa* attracted hundred of followers (Manger et al. 1996).

can be found with the Ansar Al Sunna movement which attracted many Khatmiyya disciples, especially among the youth but represents a competitive force to the NIF. The history of the brotherhoods in the Kassala-Gedaref area shows the successive rise and decline of various brotherhoods (Qadiriyya, Mahjubiyya, Khatmiyya etc.) and the long tradition of militant religious reformism. Within this context the present competition between the Khatmiyya and the Islamists may appear as the logical output of a socio-political renewal.

## The Merchants

Another domain, which reflects the interaction between the state and the local institutions, is the merchant community of Gedaref town (Munzoul Assal, this volume). Unlike Kassala, which was the administrative centre of the area since the mid nineteenth century, Gedaref is a more recent town whose economical development is closely connected with the expansion of mechanized agriculture in the seventies.<sup>27</sup> Gedaref can be described as an 'agropole'. Most big merchants are agro-capitalists: they own large mechanized schemes and benefited from the governmental land policy of 1970 that distributed former communal or tribal land to rich individuals and companies. Many merchants had an educated, civil servant or military background that provided them with the useful connections at the right time.<sup>28</sup> The big merchants of Gedaref appear as a kind of 'mafia' monopolising the grain trade, siphoning the financial institutions and exploiting the new systems of Islamic credit to their exclusive benefits; the town as a whole is lacking basic infrastructures and the majority of its population is living in informal quarters.

The picture is therefore one of a 'savage agro-capitalism' with a *comprador bourgeoisie* pumping the resources of the area. The ethnic distribution of the big merchants shows the dominance of the Nile Riverain groups and the small representation of local groups including the traditional tribal elite (Shukriyya). The local population, mainly from nomadic or Western (West African and Western Sudanese) origin, has been mostly evicted from the agricultural development. In this respect, the Gedaref area, which remained under-populated until the 1950s, appears as a kind of Far West where rich individuals or companies can easily build fortune, as it is actually the case with the Islamic associations backed by the present regime. The description provided by Assal fits perfectly with Mahmoud's (1984) conception of the Sudanese capitalists.

The close relationship between the big merchants, the religious leadership and the traditional political parties is a well established fact in Sudan and this was also the case in Gedaref area where most big merchants are believed to have been former DUP members. Their loyalty to the DUP and to the Khatmiyya seems however problematic. They were not able to constitute an organised counter force to the present regime and have been co-opted as were the tribal leadership of Kassala: a number of those big merchants have shifted from a DUP to a NIF affiliation in order to maintain their position and privileges. According to El Obeid (this volume), the agricultural capitalists who are presently mainly adherents of the NIF and the Ansar Al Sunna undermine the influence of Sufi *tariqas* in Gedaref. Here remains the question of the collusion between traders and politics. For Assal the changes relies in the fact that the interlocking relationship between economy and politics has become more obvious since 1989 as ideological allegiance is one of the main requirement for obtaining public offices and other facilities. But did the NIF regime bring a new class of big merchants in Gedaref or did it maintain more or less the same peoples providing their political shift and their financial support? The monopoly of trade by a group of non-indigenous merchants is by no means a characteristic of Gedaref area, as attested by the presence of the Jallaba<sup>29</sup> in most Sudanese regional towns (Manger ed.

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<sup>27</sup> The early history of Gedaref Town can be found in al-Tayeb (1985) who mentions the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the first establishment of a village by Saad Al Dibanayi (from the Dabaniya). He was then followed by Al MakNimir in 1840, Abu Sin in 1865, Al Sufi Al Azraq who established their own quarter. During the Mahdiyya Al Nour Anqara built part of the town (Deim al Nour).

<sup>28</sup> The privileged access to mechanized schemes by the educated elite, retired civil servants and military officers and traders has been mentioned by many authors (Abdelkarim 1988, Niblock 1987) and is also the rules in Southern Kordofan (Ibrahim, H.E. 1988)

<sup>29</sup> The generic term Jallaba refer to a class of merchants of mainly northern riverain background who spread all around Sudan and whose web dominates the trade in most places. This Jallaba nepotism to quote Harir (1994)

1984). The specificity of Gedaref relies more on the fact that it was one of the first regions where a major land alienation took place at the expense of the local agro-pastoral communities in the 1970s, a phenomenon that later on expanded to other areas such as south Kordofan and led to increasing ethnic competition and confrontation.<sup>30</sup>

## **Changes in agricultural and pastoral systems : the increasing inter-dependency<sup>31</sup>**

The present Gedaref and Kassala States cover a large area of 126 000km<sup>2</sup> that extends between latitude 12° and 18° North and longitudes 33° and 37° Eastern. The climatic conditions change from desert in the extreme north-western region through arid zone in the central region to a monsoon climate in the south-eastern part. (Steenwinkel 1980). The average rainfall varies from 25mm in the north-western boundary to 800-1000mm in the south-eastern boundary. The environmental conditions with regards to rainfall, soils and temperature led to different types of vegetation<sup>32</sup> which have determined the traditional socio-economic activities adopted by the local population. The northern half covered by semi-desert grasslands on sand or clay proved suitable for extensive grazing by camels and goats. The central arid zone (woodland savannah) covered by grasslands on clay soils was adapted to extensive cattle-grazing. Three important seasonal rivers intersect: the Atbara, Gash and Rahad which provide water for the irrigated schemes and the horticulture sector.

One of the most important changes that occurred in the Kassala-Gedaref area has been without any doubt the expansion of large-scale mechanized rainfed and irrigated farming that radically transformed the ecological environment of the pastoral areas of the Butana and the Atbara. The expansion of irrigated and mechanized agriculture was meant to change the nature of the area from a predominantly pastoral one into a rich agricultural one and to develop a market oriented agriculture with cash crops such as cotton, sesame and sorghum. Therefore the development of irrigated and mechanized agriculture was made at the expenses of both traditional rainfed agriculture and pastoralism.

## **Changes in Land Tenure and the Development of Irrigated and Mechanized Agriculture**

The area is known for its agricultural wealth and was chosen at an early stage for the development of both irrigated and mechanized agriculture. According to Baashar (1994) the total land represents 29,545,440 *feddans* of which about 9 millions *feddans* are cultivated and 18 millions *feddans* are natural range land. Estimations concerning the different agricultural land uses vary greatly from one source to another.<sup>33</sup> For example forests are said to cover between 337,000 *feddans* (Baashar 1994) up to 2,500,000 *feddans* (Abu Sin 1989). Traditional rainfed agriculture is estimated to cover an area between 1 million to 2,5 millions *feddans*. Estimations for irrigated agriculture approximate 1 million *feddans* (250,000 for the Gash Delta, 450,000 for New Halfa and 300,000 for Rahad). But only part of the officially demarcated irrigated land are effectively irrigated and cultivated and the

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was a main cause of regional discontent (cf. the Soony and Red Flag movements in Darfur, the Hadout in Red Sea). Strangely enough such anti-Jallaba regional movement has not been recorded for the Gedaref area.

<sup>30</sup> See al-Battahini (1986), Karrar (1986) or M. Saavedra (1998) for south Kordofan.

<sup>31</sup> This chapter relies partly on an unpublished paper entitled 'Resources Competition and the future of Pastoralism in the Butana Plain' presented by Mustafa Babiker during the DSRC-CEDEJ programme.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. for details on the vegetation and different types of Acacia see Baashar's paper in Abu Sin (ed.) 1989.

<sup>33</sup> For example while Baashar (1994) gives the figure of 8 Millions *feddans*, Abu Sin (1989) in the Kassala Province Environmental Profile gives the figure of 18.8 millions *feddans* of potentially arable land with 11 millions rainfed land and 7.78 irrigated. The 11 millions rainfed land are distributed in 6 millions mechanized, 2.5 millions traditional and 2.5 forest. Only 6% of the irrigated land is used.

figures of 450,000fds appear more realistic.<sup>34</sup> Mechanized farming is estimated between 6 to 7 million *feddans*.

The first irrigated scheme started as early as 1870 in the Gash and was later developed in 1923 with the Gash Delta Agricultural Scheme (700,000fds demarcated but actually only 250,000fds canalised and 60,000 cultivated).<sup>35</sup> This early project was to be followed by the New Halfa Irrigated Scheme in 1964 and the Rahad Irrigated Scheme in 1980. Until the early 1970s, the development of irrigated agriculture was considered as a source of economic welfare for the region.<sup>36</sup> Since then most reports have emphasized the agricultural failure of the irrigated schemes, in the Gash in particular, and have stressed that this scheme has been running at great loss constituting a considerable burden for the national economy (Steenwinkel, 1980). All these schemes are run by governmental corporations with a system of tenancies but since the early 1990s the Sudanese government (GOS) has been planning the privatisation of these schemes or the lending to big private societies.<sup>37</sup>

The first mechanized scheme started in 1948 in Gedaref with the creation of the MCP (Mechanized Crop Production with 200,000 *feddans* demarcated). Mechanized rainfed agriculture (both demarcated and underdemarcated) was to mushroom in the 70s and 80s. In 1997 mechanized agriculture was estimated to cover about 6-7 millions *feddans* (2,194,000 fds demarcated and 4,233,000 fds undemarcated according to S.Y.B.G 1997, see also M. Assal, this volume).

The expansion of mechanized agriculture was the result of the changes that affected the laws regarding land use and land tenure (Ahmed, S.E.M. 1986; Simpson in Craig 1991). Most of the laws enacted during the Condominium period tend to establish or maintain a communal use and to limit private land properties (cf. Land Settlement and Registration Ordinance 1925). In practice most of the land was recognised as 'tribal land' or 'village land' and decrees were enacted to control movements of herds and to regulate agricultural and pastoral rights. Gedaref district was divided by a grazing line (*khutt al mara'a*, popularly known as the Sendfour line after a British Administrator) into a zone for herding (the Butana) and a zone for farming (Gedaref southern clay plain). Large-scale farming was prohibited north of this line and herders had to stay within the herding zone until the grain harvest in the south ended, after which the customary exchange of manure for crop stubble took place. This symbiotic relationship between farming and pastoralism was broken down in 1970 by the partial abolition of the Native Administration, and the subsequent breakdown of the Grazing agreements. In 1970 the Unregistered Land Act deemed that all unregistered land was government land and that people had only rights of use. Agricultural land was distributed to rich individuals, big companies or foreign investors (see M. Assal, this volume) and grazing land considered as common property was let open to any pastoral group. Large-scale farming (both demarcated and unofficial) started to expand north and south encroaching grazing land and squeezing traditional farming land while the Butana became an open land to all pastoral groups irrespective of their tribal affiliation. This agricultural and land use policy has been regarded as one of the main factors leading to environmental degradation (deforestation and loss of soil fertility), fierce competition over access to land and water, uncontrolled movements, over-grazing, and subsequent marginalization of mobile pastoralism (A.R.D 1994, al-Shazali 1993).

### **Adaptative strategies of the pastoral groups: the re-appropriation of Agricultural schemes.**

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<sup>34</sup> The Kassala Environmental Profile (1988) gives the figure of 429,000 *feddans*. The Statistical Yearbook Sudan (1998) gives 476,000 *feddans* distributed between 130,000fds for cottons; 110,000fds for groundnuts, 146,000fds for sorghum and 90,000fds for wheat.

<sup>35</sup> For the history of the Gash Scheme see Abdel Ati (1996, relying on El Mustafa et al (1991), Ausenda (1987).

<sup>36</sup> For instance Galal al-Din (1973) states that 'it is obvious that Khartoum, Blue Nile and Kassala Provinces are more prosperous than the others ... within these Provinces there are areas which have a much higher income than the national average. For example the income per head in Gezira in the Blue Nile Province and Gash and Tokar in Kassala, both with a modern irrigation agriculture, have 2,5 times and 1,5 times the national average income per head respectively'.

<sup>37</sup> For example in 1992, a decision regarding the privatisation of the Gash Scheme has been taken without consulting the Eastern State. In 1992/93 30,000 *feddans* were allocated to private investors. (Abdel Ati 1996)

The recurrence of drought and famines in the 1980 and 1990 decades lent great support to the prediction that mobile pastoralism was in the verge of extension and would not survive the development of large-scale agriculture (Morton 1988). However and in spite of many constraints pastoralism appeared to be far more resilient and adaptative than first expected. The pastoral groups responded to the new constraints by a number of adaptative strategies including diversification of herds, increasing mobility, reliance on crop residues for animal fodder, livestock marketing as well as adoption of a multi-faceted economy (including pastoral and agricultural production, wage-labour, etc.). It appeared that agriculture and pastoralism were inter-dependant and relied on each other for sustainability. The constraints but also the new opportunities provided by large-scale agriculture to Butana herders were first highlighted in the case of Khasm Al Girba irrigated scheme (Sørbo 1976,1977, 1985, 1991 Salem Murdock 1989, A.R.D. 1994). Pastoralists who got access to agricultural land (and consequently crop products) either by receiving tenancies in irrigated schemes or by buying land in mechanizing schemes had far more facilities to diversify their resources, herds and to maintain a sustainable economic system than pastoralists who were deprived from agricultural land.<sup>38</sup> Inequality between pastoralists has thus increased because privileged individuals or lineages (tribal leaders, ruling families, traders, civil servants etc.) had more opportunities to get tenancies or schemes.

The interesting point however is that farming-herding interdependency does not only concern the pastoralists but also the agriculturalists who are facing an increasing cost of production and a decline in yield. In many areas, irrigated or mechanized schemes are therefore closely associated with animal keeping.<sup>39</sup> Farmers sell animals when in need of cash for agriculture or transform a low yield crop into animal fodder. In fact after the very bad hit of 1984-1985 and 1991-1992 which decimated most of the herds, the 1990s decade witnessed an 'animal boom'<sup>40</sup> and many wealthy farmers are investing in livestock, including camels (see Dalmau, this volume). Irrigated schemes (Gash Delta and Khasm Al Girba) but also mechanized rainfed farming are more and more used as grazing stock by individuals or groups connected with tenants. The national policy of large-scale farming linked with a policy of sedentarization of nomadic population was intended to reduce pastoralism and to increase agriculture. But the misconception and mismanagement, which went along with the implementation of large-scale agriculture, led to the opposite and agro-pastoralism is starting to be recognised as the most adapted form of economy in the area (Ahmed and al-Shazali 1999).

The situation of the pastoral groups however is far from being idyllic: many small pastoralists and small farmers never recovered from the drought years. Having lost their herds or their land they became wage-labourers or migrated to urban areas or Gulf countries. Moreover, the traditional tenure system and rules cannot protect the environment from increasing pressures on key resources (cf. deforestation, overgrazing etc.).<sup>41</sup> The disparity is increasing between well off agro-pastoralists and the others as rich pastoralists develop new pastoral systems (A.R.D 1994)<sup>42</sup>.

### **Towards a capitalist development of pastoral production?**

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<sup>38</sup> During the 1984/85's and 1990/1991 droughts, herders who were living near the irrigated scheme had far less casualties than other herders. See Ausenda (1987) and Manger et al. (1996) for the Hadendawa in the Gash and A.R.D (1994) for the Shukriyya in Khasm Al Girba.

<sup>39</sup> As early as the late 1970s, the necessity to integrate livestock in the Irrigated schemes has been recommended for Khashm al Girba and the Gash (cf. New Halfa Rehabilitation Project 1978 quoted by Sørbo (1985) and Salem Murdock (1989) and Gash Delta Rehabilitation Committee 1992 quoted by Manger et al.( 1996). Salem Murdock (1989 :44) indicated that in New Halfa (Khasm Al Girba) " Arab tenants remain as interested in raising animals as they ever were. Moreover Nubians, who were severe critics of the presence of Arab animals are themselves increasingly turning to animal raising and a number of them are doing it on a very large scale".

<sup>40</sup> The official figures provided by the Veterinary Services of Kassala State indicate a rise in the numbers of animals from 1,887,000 in 1993 to 3,182,000 in 1998. For Gedaref State, the official figures are 5,201,000 animals according to S.Y.B.G. (1997).

<sup>41</sup> See Manger et al. (1996) for an illustration of both the adaptative capacities and limit of the pastoral system among the Hadendawa.

<sup>42</sup> See in particular Holter and Kirk (1994) and Kirk and Mai (1994) in the A.R.D. volume.

The development of livestock trade has been interpreted as an indication of the transformation of pastoral production into a capitalist enterprise based on the employment of labour of nomadic origin (al-Shazali 1996). In her study of the camel trade in Showak market, Isabelle Dalmau (this volume) qualifies this perception of a capitalist-orientated camel trade and criticises the traditional perception of a polarization between agriculture and pastoralism. By describing the strategies of three local groups involved in the camel production and camel trade of Gedaref she indicates that camel marketing helps to maintain traditional networks of solidarity and develops an agro-pastoral complementarity. She traces back the history of camel trade in Sudan and explains why Showak market is developing into a dynamic livestock market due to its location. She believes that the present development is more an adaptative strategy to a new context than a rupture from a predominantly subsistent agriculture into a market oriented economy. The yearly calendar of animal sales in Showak market shows that animals are sold to face expenses linked with herd or farm management requirements.

Compared to the crop trade of Gedaref it is significant to note here that camel trade is still mostly in the hand of local pastoralist groups, the Rashayda in particular, who benefited from their historical links with the Gulf countries. The comparison between the three groups (Lahawiyin, Bawadra and Rashayda) who had different socio-historical status (i.e. territorial rights) and who present three different production systems clearly indicates that pastoral groups cannot be analysed as a homogeneous entity. The socio-historical background of each group or sub-group determines its ability to cope with the new situation and its type of interaction with the neighbouring groups. Her analysis calls upon further detailed researches on the historical interaction between the different Butana groups.<sup>43</sup> In a general context of increasing competition for access to resources, the disparity related to land rights appears as one of the major factors explaining the present ethnic polarisation around the issue of re-implementation of the Native Administration system. It also raises two questions: a) the reasons why internal class-division within the different ethnic groups did not supersede ethnic affiliation and b) the effectiveness of the local ethnic-based institutions in handling conflict and resources management.

## **Population Profile and Ethnicity**

### **Population Profile**

The demographic profile provided by F. Ireton (this volume) and based on the analysis of the successive Sudanese Population Censuses indicates three main demographic processes: the growth of urbanisation, the sedentarization of the nomadic population and the importance of the in-migration in both urban and rural areas.

The growth of urbanisation, (to the exception of Kassala which was the regional capital) is mainly linked with the agricultural development of the area (see also Assal, this volume for Gedaref). The development of the irrigated schemes of New Halfa and Rahad led to the development of New Halfa, Khashm al Girba, Hawata, Mafaza towns while the development of mechanized agriculture led to the development of Gedaref, Al Fao and Wad el Hilew. The decline of the Gash scheme is illustrated by the decline of Aroma town.

The statistical data indicates also the importance of the sedentarization process since 1956. The Nomadic population which represented 45% of the total population of the Kassala-Gedaref area came down to only 6% in 1996. However, and has discussed above, this sedentarization process is in fact a semi-sedentarization process and former Nomadic populations still mainly rely on animal production. The impact of nomadism and pastoralism is particularly evident at the educational level. Literacy rates indicate a clear difference between former Nomadic (Kassala Province) areas and agricultural areas (New Halfa Scheme, Gedaref South). However the analysis of literacy seems to

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<sup>43</sup> Such studies on internal and external differentiation among pastoral groups can be found also in A.R.D (1994) for the Shukriyya and the Rashayda in the Butana and Manger et al. (1996) for the Hadendawa in the Gash.

indicate that cultural factors might as much important as socio-economical factors. Literacy rate are particularly low in dominant Hadendawa/ Beni Amer regions while they are average in the Butana (but sedentarization started earlier in the Butana). The importance of *khalwas* (Coranic schools) education seems to be due to the large presence of Western Sudanese (Darfurians) and 'Fallata' (from West African origin), both group having a long tradition of *khalwas*. One has to note here that the presence of brotherhood does not mean the necessarily high rate of *khalwa* schooling. The Qadiriyya and the Khatmiyya has been long established in eastern Sudan but *khalwa* schooling is low among the Beja to the notable exception of the *khalwas* established by Ali Bitai in the Hamashkoreb Province.

The migration to the Kassala-Gedaref area has been a major factor of population changes since the sixties. This migration trend occurred both in rural and urban areas and is, of course, mainly linked to the agricultural development (mechanized and irrigated) mentioned above as well as to the resettlement programme of the displaced Nubians in 1962. Another important phenomenon since 1968 has been the presence of huge numbers of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees. But migration appeared to have been a long historical process that led to major population renewal as has been the case during and after the Mahdiyya (1885-1898). This is why the concept of 'local group' is here quite problematic.

The actual population of Kassala-Gedaref States includes a large spectrum of ethnic groups which came to settle at different times (see Table and Map for numbers and distribution ). Before to turn up to the issue of ethnic construction it appears particularly important to summarize the historical patterns of settlement in order to understand the present situation.

### Historical patterns of settlement

The area of Kassala appears to have been an old-inhabited area since early times while little is known about the Southern part of Gedaref State. The actual ethnic classification greatly relies on the ethnic categories established during the Condominium period. Four major ethno-regional groups can be identified: the Beja groups, the Arab groups<sup>44</sup>, the Western Sudanese groups<sup>45</sup> and the West African groups<sup>46</sup>. Each of these major ethno-regional groups represent different waves of settlement and different patterns of integration. The Kassala area (to the exception of Nahr Atbara) remains a predominantly Beja area (cf. map) while the Gedaref area came to be inhabited by many various groups including pastoral Arab groups and Western Sudanese and West African groups.

In the Kassala area, the original population is believed to have been largely from Cushitic (Beja)<sup>47</sup> and Tigre (Bani-Amer)<sup>48</sup> origin up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Beja groups (Hadendawa/Halenga/Bisharin, Amarar) still form a dominant group in Kassala State. Today the Hadendawa (the largest group among the Beja) are mainly in the Northern part of Kassala State (Gash Delta and pastoral land) while the Halenga (a much smaller group) stay in Kassala town. The Bani-Amer (a Tigre-speaking group related to the Beja) are spread between the Eritrean border and the Atbara River. In 1906, the territory of the Bani Amer was split between Sudan and the Italian colony of Eritrea. Two third of them were Eritreans and one third Sudanese. But their number in Sudan greatly increased since the 1960s due to the large influx of Eritrean refugees during the Eritrean-Ethiopian war (1961-1990).

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<sup>44</sup> The term Arab includes two quite different groups: the eastern and western pastoral groups which mainly claim a Juhayna origin and the Nile Riverain groups (Ja'aliyyin and Shaygiyya).

<sup>45</sup> The term Western Sudanese (Gharaba) refers here to non-Arab groups of Darfur such as the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa etc. and the Nuba groups of Kordofan.

<sup>46</sup> As discussed in Abu Manga and Miller (this volume) the groups of West African origin are known in Sudan as 'Fallata' and are categorized in the Sudanese Censuses (1956 & 1993) as 'Nigerians'.

<sup>47</sup> For more details on the Beja history see Paul (1954) who indicates that the actual Beja tribes (Hadendawa, Bishariyin, Amarar) emerged in the 14<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Known since the early Antiquity (pharaonic times) the Beja used to extend further North up to Egypt. They started to moved back South in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hadendawa progressively emerged as the dominant group and expanded toward the Gash Delta. Cf. also Adarob (1986), Ausenda (1987), Bonsaken (1991), Hjort and Dahl (1991), Salih (1975).

<sup>48</sup> For more details on the Bani Amer see Seligman and Seligman (1930). They found 18 Bani Amer sections with seven Tigre-speaking sections, 6 Beja-speaking sections and five bilinguals. Cf. also Kibreab (1996).



Arab groups started to move in Kassala and Gedaref area as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>49</sup> but more largely after the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. They mostly settled in the northern and central parts of Gedaref area (Butana). Many of them claimed a Juhayna origin ('Arakiyyin, Bawadra, Lahawiyyin, Rufa'a, Shukriyya). Among those Arab groups, the Shukriyya entered the Sudan around the 14<sup>th</sup> century and progressively took the mastery of the Butana in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were finally recognised as the Lords of the Butana by the Funj and then the Turco-Egyptian regime.<sup>50</sup> The establishment of these Arab groups led to the Arabization of some local original groups such as the Humran and Dabaniya in the Southern part of Gedaref and to the Islamization and partial Arabization (through genealogical claims of Arab descent) of the ruling lineages of all other groups including the Beja.<sup>51</sup>

During the Funj period (1504-1821), the Southern part of Gedaref State is believed to have been largely inhabited and covered by thick forests and human settlement is thought to be partly related to the expansion of the religious brotherhoods through the establishment of *khalwas* that became poles of subsequent settlements (McHugh 1994). 'Arakiyyin followers from Abu Haraz (north of present Wad Medani) spread to the Rahad, Dinder and Bayla (actual Gedaref) area, the latter being on the Sennar-Gondar axe. However the archaeological presence of hill-top non Muslim cemeteries indicates an old human presence (Mackinnon 1948).<sup>52</sup> The commercial axe between Sennar, the capital of the Funj kingdom (Blue Nile) and Gondar (in Ethiopia) was passing through Ras Al Fil (later known as Gallabat) and had important activity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pankhrust 1975). Gallabat grew as an important trade centre between Sudan and Ethiopia and was mostly inhabited by the Takarir, a collective name designating former pilgrims of Western Sudanese or Western African origin.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and under the Turco-Egyptian regime (1821-1885), new human groups settled in the Kassala-Gedaref area, mainly coming from the northern Nile region (Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin).<sup>53</sup> This pattern of settlement was connected in Kassala with the development of the town founded in 1840 that became the main urban centre of eastern Sudan along with the concomitant establishment of the Khatmiyya brotherhood. The Ja'iliyyin soon managed to become economically and politically dominant within the Turco-Egyptian system. Today they constitute important urban communities in Kassala and Gedaref towns and are also involved in horticulture in the Gash basin south of Kassala town and in mechanized agriculture in the Gedaref area. The Nomadic Rashayda coming from Saudia Arabia immigrated to the Sudan during the early nineteenth century as a result of the internal wars taking place in central Arabia and penetrated into the Beja territory. The Turco-Egyptians encouraged agriculture on the banks of the Gash near Kassala and started to grow cotton in the Gash Delta as soon as 1870. Therefore West African pilgrims (Hausa, Fulani, Borno) began to settle in Kassala (Gash). In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. some sections of Nomadic Arabs based in White Nile or Kordofan, such as the Lahawiyyin started to join the Shukriyya in the Butana.

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. see Mac Michael (1912,1922) and Y.F. Hasan (1967) for the traditional history of the Arab groups in Sudan.

<sup>50</sup> For the history of the Shukriyya see Abu Sin (1970,1990), Sørbo (1985), Salem Murdock (1989).

<sup>51</sup> As usual in northern Sudan, most of the Arab groups are in fact a mixture of original Arabs and local groups who claim an Arab descent. The ruling lineages of local groups would claim a prestigious Arab origin in order to legitimate their positions vis à vis the ruling royal dynasties of the Funj kingdom. According to Mac Michael (1922:253-255), the Dabaniya which now claim a Juhayna origin were from 'Sangalla' (Ethiopian) origin and probably Beja-speaking..

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Mackinnon (1948 : 729): "The vast and now unpeopled Acacia tall grass forests as well as the open grass plains or *sagea* of Gedaref, Mafaza and Gallabat are strewn with evidence of former population. The Atbara valley also shows many deserted village sites - old hill-foot water pools, rock carvings - and *hafirat* hill-top non Moslem cemeteries, while they do not provide the means reliably to gauge the strength of a former population, at least prove a distribution vastly more extensive throughout the district than exists to-day."

<sup>53</sup> A number of these Ja'aliyyin were the followers of Mek Nimir who revolted against the Turco-Egyptian regime and fled to Abyssinia. They then came back to Sudan and settled in the Kassala-Gedaref area. Others were escaping heavy taxation in the northern Provinces and sought refuge in the less controlled area of Kassala-Gedaref (Holt 1961:47). Others came to work as civil servants in Egyptian service or traders.

The Gedaref area is believed to have been rich and quite densely inhabited during the Turco-Egyptian period (al-Gaddal 1973, Mackinnon 1948).<sup>54</sup> The then dominant group during this period were therefore the Hadendawa in the Gash and Kassala area, the Shukriyya in the Butana, the Kawahla in the Rahad, the Takarir in Gallabat and the Dabaniya in the Setit-Upper Atbara Rivers (Tomat, Doka, Gira).<sup>55</sup>

The Mahdiyya period (1885-1998) resulted in important population changes particularly in the Gedaref area. Former powerful local groups such as the Dabaniya, Humran, etc. were decimated and the area became largely depopulated. But new groups, mainly from West Sudanese (both Baggara and non-Arab groups) and West African origin were sent to participate to the Ethiopian campaign and many of them, such as the Ta'aysha, Fur, Fulani, Hausa, Borno, Borgo, Kunjara, Tama, Masalit, etc., started to settle in the southern part of Gedaref (al-Gaddal 1973).

The resettlement of the area occurred during the first decades of the Condominium period with a large influx of West Africans and West Sudanese settlers in the Gash and in the southern part of Gedaref (Rahad, Upper Atbara) and therefore many villages in the southern part of Gedaref are of quite recent origin (post 1930-40s).<sup>56</sup> In the meantime Arab pastoral groups came to the Butana or to the Rahad. The opening of the railway in 1924 in Kassala and 1929 in Gedaref paved the way for a rapid population and economic development. It fostered the agricultural development in the Gash Delta and in the southern part of Gedaref. But until 1956, the Gedaref area was still considered as an under-populated area (al-Tayeb 1985).

The subsequent agricultural development of both the irrigated schemes and mechanized farming in the 60s-70s attracted a large number of landless wage labourers mainly from Western Sudan, Western Africa and later on from Eritrea (Abdelkarim 1988)<sup>57</sup> and was the main reason for the 'population boom' (Ireton, this volume). In 1964, the resettlement of the Nubians displaced from Old Nubia to Halfa Al Jedida near the Irrigated Scheme of Khasm Al Girba brought another wave of population (Sørbrø 1985, Salem Murdock 1989).<sup>58</sup> In the late 1960s, beginning of 1970s, the war in Eritrea created a large influx of Eritrean refugees including many Bani Amer, Baria, Saho, Maria, Bilen and Tigrayan<sup>59</sup>. Many refugees came to settle permanently and first worked as rural or urban wage-labourers and played a determinant role in the economic development of the region (Kuhlman

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Mackinnon (1948 : 729): Many elders testify to the former existence of a heavy population up to the time of the Mahdia in the middle eighties of the last century. This decimation is thought to have been caused by a combination of smallpox and cerebrospinal meningitis following years of cattle plague and famine and to the resulting capture of grass plains by Acacia forest". The fact that Gedaref was a rich region that attracted the Turco Egyptian is also attested in the Arabic sources (al-Gaddal 1973, Shuqayr 1981)

<sup>55</sup> cf. al-Gaddal (1973). The importance of the Shukriyya and the Dabaniya is indicated by the status and privileges given to their leaders. The Shukriyya *Nazir* Ahmed Abu Sin received the title of Pasha and was appointed *Mudir* of Khartoum and Sennar. The Dabaniya *Nazir* received the title of *Bek*. Those two groups seemed to have been involved in both agriculture and pastoralism.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Galal al-Din (1975) & Kibreab (1996) for the Rahad-Qala an Nahal area.

<sup>57</sup> In 1982, according to an ILO survey, wage workers in Gedaref were estimated to be 350,000 persons. No new estimates are available and Munzoul (1997) gives the estimate of 400,000 wage labourers. Among them the Western Darfurians are mainly settled in the rural areas of New Halfa-Nahr Atbara (34% of the total population), Rahad (. 30%) and Gallabat (30%).

<sup>58</sup> The official numbers for Khasm al Girba (Halfa al Jedida) give 68,000 resettled Nubians, and 150,000 pastoral Arabs including 68,000 Shukriyya ; 23,000 Lahawiyyin; 24,000 Beja ; 10,000 Ahamda ; 6,000 Rashayda ; 6,000 Kawahla cf. Salem Murdock (1989) quoting a report from Agrar 1978. See also Drupsteen et al. (1989) for a more recent classification of the population which includes Darfurian (22%), unknown tribes (15%), Nubians (14%), Beja (13%), Fallata (9%), Juhayna Arabs (8%), Ja'aliyyin Arabs (7%), Egyptian (6%), Nuba (3%), Mix Arab-Nubians (2%), Ethiopian (1%), Dinka (1%).

<sup>59</sup> The war started in 1961 but the first major influx of Eritrean refugees occurred in 1967. In this first wave nearly 30,000 refugees came to Kassala. Another major influx was in 1984-1985 during the famine in Eritrea and Tigre. Since 1990, Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees were supposed to go back to their country under the control of UNHCR (United Nation High Commissariat for Refugees) but in fact most of them still stay in Sudan or go and come back. In 1986, 20% of the population of Kassala was from Eritrean and Tigrayan origin (Kuhlman 1990 :11). The 1993's census gives a far lower percentage but records only the 'official refugees': 15 % of present Gedaref State and 8.5% of present Kassala State (see Ireton, this volume, for a discussion of the Refugees' number).

1990, Kibreab 1996)<sup>60</sup>. The Bani-Amer refugees joined their fellow tribesmen giving thus a new political and demographic weight to the tribe.<sup>61</sup> Finally, albeit in small number compared to central Sudan or Khartoum, displaced people from Southern Sudan came to look for work in urban areas.<sup>62</sup>

### **Ethnic Diversity**

The ethnic diversity of the Kassala-Gedaref area is thus very high not only in urban areas but also in the irrigated schemes of Khasm Al Girba (Halfa Al Jadida) and Rahad and in the southern part of Gedaref state (Upper Atbara and South Gedaref heavy clay plain). This ethnic diversity is correlated to various processes of socio-economical differentiation such as land-owners versus landless wage labourers, former pastoralist groups versus former agriculturalist groups, ruling lineages versus commoners, old-timers versus new comers, etc. But in spite of the various migration patterns and the dramatic socio-economic changes one notes the quasi-absence of a “detrribalisation” process. The vitality of ethnic affiliation has been quoted by almost all authors working on the area and is attested by features such as a strong tendency to ethnic clustering in both rural villages, agricultural schemes and urban quarters<sup>63</sup> and the relative maintenance of non-Arab vernaculars (Beja, Tigre, West African languages).<sup>64</sup> Anthropological studies in the area also highlight the maintenance of intra-tribal patterns of marriage.<sup>65</sup> All these factors indicate that pluri-ethnic coexistence does not mean necessarily ethnic fusion or de-ethnicization.

However the maintenance of ethnic affiliation as a dominant pattern of identification must not be interpreted as evidences of cultural or social isolationism. In fact all the ethnic groups of eastern Sudan share many common cultural features in terms of cloth, housing, food habits, agricultural or pastoral know-how, marriage patterns, etc. All groups have been subjected to sedentarization or urbanization processes and are more and more incorporated within what some authors (Doornbos 1988) have called a Sudanization process. The present situation in Kassala-Gedaref corroborates Barth’s analysis (1966) of ethnic boundaries, i.e. members can continue to affiliate themselves to a distinct ethnic group even if the cultural characteristics of this group underwent drastic changes. It would be misleading to conceive the different ethnic groups as closed, stable and long standing entities. In fact, process of ethnic affiliation appeared to be subjected to various dynamics of fusion or fission according to the historical and political context as well as to the interactional settings.<sup>66</sup>

Many post-colonial studies believed that tribes or ethnic groups were mainly colonial political products that would disappear within a modern nation. This ideological stand did not take into account the reality and effectiveness of ethnicity as a socio-economical system. In most local Sudanese groups

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<sup>60</sup> According to Kuhlman (1990), 71% of the Eritreans in Kassala work as casual or permanent workers compared to 40% Sudanese. In the rural sector they represent 40% of the small scale farming of Kassala and are largely employed in the horticulture and mechanized farming sector.

<sup>61</sup> No recent studies have been done on the Bani Amer who now play a very important role as a border tribe. The importance of the Bani Amer has been acknowledged by the 1989’s government who always give them important governmental position including in 2000 the position of Governor of Kassala State.

<sup>62</sup> According to the 1993’s census, Southerners constitute 4% of the population of Gedaref town and 1% of the population of Kassala town

<sup>63</sup> See in particular Galal al-Din (1975), Heinritz (1982), Salem Murdock (1989), Salih, Mahgoub Mohammed (1982), al- Tayeb (1985) for ethnic clustering in the Rahad, Gedaref and Khasm al Girba areas.

<sup>64</sup> The socio-linguistic situation of the Kassala-Gedaref area has not been described. We remain with the indications of the 1956’s and 1993’s censuses which give both the ethnic affiliation and claimed Mother Tongue but are far to be reliable in this matter. Comparison between these two variables indicates that of course Arabicization (i.e. linguistic Arabization) is taking place but at a low speed. Major non-Arabic languages (i.e. Beja, and West African languages) are still widely claimed as Mother tongues. From our observation, maintenance of non-Arabic languages is stronger in rural areas with strong ethnic clustering. This fact is also attested by the data of the 1993’s census for Rural Areas. For example Beja is claimed as Mother Tongue by 81.89% of Kassala Province Rural population, Darfurian languages are claimed by 32% of Nahr Atbara Province Rural Population and West African Languages are claimed by 40% of Gedaref Province Rural Population.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. see Young (1996) for the Rashayda and Hassan A. (1992) for the Hadendowa.

<sup>66</sup> The fluidity of ethnic affiliation and the role of political and social factors in determining ethnicity has been highlighted by many anthropologists. Among them and particularly relevant to Sudan are Ausenda (1987), Barth (1966), Fukui and Markakis (1994), etc.

affiliation to an ethnic group is activated through adherence to a common genealogy, acceptance of a set of socio-cultural rules, acknowledgement of land rights and customary laws, etc. The fluidity of ethnic boundary, the endless processes of fusion or fission do not mean that ethnic groups or tribes do not function as social system. It just indicates how difficult it is to incorporate such fluid groups into fix administrative units.

## **Ethnic interaction and ethnic reprocessing**

### **Ethnic competition**

The general Sudanese context of war and crisis had sharpened ethnicity at all levels of the public life. But among all the factors, it appears that the socio-economic changes and the increasing competition for land can be considered as the main factors of strengthening of ethnicity in the Kassala-Gedaref area.<sup>67</sup> As pointed out by Saavedra (1998), 'hardening of ethnicity is not only the outcome of deliberate political action, but also has historical roots in the local political economy and administrative experience of the region'. Due to the customary principles of 'tribal lands' acknowledged by the state since the Funj era, competition for resources was and still is conceived in terms of tribal competition between former dominant groups which try to keep their domination and emerging groups which try to gain the support of the rulers and to establish their domination to obtain access to land. During the 18th-19th c. such ethnic competition included the Shukriyya against the Batahin and the 'Arakiyyin in the Butana, the Hadendawa and Bani Amer against the Shukriyya along the Atbara, the Hadendawa against the Rashayda in the Gash, as well as the numerous conflicts between the different lineages and sections of each tribe. 'Tribal competition' is also well documented for the first half of the 20th century in the British Records of the Kassala Province with the endless list of grazing conflicts opposing the different tribes and sections in spite of British efforts to regulate movement of herds<sup>68</sup>.

The development of irrigated and mechanized agriculture led to new types of competition. In the Gash Delta, the Hadendawa are acknowledged as the original owners of the area and still hold the majority of the tenancies in the Gash scheme (65%) but are in competition with the West Africans (mainly Hausa and Borno) share-croppers and with the Nile Riverains who hold gardens and tenancies.<sup>69</sup> In Khasm al Girba (New Halfa) part of former Shukriyya land was given to the resettled Nubians and to other pastoral groups. In the south-eastern area of Gedaref part of the Bani Amer land became mechanized schemes in the hand of the Shukriyya or Nile Riverains. Around Showak, most of the Lahawiyyin grazing land became private mechanized scheme owned by the Bawadra (Khalid et al., this volume). Along the Atbara and Setit Rivers, West African farmers and former pastoral groups like the Lahawiyyin are in competition for river-banks (*juruf*), etc. The 1970 breaking of the Grazing agreements led to numerous conflicts between the pastoral groups while environmental pressures led to greater mobility. The Rashayda who were previously mainly concentrated in North Kassala are moving to South Gedaref between Showak and Doka, a previous Dabaniya territory and a growing number of Rufa'a and other Arab pastoral groups entered the Southern part of Gedaref State (al-Shazali 1989). Finally the sedentarization process led to increasing mixing but also increasing ethnic confrontation for access to resources and political representation.

### **Ethnic reprocessing**

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<sup>67</sup> For a parallel with South Kordofan cf. Karrar (1986) who provides a vivid account of increasing ethnic confrontation between three groups (Hawazma, Moro, Sabori) following the introduction of new agricultural projects by the NMAPC (Nuba Mountains Agriculture Production Corporation).

<sup>68</sup> See the SNRO references concerning 'grazing conflicts' in the Index provided by R. Hasterok (ed.) 1997.

<sup>69</sup> The Hadendawa owned 65% of Gash tenancies versus 35% to Nile Riverains or Westerners (including West Africans and Western Sudanese). But Westerners cultivate most of the plot as share croppers or wage labourers. Cf Ausenda (1987), Abdel Ati in Manger et al. (1994).

Therefore in the second half of the 20th century this 'tribal' competition for resources led to a number of ethnic reprocessing:

- the first one is a tendency towards a process of supra-ethnic grouping according to socio-economical criteria. Different ethnic groups tend to gather and to be considered as one group on the basis of various socio-cultural and economical factors.
- the second is the tendency among former dominated or affiliated groups to establish themselves as independent units.

Both tendencies can operate within the same group at the same time but at different levels and this dual process reflects the plurality of ethnic affiliation. The process of supra-ethnic grouping was well documented by Salem-Murdock in the case of New Halfa (Khasm al Girba) scheme. She noted that 'ethnic identity plays a prominent role in differentiating groups on the New Halfa Scheme. The border line was between the Halfawi (i.e. the resettled Nubians), the Arabs (all the former Butana pastoral groups including the Arab-speaking groups and the Beja-speaking groups who were allowed to get tenancies) and the Sudanese (i.e. people mainly from Western Sudan, West Africa or Southern Sudan who did not have tenancies and work as share-croppers or wage-labourers). This broad ethnic cleavage was fuelled by different rights in the scheme, different economical activities and different socio-cultural practices. She noted however other types of conflict cutting across ethnic affiliation (cf. old Nubians and old Shukriyya elite against young Shukriyya and young Nubians in the election of the Farmer's Union of 1973) and she anticipated a more clear class alignment to emerge (involving for example landless agricultural workers in opposition to tenants and freeholders and small-scale holders in opposition to those with large holdings) that will replace ethnicity, tribe or descent. In the same lines, Barnett and Abdel Karim (1991:92) believed that the huge number of landless wage labourers will foster class competition in the Gedaref area.

But 'class affiliation' does not supersede but rather interpenetrates deeply ethnicity as can be seen in the case of the West African grouping. The fact that broad ethnic labels such as *Gharaba* or *Fallata* are often associated with 'landless wage labourers' is symptomatic of such a collusion between ethnicity and social status. And these supra-ethnic groupings tend to act now as political forces (Harir 1983, Miller and Abu Manga, this volume). That ethnic conflicts in Sudan have their roots in the unequal socio-economic structure of the country is a well known fact which has been the base of the 'New Sudan discourse'. But an important aspect of the ethnic interaction in the Kassala-Gedaref area is that it cannot be summarised within a simple dual dichotomy (the dominant groups versus the dominated). The cases of the Rashayda, Ahamda and Lahawiyyin presented in this volume are particularly relevant here because they describe concrete cases of ethnic reprocessing through internal recomposition and external interaction. By recalling the history of these groups and describing the internal segmentary organization and the internal competition between the lineages they show how the 'tribe' functions as a political and social structure evolving according to the general socio-political context.

## Case-studies

Eman Bushra described the formation of the Rashayda polity and provides a fascinating account of interaction between the state and a semi-nomadic Arab tribe.<sup>70</sup> The Rashayda arrived from the Arabian Peninsula in Sudan in the early 19th century and since then they have been in conflict with the Hadendawa (Beja) who consider them as 'outsiders' intruding on Hadendawa customary lands. The Rashayda-Hadendawa conflict have led the Rashayda to establish alliances with the different governments and with the Khatmiyya/DUP. The alliance with either the Khatmiyya or the Umma proved very beneficial at different times (late 19th century and during the democratic period of 1985-1989) and helped the Rashayda to succeed to settle in the area and to finally obtain an autonomous "tribal" political representation (in the form of *ra'is al idara*). But the state intervention interferes on

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<sup>70</sup> The history and social system of the Rashayda have been detailed by Young (1988; 1996) who conducted anthropological research among them for two years during the late 1970s. al-Hassan (1974) provides also an account of oral history. Since Young's field work, the Rashayda have been subjected to considerable social changes shifting from a nomadic way of life to a semi-sedentary way of life.

the internal tribal political structure and led to rivalries between the different Rashayda branches and families. This was particularly clear during the Colonial Native Administration period but also in a more recent time with the emergence of new political 'freshmen' like Mubarrak Museilleimun who did not belong to the ruling Rashayda families but succeeded to use its Islamist connection. The formation of the Rashayda polity is thus a long process resulting from inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic competition. The Rashayda may be considered as a successful 'outsider' group due to their economic connection with the Gulf countries and their involvement in camel trade. While being in a process of sedentarization since the early 1980s, they strengthen their pastoral activities in spite of the drought of 1984-85. Many Rashayda migrated to the Gulf and reactivated their networks in order to control the camel export to Saudi Arabia. Being 'rich' they became in position to buy land as far as the southern parts of Gedaref State and to get involved in mechanized agriculture to secure animal foster. Their economical success compared to the fate of other pastoral groups enhance ethnic resentment, particularly among the former dominant local group, the Hadendawa. The Rashayda case clearly indicates that socio-economical changes can not be analysed at the local level only. The main difference between the Rashayda and other local Arab pastoral groups is their 'international network' which provides them with both economical empowerment and political network.

The Lahawiyyin (Khalid, Dalmau and Miller) clearly do not master such a network and provide an example of a 'declining' pastoral group (Morton 1988). Like the Rashayda, the Lahawiyyin came late in the Butana and were first spread between the White Nile and Kordofan. They moved to the Butana in the earlier years of the Condominium period and affiliated to the Shukriyya. As an hosted tribe, the Lahawiyyin benefited from the 1904 grazing rights granted to the Butana tribes but were not recognised as an autonomous political entity, a fact that led to much resentment and complains. The authors provide a detail account of the history and distribution of the Lahawiyyin sections and sub-sections based on the Condominium records as little is known about this ethnic group. Their sub-political status during the Condominium period did not prevent them from being a rich nomadic tribe, known for their camel wealth in particular. The authors suggest that the Lahawiyyin post-colonial economic marginalization was partly a consequence of their sub-status during the Condominium period. As the Lahawiyyin were not at the top of the tribal hierarchy since the beginning they could not benefit from the needed administrative and political networks in the post-colonial Sudan. They remained in the pastoral sector and were mostly excluded from the development of mechanized agriculture, a fact that had dramatic consequences during the 1980s and 1990s drought.

This economic marginalization linked with a process toward sedentarization led to a number of socio-political changes. Among them is the emergence of a new segment of population, the Gulf expatriates, often younger and more educated, claiming Islamist affiliation and who are acting for a better political representation to emancipate themselves from both the Shukriyya and the Bawadra. In this new political context one witnesses both inter-ethnic (Shukriyya-Bawadra/Lahawiyyin) and intra-ethnic (Awlad Hardan vs. Awlad Al Faki) struggle. The Shukriyya-Bawadra/Lahawiyyin antagonism may reflect the opposition between the former masters of the Butana and their affiliate groups in spite of the fact that the fate of many poor Shukriyya families might not be better than that of most Lahawiyyin. But again socio-economic conflicts (large scale agro-pastoralists towards small agro-pastoralists) crystallized in ethnic antagonism. The Rashayda and Lahawiyyin cases show the long term impact of the 1970-1980s changes with the emergence of new lineages or individuals, who did not belong to the ruling families and had to migrate to the Gulf.

The Ahamda (Barbara Casciarri) provide a clear example of ethnic formation according to political and social context. Following an anthropological approach, Casciarri questions the concept of the Ahamda *gabila*. She perfectly describes the fluidity of the Ahamda grouping due to the fragmentation of the different Ahamda sub-groups within a very large territory and their subsequent affiliation to various regional dominant groups in some areas (Ja'aliyyin in Khartoum Province, Shukriyya in the Butana) or their maintenance as a specific group in other areas (White Nile). Through the Ahamda case, the author tackles the history of Sudanese Arab tribal formation in general, the importance of *Sufi* affiliations as indicators of lineage split and the active role of the Condominium administrators in restructuring the tribe. In most cases, the dynamics of fragmentation and assimilation process took place before the colonial period but the British prompted those dynamics. A new development

occurred in 1994 with the development of the 'League of the Ahamda' which led to an overall restructuring of the Ahamda *gabila* in order to recreate a link between the numerous and scattered Ahamda groups. The whole process fostered a renewed tribal pride and a rediscovery of their own history. Those very recent events indicate that the tribal model is still functional, probably due to its flexible nature.

The community of West African origin (known as Fallata) constitutes another complex case of ethnic formation and ethnic interaction. As pointed out by the authors (Miller and Abu Manga), the Sudanese Arabic generic term Fallata refers to a cluster of different ethnic groups with different historical, linguistics and social backgrounds and whose unity relies mainly on this outsider categorization. The construction of the Fallata ethnicity clearly interacts with the other's perception, i.e. the central Sudanese 'Arab' perception. Among the critical issues concerning the Fallata in eastern Sudan is their specific status as both 'locals' and 'foreigners'. Through a detailed account of the settlement patterns of each Fallata group in Gedaref State, the authors highlight the historical depth of the migration trend and the different networks and strategies followed by each group. Those networks are still active and may connect members of a specific village to their fellow tribesmen in other parts of Sudan (Blue Nile, Kordofan) as well as Hijaz while a trend towards localization is also taking place. The Fallata make up an important socio-economic force in Gedaref State whose union or division can prove decisive in the regional political fabrics. But the factors leading either to self-affiliation to a Fallata sub-grouping or to a dissociation from this grouping vary according to the micro-regional and social contexts. The Fallata provide thus a fascinating and sensitive account of a supra-ethnic grouping in process that built itself partly in reaction to a feeling of exclusion.

The establishment of the Fallata in eastern Sudan is often conceived as the result of a specific British labour-policy (Balamoan 1981) which favoured West African workers to native Sudanese or Egyptian labour forces. The British policy towards West African has been already described by some authors (Duffield 1981, in particular) especially with regards to the status of Sultan Maiwurno in the Blue Nile. A detailed scanning of the British Records of the Kassala Province (Rupert Hasterok) shows once again the intricacy of the British administrative policy in matters of 'tribal affairs'. In 1924-1925, the British requested Sultan Maiwurno to send some of his people to the then depopulated area of Southern Gedaref. But the changes in the administrative system and the establishment of territorial native administrative units in 1927 led the British administrators to deny Maiwurno's native authority upon the West African communities settled in the Kassala-Gedaref area. As usual the heavy correspondence between the various British officials highlights the contradictions of the British administrative policy and reminds us of Sikainga's study on Bahr al-Ghazal (Sikainga 1991). This correspondence shows the ambiguity of the British attitude towards the West Africans, whom they need as a labour force but whom they were reluctant to recognize as a 'local group'. This ambiguity had later consequences in the post colonial Sudan: Fallata are still often perceived as 'foreigners' in spite of their long stay in Sudan and their participation in the economic development.

Moving away from politics and coming back to ethnicity, understood as a social system organized through a set of shared values, we found the important concept of gender relationship. Gender studies form now a specific field in itself attracting more and more scholars and aiming at shedding a new light on power relationship within given societies (Hale 1996). As pointed out by Tamadur Khalid for the Lahawiyyin, nomadic societies in Sudan have until recently hardly been approached in a gender perspective. However more recent studies (Holter 1994, al-Hassan 1992, Lobban (ed.) 1998, Manger et al 1996, Michael 1998, Salem Murdock 1989) have shown the impact of socio-economic changes (mainly sedentarization) upon the traditional gender socio-economical division. Women are often thought to be among the main victims of nomadic pauperisation but it appears that sedentarization has a dual impact on women status. The traditional pattern of women activities in the Lahawiyyin society is quite similar to that of the Arab surrounding groups<sup>71</sup> with nevertheless some specificities according

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<sup>71</sup> See in particular Hassan (1992) for the Hadendawa, Holter (1994) and Salem Murdock (1989) for the Shukriyya, Young (1996) for the Rashayda.

to each group, in particular concerning animal care.<sup>72</sup> Both Salem Murdock (1989) and Young (1996) consider that there has been an economic decline and a reduction of the sphere of women activities. A number of traditional products made by women are no longer economically rewarding (such as milk products, carpets etc.). Moreover sedentarization enhances women seclusion and drive them away from their traditional activities (animal care, wadi land cultivation). In the case of the Lahawiyyin women of Al Mugatta Wad Al Zein village, sedentarization led to a number of changes. Women are often more secluded, especially those belonging to well to-do groups, and don't 'go public' but get involved in petty business through male relatives used as mediators. Because of male immigration women got increasingly involved in riverside cultivation and animal care. Shifting from a mainly economical perspective to take into account the importance of the symbolic sphere, T. Khalid describes the Lahawiyyin self-representation of body, sexuality and reproduction as it is expressed by women songs. Like in most Sudanese societies, whether in rural or urban areas, women do not have direct access to politics and exercise their power within the sphere of the extended household or lineage.

The notions of shame, honour and privacy are at the heart of Beja ethic (Mohammed Tahir Hamid) and are particularly reflected in the discursive rules of Beja poetry. The role of the poetry in many societies, and in Beja society in particular, needs to be emphasized in an area where crises led to a focus on economic factors and overshadow other aspects of social life. Poetry is an active way of expression and contestation as it has been shown in the case of the Shukriyya (Hurreiz 1975, Sørbo 1985), Halfawiyyin (Abdel Manam 1991) and the Hadendawa (Ausenda 1985) but its actual status under urbanization process needs to be investigated. Hamid indicates how the respect of specific discursive rules makes up the essence of Beja identity. According to him, Beja identity is not built upon the language itself (tu-Bedawi) but upon those rules and ethic codes. This is why, the Tigre-speaking Bani Amer are considered as Beja while some Beja-speakers affiliated to the Beja groups but without the mastering of this ethic are not considered as Beja proper. Therefore, specific topics that will need to break away from these discursive rules cannot be expressed in Tu-Bedawi and speakers will often switch to Arabic in public arena. The author is critical of the supposed Arabic influence upon the Beja poetry. This influence is often shown by the use of a similar poetic form: the quatrain. But more than the form, it is the extensive use of allusion that distinguishes Beja poetry from surrounding Arabic poetry. Behind those technical aspects it is the whole issue of mutual cultural influence between the different groups that need our careful attention. In a general context of ethnic tension where each group wants to prove its specificity it is important to confront discourses and practices and to give detailed accounts of the cultural practices.

## **To Conclude**

The political situation of the area cannot be understood without taking into account the history of the population, the ethnic interaction and the issue of land rights. The Kassala Gedaref area has been a region of major socio-economic changes since the sixties with the development of large irrigated and mechanized agricultural schemes. Although the agricultural results of these schemes have not been as successful as first expected, it led to new economic developments, mainly an increasing agro-pastoral inter-dependency. Former free pastoral land became private properties but are used as grazing stock by the herders. This economic development induced many change in the patterns of settlement and in the land rights. Previous local dominant groups such as the Shukriyya or the Hadendawa came to be in competition with groups they consider as 'new-comers'. Those 'new comers' are either other pastoral groups (such as the Rashayda or the Lahawiyyin), or groups involved in agriculture (West African in the Gash and in South Gedaref, Nile Riverain in the Horticulture in Kassala) or migrant labour force (westerners, Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees) or traders. Each group may have a different interpretation of the situation and of its legitimacy in the area.

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<sup>72</sup> A table of women activities according to each ethnic group can be found in the Environmental Profile Kassala Province 1988.



It is clear that the political and administrative changes of 1970-1971 (namely the 1970 Unregistered Land Act and the 1971 People Local Government Act) had more negative than positive impacts in the area. It gave to wealthy individuals, well connected with the government, the opportunity to monopolise the land and to exploit it without any ecological consideration. It led to deforestation and over grazing. It weakened the authority of the tribal leaders whose main function was to solve problems related to access to land and water.

The revitalisation of the Native Administration advocated since the 1980s and finally enacted in 1994 raises many questions. Which group is going to be considered as a 'local one' entitled with a 'Native land' (*Dar*) and a native leadership (*Nazir*)? Is there an opportunity for the other groups to be recognised as autonomous local group with their own territory and leadership? Shall the tribal leadership remain in the hand of the same aristocratic families or shall it shift to other individuals? Here again it appears that each group or sub-group has its own interpretation of what should be an adequate Native administration system.

The fact that the *Inqadh* government tries to co-opt and manipulate tribal leadership as well as religious leadership to deepen its local bases cannot be considered as something new in the Sudanese political arena. It just indicate that 'tribes' and brotherhood are still considered as effective social structures. More interesting is to analyse the strategies of the regional groups and lineages to gain power. Who is joining which party to get what? It appears that the NIF and Ansar Sunna were able to co-opt not only rich individuals but also segments of population unsatisfied with the traditional parties (e.g. DUP, Umma) and with the traditional tribal leadership. A new 'actor' is here the Gulf expatriate but also the Westerner (both Western Sudanese and West Africans). The main northern opposition party, the NDA, settled in Eritrea and allied to the SPLA has launch a number of attacks in the Kassala State, more precisely in the Gash and in Hamashkoreb Province. Among its members are the Beja Front and the DUP. Behind the official ideological confrontation ("Islamists" versus "non-Islamist") one has to take into account the interest and the strategy of each group.

Finally, although the ethnic group is a fluid entity that adapt to the situational context, is must not been approach in political term only. Affiliation to an ethnic group or a lineage is activated through adherence to a number of beliefs and practises: a common genealogy, acceptance of a set of socio-economic rules, land rights and customary laws. It determines one's perception of the surrounding society and sets social ethics. Within a 'changing world' where urbanization and ethnic mixing are increasing, the studies of cultural and social changes can be revealing cases of ethnic reprocessing.

**Table**

**Main ethnic groups in Kassala and Gedaref States in numbers**

<b>Ethnic groups</b>	<b>Kassala State</b>	<b>Gedaref State</b>
<b>Arabs</b>		
Baggara ( Ahamda, Ta'aisha, Habbaniya etc.)	31,427	60,047
Ja'aliyyin (Ja'aliyyin, Shaygiya, Bidariya, Rubatab etc.)	61,625	82,647
Juhayna (Rufa'a al sharq, Kenana, Khawalda, Messalamiyya, etc.)	18,129	64,660
Northern Arab (Kawahla, etc.)	33,728	32,848
Eastern Arab (Rashayda, etc.)	95,060	72,270
Miscellaneous Arabs (Shukriyya, Lahawiyyin etc.)	6,383	119,930
Other Arabs (Dar Hamid, Bederiyya, Hassaniya, Rufa'iyyin etc.)	8,853	42,058
<b>Total Arabs</b>	<b>235,105</b>	<b>474,460</b>
<b>Beja</b>		
Hadendawa	326,627	3,670
Other Beja groups (Amarar, Bisharin, Arteiga, Halenga, Ashraf)	42,717	21,236
Beni Amer	187,437	47,952
<b>Total Beja</b>	<b>556,781</b>	<b>72,858</b>
<b>Nubians</b> (Danagla, Mahas, Sokot, Kunuz, Meidob, etc.)	<b>54,937</b>	<b>5,496</b>
<b>Tribes of Western Darfur</b> (Fur, Berti, Masalit, Tama, Borgo, Zaghawa, Tunjur etc....)	<b>101,861</b>	<b>202,640</b>
<b>Nigerians Tribes</b> (Borno, Fulbe, Hausa)	<b>120,067</b>	<b>170,022</b>
<b>Nuba groups</b> (Ghulfa, Katla, Dilling, Nyimang, Kadugli, Moro, etc.)	<b>21,006</b>	<b>40,551</b>
<b>South Sudanese groups</b> (Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zande, Bongo-Baka etc)	<b>8,667</b>	<b>11, 503</b>
<b>Funj</b>	<b>1,083</b>	<b>3,098</b>
<b>Non Sudanese</b> (Indians, Yemeni, Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees)	<b>108,160</b>	<b>163,264</b>
<b>Non Stated</b>	<b>6,069</b>	<b>4,454</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,234,562</b>	<b>1,148,262</b>

Source. Sudan National Census 1993 (p. 115,117). Department of Statistics, Khartoum, Sudan