

## **Marrying Modeling with Empiricism: the case and context of Sudan**

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### Introduction

The conflict in Darfur that expanded in February 2003, had long standing, prior origins, that could have shown it would have likely happened unless timely and appropriate interventions were made. The inadequate recognition of the causes and the lack or capacity to solve them has meant that this conflict has now reached its 5<sup>th</sup> year with perhaps hundreds of thousands dead and wounded and perhaps millions displaced. Beyond the evident humanitarian concerns, this violence has severely tested conflict resolution mechanisms as well as peace making, peacekeeping bodies in Africa and in the international community. This conflict has also put international and national strategic interests of peace, security, oil, uranium, and agricultural products also at risk. It has substantially weakened the regimes in Chad and Sudan, that are already heading toward failed states with many ungoverned places that represent opportunities for those with adversarial interests to the United States and the wider world. It has raised difficult political and legal issues about crimes against humanity.

The conflict can not be viewed in simple polarities or prisms of mono-causality. It must be viewed in the context of multi-causality with such variables as: historical state formation, economic position for trade, agricultural produce and livestock, traditional political systems of governance as well as its foundational ecology, micro-climates and demography. The cultural and linguistic basics of Darfur are critical along with conceptualizations of gender, race and ethnicity. Ideology, religion, and perceptions of core-periphery relations to power, class formation, and marginality are also part of the equation. Proxy powers amidst extensive small arms trafficking should be included as well as struggles for natural resources such as oil, water, uranium and copper, gum arabic and grazing and farming activities. In short there are many past and present complexities to the Darfur conflict, moreover there is more to Sudan than Darfur and there is more to the Horn of Africa than Sudan.

### Ten Strategic Concerns for the African Continent

While this paper is focused on Sudan and its related issues, in needs to be put in the still wider context of the Sahara, Sahel, and Savanna. In turn such concerns need to be viewed within the larger prism of continental Africa. At this macroscopic level one can summarize at least ten dominant issues that need to be recognized and addressed.

#### 1. Destabilizing Global Ecological Concerns:

Climate Change, Water Resources and Desertification

#### 2. African Maritime Choke Points:

Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, Bab al-Mandeb, Horn, Mozambique Channel, Cape of Good

- Hope, Cap Vert (Senegal)
3. Democracy and Political Pluralism:  
Regime Stability and Security, Human Security and Rights, Transparency  
Accountability
  4. The Great Faiths  
Religious and minority rights  
Islamic Extremism
  6. Energy Production and Security:  
Oil, uranium, water
  7. Military security and the (small) Arms Race:  
capacity building and training; peace-keeping, anti trafficking and anti-piracy
  8. Strategic Resources other than oil:  
Gold, cobalt, copper, bauxite, iron, coal, coltran
  9. Economy and Markets  
Growth in GNP, economic composition, access to markets, import substitution,  
employment opportunities, brain drain, unemployment, informal sector and black  
markets, cash economy
  10. Health and demographic Issues: Malaria and parasitic diseases, TB, HIV/AIDS, age-  
sex  
Population pyramids, famine, malnutrition, refugees, and migrations

Clearly the long neglect of Africa in the strategic interests of the United States has brought us to the point where Africom needs to be stood up, but in a careful, cerebral and informed manner. Especially this is the case with limited funds and personnel presently available. This paper takes a multifaceted look at the crisis in Darfur within the wider Sudanese and Sahelian context. It views the principle variables that could have been seen earlier as well as raising a number of themes and questions drawn from Sudanese history. In particular its takes an anthropological look at the structures, functions and evolution of states in general with a deeper look at the Sudanese state as a candidate for failed state status.

#### The State: some anthropological perspectives

Part of the work for this paper is to explore, define and model “the state” in this region. What has been the configuration of the pre-colonial state, vs. the colonial state, vs. the post-colonial state? With states having an extremely long political and military history in the region and the African continent, this provides a rich laboratory for research and analysis. Moreover we have medieval states built around Christianity with centuries of peaceful coexistence between them and Islam. And we have many Islamic states and *jihadist* movements from the rise of dynastic Islam itself down to contemporary Islamic movements in the region. Were these all states in the conventional sense? What constitutes a failing or failed state? There can be lots of empirical evidence to choose from to answer such questions.

First of all, the subject of defining and describing “the state” has long been an popular anthropological topic with an extensive literature for analysis, ranging from the

archaeological investigation to written records. Roughly it is a dense, class-stratified society with a complex division of labor usually having defined boundaries. The elite representatives of the state have a controlling monopoly on political power, coercive force, and wealth. Typically they live in some type of seclusion with controlled access to their wealth sources, military and police, and religious or symbolic legitimacy. The state can draw its legitimacy from dynastic pedigree, fear and force, popular elections, divine authority, priestly appointment, legal bodies or constitutions. In other words if the legitimacy, monopoly of force and control of the political economy are questioned this could be perceived as existential threats to that state. Potentially, they will use violent means (or the threat of it) to recover from this threat to the state. Urban and state formation processes have included impacted habitat, class formation, social stratification, division of labor, ancient states and relations between the component parts of modern states as well as development theory. Commonly, definitions are based on structural/functional models as well as processual and historical models. All can be subjected to empirical testing for whichever variables appear to be of interest or importance.

Anthropologists have long noted that human social organization tends toward increased complexity, while at the same time its increased complexity requires more and more energy to keep it from collapse. This is all according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics that can be viewed as the law of entropy, while state formation pursues the ultimately impossibility of anti-entropy. Thus human societies, whether acephalous (egalitarian) bands, chiefdoms, ranked societies, kingdoms nation states or imperial states all have an inherent and contradictory nature toward increased power concentration on the one hand and toward breakdown and rivalry for power on the other.

Many theories have been offered to explain this dynamic of state formation from hydraulic (water) control for irrigation and taxation, theories about impacted habitat, surplus accumulation, class struggle, gender theories, religious and spiritual theories, warfare and violence theories. Other approaches include human nature and greed theories, coercion, protection, redistribution, charisma and leadership, 'clash of civilizations, central place theories, and nomads vs. farmer theories. All of these theories have certain strengths and weaknesses. All are good at explaining some variables and causes of state formation while perhaps not so good at explaining other dimensions.

Since first known in ancient Mesopotamia and in the Nile Valley, and later on, along the Indus and Yangtze Rivers, states have risen and fallen. They have been defended and they have collapsed. They have failed for internal reasons and external invasion. Sometimes the historical trajectory of one state or another can be adjusted, accelerated or modified. Sometimes the effort is not worth it. Some states have essentially failed to deliver basic services but their security apparatuses are still stronger than any (divided) forces inclined to bring it down.

Typology of States and Their Evolution:

**(Sudan in Bold Face)**

Formative States

Ancient States

Warlords to City States

Medieval States

Religious States

Jewish

Christian

**Muslim**

**National States**

Imperial States (Slave Pump States)

Conquest States

Crusade States

Jihad State

Colonial States

Efflorescent States

**Dictatorships**

a. **Military**

b. Elites

Monarchical States

Feudal

Constitutional

Constitutional States

**Ideological States**

Capitalist

Socialist

Communist

**Islamist**

**One-Party** and Multi-Party states

Secular States

Industrial States

Declining or Reforming States

Post Industrial States

Irredentist States

Secular States

Democratic States

**Post-Colonial States**

**Failed States?**

Global Village

Cyber-State

The Structural Roles of the State Can Include:

Economics

Means of Production

Mode of Production  
Land Registry and Taxation  
Technology  
Wealth Distribution and Redistribution  
Employment  
Conspicuous Consumption

Politics

Ideology and Legitimacy  
Conflict Resolution Mechanisms  
(Self) Individual and the State, Civil Liberties, Human Rights

Religion and Belief Systems

State (National)  
Regional (Local)  
Personal and Cultic

Means of Coercion

Armies, Body guards and Police  
Legal and Punitive  
Supernatural  
Prejudice and Discrimination

Social Stratification

Elites and Nobility  
Class and Caste Society  
Division of Labor  
Race and Ethnicity  
Achieved and Ascribed Status, Poverty  
Gender and Social Organization

Record Keeping

Weights, Measures, Taxes, Calendars  
History and Writing Systems

Arts and Architecture

Monumental  
Utilitarian  
Personal Decorative

Demography

Settlements  
Regional Geography  
Fertility, Mortality  
Migration, Refugees  
Health issues

The Functional Roles of States include:

Monopoly of Wealth

Control of Currency and Standards  
Regulation over Counterfeiting

### Monopoly of Power

- Armed Forces and militias
- Law and Justice
- Corporal and Capital Punishments

### Monopoly of State Symbols

- Flags, Banners and Standards
- Religion and religious structures
- National Culture and Linguistic Identity

### Class Formation

- Corporate Elites
- Sumptuary Goods
- Division of Labor

### Control of Means of Production

- Primary Production and Natural Resources
- Secondary Manufacture
- Tertiary Services

With these definitions and properties of states well in mind, one can turn to the cases of states in Darfur, the Sudan and its Sahelian context

While this original paper (1) was focused on **Province** of Darfur, it also needs to be placed within its own empirical and **National** context of the Sudan. In turn the Sudan needs to be in its regional context in which it is situated in the Sahel **Region** that sweeps across West and Central Africa that finally includes the Horn of Africa. Once the descriptive features of these three level of analysis, Darfur (provincial), Sudan (national) and Sahel with Horn (regional) are surveyed than we can begin to construct models. Then the actors and their actions can be more sharply defined and modeled.

### Strategic Locations of Darfur

Darfur occupies a strategic location in several respects. First it was long a separate and independent and sovereign sultanate or state that paid no allegiance to anyone and at various times it was a major power broker in Wadai, Kordofan, Sennar, Khartoum and Omdurman. Its economic strength was centered on the trade towns of ancient Kobbe and modern Fasher and Nyala at the southern terminus for the very historic *Darb al Araba'ain* ('40-day road') across the Nubian and Libyan deserts to Egypt for transporting livestock slaves and gum arabic. It is also the northern terminus from trade from southern Darfur (*Dar Fertit* and *Hofrat an-Nahas*). With such importance it also occupied a key east-west trade position and pilgrimage position to Wadai (Chad) and on to the western Sahel states of Bornu, Kanem, Hausa states, Songhai, and Mali. From a religious point of view Darfur also connected the province by trade and pilgrimage routes to Kordofan and to the Muslim Funj Sultanates (central Sudan) to the east. The town of Nyala in south Darfur is the westernmost Sudanese terminus of the railway to the west.

Location is not just in trade and migration routes, but Darfur also occupies a central location on the savanna and desert divide. Presently there is heightened competition for water (underground and rain fed) and natural resources, in the modern

times, perhaps some competition for oil in various places in Darfur and for potential sources of uranium ore. It livestock and grains are also of considerable importance, at least, in normal times.

Darfur is also distinguished among several mid Saharan locations for a central highland *masif* that rises up to 10,000 feet which results in important micro-climatic and rain-causing (pluvogenic) effects in an otherwise sweeping flat terrain that is hot and water starved. Thus this local advantage can be another setting for competition and conflict. One expression of this is the rivalry between camel and cattle herding modes of production away from the highlands with the traditional farmer and mixed agricultural activities in the Darfur highlands. Upon this economic foundation is a cultural divide between Arab Muslims herders and non-Arab Muslim farmers. To the extent that the government of Sudan seeks legitimacy through the mobilization of an Arab and Muslim identity these factors in Darfur and in Khartoum also need to be brought into the equations of understanding.

### Strategic Location of Sudan

Beyond the province of Darfur (actually, now three provinces of Darfur: North, West and South) is the entire nation of the Sudan. It is well known that the Sudan is the largest nation in Africa situating it to border nine other African nations some of which have great strategic importance in their own rights (especially Egypt and Ethiopia). Its strategic location is enhanced by commanding very substantial lengths of the Nile proper as well as the White and Blue Niles and other tributaries with four functioning dams (Roseires, Sennar, Jebel Aulia, and Merowe) another in design (Kajbar), and still a major canal diversion (Jonglei) partially built. As water is a critical resource in northeast Africa, Sudan is again in a very strategic position. On top of this Sudan has extensive seafront and a deep water port on the Red Sea which is situated between two of the most important global maritime choke points of the Suez Canal and the Bab al-Mandeb. On top of this impressive list is that Sudan has become a substantial oil producing nation (to China, India, Malaysia, etc.) along with its oil-producing neighbors Egypt and Chad. Expansion of oil producing is anticipated. Valuable minerals, especially gold and important agricultural production in sorghum (millet), cotton and gum arabic and a major producer of livestock add to the impact and importance of Sudan regionally and globally. Subsistence production in irrigated and rain-fed areas plays a strategic role in that the populations in those areas (at least those without civil strife) have fairly reliable food sources.

### Strategic Location of the Sahel

The region in Africa known as the Sahel, is derived from the Arab root '*shl*' meaning 'borders' or 'edges' or 'coasts.' The pidgin language of the east African coast is termed Ki-Swahili as it is spoken in the lands where Arabic and Bantu languages first met. For the West African Sahel the term connotes the borderlands between the full Sahara (Arabic for 'desert') and the savanna grasslands further south. This region is approximately 200 to 600 miles wide and about 4,300 miles long. It can function as an environmental barrier, a 'sieve', and a corridor depending upon the uses to which it is being put. In ecological theory this can be termed an ecotonal subsystem in which one can find also of both interaction climate zones as well as unique features to the Sahel. This

zone is also defined the regional of bi-seasonal clashes of the northern (summer) migration of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) and its southward migration in the winter. This regular oscillation has long taken place but at time of global climate change the northern migration can be shorter and less productive of rain. This can result in increased desertification and dust storms known as *haboubs*, or *harmattans*. These are caused by the clashing fronts that generate the vertical lift Hadley cells which give wind (and sand) lift as these forces meet. Over the Atlantic this generates counter clockwise rotating storms known as hurricanes which are typically born in the region of the Cape Verde Island, or the ITCZ surround by warm water which further fuels the hurricanes. On the positive side, it was in the West African Sahel that we find a very long history of functional state formation. Conflict and crisis can be creative and stimulating or it can be destructive depending upon governance and difficult conditions can cause both creative vs. destructive responses.

In latitudinal terms once notes that the axis of the seasonal shifts takes place generally on about 10 degree north of the Equator. Put in political terms, if one draws a set of parallel lines, let's say between 5 to 15 degrees north of the Equator, we also have a "zone of conflict" partly because of the stress placed on human resources and populations. Not to advocate for a reductionist model of environmental determinism, but only to notice an obvious fact that the majority of present or recent conflicts in Africa are within this zone. They can include Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Somalia are all found along this latitude. So, one must take note of factors which ameliorate or exacerbate these fluctuations, especially in terms of the resource foundations of the economy and control of the economy that often underlies wider and expanding conflicts, or will this 'necessity' of response stimulate human creativity?.

### The Size and Scale of Africa, the Sudan and Darfur

Factors of size must be brought into the equation in terms of basic difficulty of the logistics of long distance transport and communication as well as having good governance and delivery of effective political administration. This is in the context of very poor infrastructure and a harsh hot climate

- The continent of Africa is more than three times the area of the continental United States. Its human history is vastly longer including some of the most ancient states known, such as Kerma..
- The area of Sudan (1 million square miles) is about equal to everything east of the Mississippi in the United States.
- The north-south distance in Sudan from the Hayalab Triangle in northern Sudan, to Nimule in the southern Sudan equals that from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Or, east-west in Sudan is equal to the distance from Chicago to eastern Utah.
- Sudan borders nine African nations. Two of them have high strategic importance (e.g. Ethiopia and Egypt).

- The three parts of Darfur alone border three nations, Libya, Chad and the Central African Republic.
- Darfur ranges 840 miles north to south (from Boston to Iowa). Darfur is 396 miles east to west or the distance from Boston to West Virginia.
- In size, Darfur alone is 191,650 square miles. This can be compared to the size of France 212,736 square miles or of the United Kingdom at 93,377 square miles
- Unitary state power was achieved by the Daju, Tungur and Keira dynasties (in 1596). Under the Keira, major Islamization took place. Darfur was a sovereign state until military conquest late in Turco-Egyptian rule in 1874. The Mahdists ruled Darfur from 1885 to 1898, when sovereignty reverted to the Darfur Sultanate, but eliminated again when British killed the last Sultan in 1916. It was administered as a single province until 1991, but was divided into two provinces, northern and southern in the mid 1990s. At present, it is further deconstructed into three Darfur provinces: northern, western and southern. Thus, irredentist sovereignty is an important issue in Darfur.

Darfur must be understood in its climatological position.

This is especially true in the context of global climate change, regional desiccation, poor land registry and ungoverned spaces, poor border definition and the weak or missing mechanisms of conflict resolution.

1. Darfur straddles the bi-seasonal north-south migrations of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) which forms and defines the Sahelian region with its notable dust storms (haboobs, harmattans).
2. Darfur straddles three major climate zones, desert, savanna and scrub forests. Human competition for these ecosystems can be intense
3. Central Darfur, in particular has notable microclimates due to the high elevations in the Jebel Marra Plateau. Jebel Marra rises to an impressive 3,088 meters. Orographic cooling generates some much-needed water for farming and herding activities.
4. With global and regional climate change all of these areas are under considerable stress. The regional populations are under severe competition for arable land and herding with water access. Substantial rainfall differences and declines exist on a north-south gradient. With northern Darfur receiving hardly any (less than 4 inches p.a.). Central highland Darfur can reach 4-20 inches and southern Darfur can go from 20-50 inches p.a., if the ITCZ goes far enough northward with sufficient rainfall.
5. The summer position of the ITCZ essentially determines the boundary of northern Darfur. By the winter the ITCZ has migrated to southern Darfur. As it migrates, the northern camel herders (Abala Arabs and non-Arabs such as the Zaghawa) put grazing pressure on those people in the center. Those cattle herding Baggara Arabs in

the central savanna, following the rains, put more grazing pressures on the center (Fur, Daju) and on southern Darfur (Rizeigat Arabs).

6. While the causes of conflict in Darfur are many, the context of an impacted habitat is substantially contributory. It is notable that the vast majority of reported clashes and refugees are neither in the far north, nor in the fare south of Darfur.

Sudan and the Sahel need to be understood in their climatological positions but also in relation to their governance. The desert will not improve in the near or distant future. Probably it will get worse. Responsible leadership will either develop the desert for other uses, such as oil or uranium or search for additional water resources that are also not renewable. Organized migration to central places is a solution that can provide security and employment if done in an equitable and responsive way. Yet anticipation of conflict in the impacted region is necessary. For example, Darfur is not the only place in Sudan with active or threatened conflicts that also include eastern Sudan, southern Sudan (Abyei and Blue Nile, both on 10 degrees north) and recently in northern Sudan (Kajbar dam).

Elsewhere in the Sahel, the situation in Somalia is not at all stable and has various new rounds of complicating violence. The most contested zone in Somalia is at about 5 degrees north. The conflicts, instability and large ungoverned spaces in Chad (its cultural north-south divide is on 10 degrees north) and the Central African Republic (its most ungoverned spaces are just below 10 degrees north) must also be understood as much more that spill over from Darfur or interstate conflicts. The Democratic Alliance launched recent violence in Mali for Change (ADC). The capitol of Mal, Bamako is about 11 degrees north. Niger has also faced insurgency with the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ); the capitol of Niger, Niamey is about 11 degrees north of the equator. Such asymmetric insurgencies are thematic for the entire region.

Senegal is a state for potential violence as seen in its war with Mauritania and the persistent conflict in southern Senegal in the Casamance region (with the MFDC), but rather good governance and clear boundaries in Senegal has spared it from expanded violence. Bad governance in Guinea-Bissau at about 11 degrees north have caused this to be a 'failed state', or even worse, it has become a deeply corrupted 'narco-state' with *coup d'etats* and multiple abuses of power. Happily the bloody and protracted conflicts in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast have been calmed and stabilized with substantial ECOMOG intervention but, once again the 10 degree lines goes through sections of both of those nations as well.

Taking a continental view, Africa has 53 recognized nations. Nations with very recent or on-going organized conflicts (other than focused 'terrorist' acts) include Algeria, **Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-B, Congo-K, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.** These 23 nations represent 42 % of Africa, so one can say that the majority of African nations don't have notable conflict. This already contradicts a common stereotype, but this is not to say that this is good, but that it is not as bad as Afro-Pessimists might have it and several of these conflicts are resolved or over specific issues (such as elections).

In bold face, this list is further identified by those nations that are located from 8-12 degrees north latitude of the Equator. In other words these thirteen nations of twenty-three with conflict represent 57% of all conflicting nations. Moreover some of these conflicts have been much longer lasting with more casualties, deaths and refugees (these can be operational measures of the scale of conflict) than many of the others with, for example, short term violence as in post election violence. Africa has the largest number of refugees for any continent and Sudan and the Horn account for the greatest proportion of this number. Admittedly, these calculations are rough and could be, or need to be refined, but at least on this basis it does appear that if climatological factors are not addressed, the situations can be substantially worsened and go into further degeneration. Throughout the region, measures can be made to improve land registration, border definition, property registration, provide well drilling projects, expand use of solar ovens, improve security provisions and install systems for early conflict recognition and management.

It is important to stress that this is not an argument for ecological or geographical determinism, but only that the impacted habitat requires positive action if it will not devolve or degenerate. Actions are, or were, possible, but clearly not sufficient in too many cases. There are other problems in Africa, in the Niger Delta, in northeastern Congo and Zimbabwe (the interaction of stressed environment [the southern ITCZ] and terrible governance), but one can not help but notice the strong clustering of the more prominent areas of conflicts along the ITCZ. At the least, this is a testable hypothesis to investigate or confirm and then determine reasoned interventions that could ameliorate or curtail the devolution or further instability if done in timely manner.

#### Darfur is very complex from an ethnographic perspective.

An understanding of the conflicts in Darfur must also include cultural identity and ethnicity.

1. On one hand, there has been a long history of relative isolation and state independence. Yet, on the other hand, there has been an equally long history of interconnectedness, migration, local and long-distance trade and population movements according to climate and location as already noted. Thus for every generalization one might make about the ethnography of Darfur, it risks being easily refuted by counter evidence.
2. One might divide Darfur populations by those who were present before the Arab expansion in late medieval times and more recently, from those people who were present before this expansion took place. But long standing slavery and intermarriage complicates this easy division.
3. One might divide the people of Darfur by those who are herders vs. those who are farmers, but many practice varying degrees of both modes of economic production.
4. One might also divide the herders by those who predominantly herd camels vs. those who herd cattle, but again these facile categories often collapse with varying ecological, economic and cultural circumstances.

5. Among the Eastern Sudanic non-Arabs some of the groups include the Daju and important Fur. Along the Chad-Sudan border there are small pockets of Tama, Daju, Masalit, Sinyar, and Runga. Along the Sudan-CAR border even some Banda, Bongo, Ndogo and Kreich (in Dar Fertit). Elsewhere in Darfur there are Birkid, Berti, Kimr, Sila, Tungur and even some Nubian speakers in Jebel Midob. To the north there are the important Central Saharan (Kanuric) Zaghawa and Bideyat with their multiple clans. Language, ethnicity, family and kin are critical in identity formation and cultural recruitment.
6. Arab populations in Darfur include the generic Guhayna camel-herders (e.g. Kabbabish) to the cattle-herding Baggara (Humr, Missiriya, Ta'isha, Rizeigat, Mahaliya, Kawahla, Hassaniya, Habbaniya, and Hawazma).

#### The Sudan, the Sahel and Africa are very complex ethnographically

Depending upon various cultural or linguistic measures, the Sudan has scores of major ethnic groups, the Sahel has hundreds, and Africa has thousands of ethnic groups. This diversity and complexity is not a problem or advantage unless put in context by such features such as marginalization, privilege, access, or discrimination. Prior to colonialism African people were locally sovereign 'nations' by being brought under colonial imposed states, their original 'nationality' was subordinated to 'tribal' status. Having recourse to king, family and local values is only a problem in the context of privilege, favoritism and or were neglected, taxed and punished.

Colonialism profoundly distorted the ethnographic map of Africa by forcing dissimilar peoples (e.g. within Sudan, Nigeria and Chad) to reside under common boundaries and jurisdictions on the one hand, while dividing people who wanted to be together on the other (e.g. Somalia).

On top of this, colonial state boundaries were whimsical and arbitrary having little relevance to patterns of seasonal migration (transhumance), labor migration, pilgrimage routes, and linguistic affiliation. Even within colonial states little was done for property demarcation except for "no-go" areas for the native populations. Thus, areas of conflict were very likely, and if located close to an impacted habitat systems such as the ITCZ, conflicts were virtually guaranteed

#### The Economics of Darfur as an local example of the Sahel and Africa in general

Essentially there are multiple intersections of multiple economies in Darfur. All can be seen as potential collaborators and competitors.

1. At the most general level the economies of Darfur can be roughly grouped as either traditional (barter and subsistence) or modern (cash oriented and articulated).
2. Each mode has its unique and independent features, while each is closely articulated with the others. They are distinguishable but in reality also inseparable.

3. The economies of Darfur can either be considered as local, national, or international. Typically local products are foodstuffs and handicrafts; national products are those with higher bulk value like gum arabic, sesame and sorghum and some livestock, international products are more often bigger livestock especially camels, but also natural resources such as oil and copper.
4. Economic activities can also range from the domestic and informal to the wider market place in the formal sector.
5. The main modes of production are pastoral nomadism (transhumance) of various livestock, strategies and scales, and agriculture (mostly rainfed when possible); and commerce (either local market exchange or long distance shipping) by truck or rail from Nyala.
6. Even before the present conflict, each mode of production is facing notable constraints. Pastoralists have issues of trespass and land registry as well as diminished water resources and lack of market price control to prices. Hill farmers are vulnerable to trespass and degraded ecology, transport and marketing issues. Commercial merchants have severe transport problems with poor infrastructure. All people in Darfur suffer in one way or the other from unfavorable core-periphery relations vis-a-vis Khartoum. All people in Darfur are suffering because of inadequate and declining rainfall. Now all are suffering from persistent violence and insecurity.

#### 6. Governance and Justice in Darfur and in Islamic Africa

Parallel to the economic system, there are traditional and modern systems of governance and administration in Darfur.

1. Traditional governance of the state of Darfur ranged was founded in, by, and for the sovereign dynastic sultans of independent Darfur who ruled effectively by the principles of Islamic law.
2. Traditional governance at the local level was in each dar (district, guided by a *sheikh*) or council of elders (*mejlis ash-shayukh*) who could adjudicate and settle non-capital cases like trespass and livestock theft.
3. Modern governance was guided by principles of modern, integrated, nationally based law and civil service. Especially in the Nimieri years the traditional system was reduced but without full local articulation of the new system. The evolutionary gap between the old and the new systems might have made no difference if the ecological and political crisis had not emerged in the wake. When matters deteriorated there was no effective management system in place.

4. Modern administration also moved from the originally sovereign Sultanate of Darfur to a unitary province of Darfur. Then in the 1990s Darfur was split into north and south and most recently into three provinces of north, west and south. Done in the spirit of decentralization of Khartoum's authority, it was perceived in Darfur as a further weakening of local administration and marginality of the dismembered province.
5. As the present conflict evolved, mechanisms for conflict resolution were in a contested state of flux. Quite rapidly local problems became national. Verbal debates evolved into violent clashes. [Islamic] legitimacy of the national government failed and unity of the increasingly diverse rebels was elusive. This hindered efforts to sit at a common negotiating table to manage a conflict now out of control. Moreover at least one of the rebel groups in Darfur has a national and not just local agenda

### Governance in Sudan and Africa

This topic is vast and complex but some summary points can be made to say that there is a great range of systems of governance found in Africa. This can include egalitarian bands and other forms of acephalous society to chiefdoms, and kingdoms, as well as imperial states that are highly cephalous. Africa has been colonized; and some African states have been colonizers as well. Traditionally there were hardly any cases of modern multi-party democracy, but African governance has been broadly consultative and has been built around principles of negotiation. Bodies such as councils of elders, or other consultative bodies were widespread. Contrasting systems of colonial rule, 'indirect' for the British and 'direct' for the French and Portuguese tried either to instrumentalize colonial rule through existing hierarchies, or tried to transformed African society in some sort of western form. In the first instance it tended to 'fossilized' traditional African society in increasingly anachronistic ways, or in the second instance it pursued assimilation with no realistic plan to actually transformed the majority into citizens of the colonial metropole.

Thus modern African governance inherited from two sources, the deformed African traditions couple with the colonial models. For the deformed traditions there were acephalous societies with leaders having little legitimacy and for the cephalous societies they could be seen has colonial accomplices. For the Sudan there are examples of both, especially over the very distinct north and south cultural, political and religious divided. It is important to recall that despite efforts to conceal the real nature of colonial rule and pacification, it was essentially rule by military conquest. For this reasons it is rather ironic that some European nations are critical of systems of military rule in Africa when it was how they ruled in the first place and that the inherited structures of governance were very heavily derived from the earlier colonial military period. The fact that many African nations have turned to multiparty democracy must be seen as creditable, even amidst some notorious cases to the contrary. On the other hand, the mythology that military rule will be honest and free of corruption is certainly disproved. Nor does it necessarily mean that it has no stability or legitimacy. Some security regimes are surprisingly and unhappily very stable. The content is much more critical in this later respect that in the form or image.

## 7. Religion in Darfur and Islamic Africa

While, virtually all people of Darfur are Muslim, there are various ways of being Muslim and varying political ideologies. Differentiating these groups is essential to understand the present conflict.

1. The vast majority of the population of Darfur is Sunni Muslim, following Maliki legal traditions, with substantial influences of local and regional turuq (religious brotherhoods).
2. Despite the appearance of religious homogeneity one may distinguish: a.) orthodox, politicized Islam (“Islamists”), b.) practiced orthodox Islam and c.) syncretic, popular and folk Islam.
3. Further distinction can be made about the varying views that Islam should have vis-a-vis state power. Shall Islam and Shari’a Law be unitary and universal? Shall it only govern believers? Shall Islam be limited to personal status matters? Shall there be separation of religion and state? Answers to these questions are very contentious.
4. For the endogenous Arab populations and the ruling elites of Darfur one can generally say that they are ardent practicing Muslims following the spirit of the “Five Pillars” and the Quran. Some participated in the political parties existing at times of democracy.
5. There are those linked to the National Islamic Front or its successors who follow an “Islamist” agenda which puts Islam at the center of state law, and policy and practice. Some groups in Darfur follow this approach so that, once again, simple dichotomies do not work. Not to mention the intricacies of Khartoum politics, especially at this present unstable time of more openness and a governmental of national unity.
6. For those with traditional beliefs and practices, there is folk and syncretic Islam in which folklore, “non-Islamic” beliefs and practices are mixed and merged with orthodoxy. Sufism, soothsaying, amuletic protection, local shrines and such are easily merged with “official” Islam.

## 8. The Application of Force and Violence in Darfur

The context of violence in Darfur has substantially complicated an already complex picture.

1. For Darfur violence, one size does not fit all. The simplistic or even propagandistic, efforts to depict the rebel or government forces with a single lens have not helped to understand or negotiate or resolve the situation.

2. Traditional violence of livestock theft and trespass has long been a part of Darfur; but it was formerly managed
3. The violence of today follows all taxonomies from individual opportunistic banditry and crime; looting of NGOs, gender crimes, attacking peace keepers, irregular raids on capitols. It can be civilian to civilian, militia (janjaweed) to civilian, civilian to militias, militia vs. rebels, rebel vs. rebel, government forces with proxy forces and militias, and even state to state violence. To simplistically view all violence in Darfur uncritically as “genocide” is not helpful in analytical, tactical or strategic terms.
4. There may well be cases of “crimes against humanity and war crimes” but to use this as political leverage rather than in post conflict judicial proceedings has complicated and internationalized the application of armed and military force.
5. The proliferation of serious small arms Kalashnicovs, IEDs, RPGs, and now anti-tank weapons and even some SAM-7s with mobility by 4x4 vehicles has made a mini arms race in which peacekeeping and state forces and under-equipped especially in terms of light armor, helicopters as well as general logistic support for AU/UN hybrid forces.
6. The spiraling lawlessness in Darfur in which no authority or group is controlling is a very aggravating context of the conflict.

### History of Darfur

As the complex history of Darfur is very long it is easy to see prevailing themes. For example, one can see where efforts could be made to achieve specific short-term objectives and likewise it is clear where efforts will likely fail or the potential gains might not be worthwhile. In brief, Darfur has spent far more of its known political history as an independent entity or sultanate, than it has as part of the wider Sudan. Indeed, Darfur has been a rival for, or source of, power for the central government of Sudan. Respectively, in the times of the Funj Sultanates (1504 to 1821) it competed for power along the Nile and Gezira. In Turkish times, Darfur was semi-autonomous, or in Mahdist times (1885-1898) it was a source of the armed forces of the Khalifa ‘Abdullahi. When the Mahdiya was defeated by the British, Darfur reverted for full sovereignty until it was finally reconquered 18 years later only in 1916 when it was brought under British colonial military rule. Even then, according to Metz (1992:233), during the years 1898 to 1928, the British conducted 170 punitive missions throughout Sudan to crush neo-Mahdists, and intervene in inter-ethnic conflict, but most of such actions were in Darfur as the southern Sudan was ruled with indifference and indirect rule at best. In modern times, soldiers from Darfur were the backbone of the Sudanese army. Even in Early 2008, rebel forces from Darfur reach all the way to Omdurman in a bold surprise raid on the capitol’s suburbs. Some believe that the raid’s political objectives included weakening or toppling the current regime. Thus, irrespective of who is ruling Sudan the long-standing tendency to use political measures and military force to bring Darfur under

control, or to have Darfur challenge Khartoum authority have usually failed or have been very costly with dubious results and value. The notion that the present conflict in Darfur is something utterly new would clearly be incorrect.

Plainly, a look at the present history of Darfur needs to take account of its earlier history to set the stage for some of the modern dynamics and conflicts. Its history can be divided into four periods. 1) The ancient period is mainly known mainly from archaeological records. 2) The medieval period that is starting to be known archaeologically but is also known from contemporary texts. 3) The dynastic period (including the Daju, Tungur and Keira Sultanates) takes Darfur to 1916. Finally 4) the period of annexation that itself has four phases:

- a) Turco-Egyptians rulers,
- b) Sudanese Mahdists,
- c) Anglo-Egyptian colonialists
- d) all of the post-colonial Sudanese regimes.

### The Ancient Period: The Nile Valley Hinterland

There is a limited archaeological record in Darfur from recent surface surveys and some excavations before 2003 of various ancient and medieval strata but chronology and pottery typologies are still being refined although connections to the Egyptian and Sudanese Nile valley as well as the deeper Sahara are clearly established. People who were essentially ancestors to the present populations have certainly populated the region for many millennia. It is most likely that governance in Darfur was at the level of organization of a stable and autonomous kingdom on consortium of regional kingdoms. In these early periods, the later Arab populations were not present. There are passing textual references from ancient Egypt from as early as the Old Kingdom in the documented travels to Sudan/Nubia/Kush by Harkuf and other Hekaib (governors of Aswan). This travel took place along the 40-days road from Middle Egypt to the Selima oasis and then on to tributary donkey and (later camel) routes into Darfur and Kordofan on the Wadi al-Milk. Equally and very early, Darfur straddled east-west trade and migration routes along the Sahel.

### The Medieval Period of kingdom consolidation

Islam was blocked by Christian Nubia (northern Sudan) for seven centuries. This is a subject that will be pursued later as it is from contemporary Christian references from Medieval Nubia that we have some of written traces of Darfur. Thus, Islam mainly entered Darfur from the Muslim empires to the west (Mali, Songhai, Bornu, Kanem, and Wadai). It also came across the Sahara from Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya during the early Islamization of the Sahel. Islam arrived in Darfur as part of the quest for law and legitimacy for the small Darfur kingdoms in about the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Independent Dynastic Periods of State Formation

The Daju dynasty has an unknown starting time but at least it goes back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the medieval period if not much earlier. The Daju people occupied the

southern terminus of the 40-days road and dominated local trade until successor states replaced them. The Daju are a relative isolated group of Eastern Sudanic language speakers. They were pre-Islamic and non-Arab. The themes of independence from the Nile valley and early state formation must be considered with respect to the military and political struggles of today. Until the increased competition with the successor dynasty one may consider that Daju was stable and persistent.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Tungur Dynasty succeeded the Daju rulers. They accepted Islam to legitimate and order their independent state that also accommodated their traditional beliefs as well. Competition for ruling Darfur was obviously present, as it is today, but evidently this competition was within the ruling elite and their armed personnel and was without outside intervention. After almost three centuries of continuous rule, the last sultan of the Tungur dynasty after 1600 was Ahmad al-Maqr the 'wise stranger.' The Tungur dynastic authority reached Wadai in eastern Chad and even further west to Kanem in northeastern Nigeria and western Chad. African Union troops from Nigeria have been reported killed in action in Darfur today. Again, this is not a new occurrence.

The modern themes of "spill over" conflict from Darfur to Chad are not at all new to the region, indeed such internal rivalries are essentially permanent but usually without intervention of outside powers including Khartoum. Even the transition from the Tungur dynasty to the Keira was achieved peacefully when al-Maqr provided for the peaceful transfer of power to this following dynasty by marriage into the ruling circles. Noting that much of the present conflict in Darfur is between rebel groups that have a degree of ethnic affiliation is also not new. In addition that the issues of sovereignty vs. a relationship to power in Khartoum are still strongly centered on the political gameboard.

The Keira Dynasty descended from the Kunjuru branch of the Fur. The Fur language belongs to its own distinct linguistic group. Other main language groups of Darfur such as the Berti, Zaghawa, Bideyat languages belong to Kanuric Central Saharan language family. This is just one of many fault lines in contemporary Darfur. Modern ethnic cleavages in Darfur are further confounded by class, ideology and gender, but certainly this much earlier history has notably influence aspects of the ethnic rivalries and patterns of political recruitment of today.

### The Annexation Period and deepening Core-Periphery Tensions

Turco-Egyptian rulers intruded into Darfur with the defeat of Sultan Ibrahim in 1874 by the infamous slave trader Zubayr Pasha Rahma. Slave raiding in *Dar Fertit* and *Hofrat an-Nahas* in Darfur was especially extensive and ruthless. This began, rather late, the period when central Sudanese powers sought to annex Darfur for reasons of exploiting its products and controlling their trade.

### Mahdist and Colonial Times

Anglo-Egyptian rulers conquered the Sudan in 1898 but took some months to hunt down the Khalifa 'Abdullahi and sort out rival French claims to the Upper Nile. The collapse of Mahdist rule allowed for the reestablishment of the Sultanate of Darfur since it was remote from the Nile valley conflicts. However this regional rival to English

power could not be tolerated for ever so in 1916 the British sent Hubert Huddleston (1880-1950) to suppress the Sultanate during which time he killed the last Sultan 'Ali Dinar. As a conservative colonial officer and military commander Huddleston also saw service in crushing the 1924 White Flag Society revolt as well as suppressing the Workers' Affairs Association, the nascent Graduate's Congress and even the 1944 protests against colonialism in Tuti island in Khartoum. Rewarded for this military successes in Sudan Huddleston was appointed as Governor General from 1940-1947. Such memories of British colonial practices in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan make modern Sudanese extremely apprehensive about any British forces returning to the region for any reason.

As noted above, post colonial administrations of the Sudan, whether democratic or military have generally pursued policies of strong centralization of power in the capital and along the core Nile valley. Peripheral regions are typically neglected and their neglect is often at the roots of regional resistance, especially if compounded by poor governance and exacerbated by environmental crisis.

## **SIDEBAR**

### Relations between Islamic Egypt and Christian Nubia: the case of the Baqt"

With tensions between Christianity and Islam riding high these days, an a good bit of stereotyping the Muslims and Christians can NOT get along, especially in Sudan, it is also worth while to have a brief look at the six centuries in which Sudan was Christian while Egypt was Muslim. This section addresses the enigmatic question of the long and complex relationship between Islamic Egypt and Christian Nubia. Once Arabs and Islam reached Egypt in 638 CE, they fairly zoomed across North Africa and into Europe by 711 CE in only seventy-three years. Meanwhile, with a similar intent, Islam rapidly went south in Egypt but Nubian Christians stubbornly halted its spread for almost seven centuries. The non-aggression pact or *baqt* that resulted between Muslim Egypt and Christian Nubia is often considered one of the most long lasting treaties in the world. What were some of the complex factors that gave Christian Nubia such strength to resist and absorb Islam? What can be learned from this *baqt* treaty that can be applied to the present? How did it navigate the terrain in Egypto-Nubian rivalry, resistance, reciprocity, and détente.

Both sides of the politico-religious equation need to be examined to understand it more fully. Indeed, taking the longest span of Egypto-Nubian relations there were various measures and practices established to manage the economic, political and military relations between these two powers on the Nile. A critical and pioneering historiographic account offered by Spaulding (1995) has raised important and stimulating questions about whose interests were being served by this treaty as well as how well it was really observed and variously understood by the parties. Also considered are issues of the nature of the sources that have shaped the common view of the *baqt*. The investigation and conclusions that follow are much inspired by a close reading of Spaulding. Then the paper compiles and reviews the evidence and chronology to the extent that it is presently known. Students of this time and subject are strong encouraged to review his anti-Orientalist critique of the relevant primary sources, especially al-Maqrizi, al-Hakam, Yazid, and al-Masudi (Spaulding, 1995: 579, 582, 583, 588).

### **Preliminary Questions:**

The seventy-three years (638-711 CE) that were needed to bring Islam from eastern Egypt into Western Europe is an extremely rapid socio-political and religious movement. This contrasts very sharply with the period of 638 years (from 638 CE to 1276 CE) that it took to bring Islam a much shorter distance to arrive at northern Christian Nubia at Dongola. Or one might say that it was 866 years (to 1504 CE) when Islam was finally made the state religion of southern Nubia at Soba above the confluence of the two Niles. What accounts for this great difference?

To what degree was the *baqt* actually observed or abrogated? To what extent was it mutually beneficial? Who did it really serve? At the foundation of these questions is the changeable contextual and circumstantial definition of the *baqt* by the two negotiating parties. Cases could be made at various times that it was alternatively understood in quite different ways by the different and changing parties. These possibilities can include that it was a cease-fire, a peace treaty, a (slave) trade accord, a non-aggression pact, a schedule of tribute payments, a documentary instrument of surrender, or recognition of mutual political autonomy. The *baqt* may also have been perceived as a 'free pass' system, a set of regulations for fugitive slaves and rebels, a security truce, or rules for reciprocal gift-giving between the elites of the respective parties.

Furthermore there are no surviving original copies of the *baqt*, presuming that it was written down at some point, or was this just a common informal understanding to be renegotiated periodically? The existing records are only second hand reports by the Islamic side and there are no known accounts on the side of Christian Nubia (Spaulding, 1995: 577-578). Moreover, the very long relations between Egyptians and Nubians from Dynastic times and in the Greco-Roman period could also lead observers to see that this was only the latest form of many varied understandings and relationships. One could conclude that the *baqt* was only the categorical name for the relations at a certain historical period. Perhaps it only formally conceptualized this ancient relationship during the medieval period and was thereby not really that new at all. From this hesitating historiographic account, and multiple and changeable interpretations there is no wonder that historians and anthropologists have not been consistent in the appraisal of this significance of this historical political accord.

It is generally agreed that the term *baqt* is a corrupted form of *paktum* or *pakton* from the Ptolemaic Greeks and Romans who had been able to settle peace treaties with their southern Nubian neighbors in pre-Christian times (Shinnie 1954:6). To investigate this dimension one needs first to explore some of the far earlier relationships between Egypt and Nubia (Lobban, 2004). For example, the Predynastic and Archaic times the relationship appears to have been largely that of equals. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms the Egyptian relationship with Nubia was a military standoff with a clear demarcation of territory by a program of military Egyptian fortification. In the First and Second Intermediate periods, C-Group or other Nubians recovered major portions of Lower Nubia. Moreover, in the Second Intermediate Period Nubians of Kerma clearly had political and military relations with the Hyksos in the common objective to restrict Egyptians to the Theban region and Upper Egypt. In their respective Golden Ages, (five centuries for the Egyptian New Kingdom and about a century for the Nubian Dynasty

XXV) both Egypt and Nubia had the capacity to rule each other. Even when the five centuries of Egyptian manorial rule was established in Nubia/Kush a very common theme was Nubian revolts against forced tribute.

Moreover, we can report on clear military demarcation of the border regions by Egyptian fortresses and proclamations in the Old and Middle Kingdom, or Nubian reoccupation in between. While we cannot report on any peace treaties for these periods, we can find that the borders were sharply defined for military and commercial reasons. In Persian-Napatan times and in Ptolemaic-Meroitic times the control of Lower Nubia fluctuated periodically without any major Ptolemaic fortification program. Romans faced similar dilemmas in their relationships with Nubia. They had a major fortification at Qasr Ibrim and at Dush in the western desert. There were also brief attacks and counterattacks into Nubia perhaps as far as Napata. But there were also Nubian raids on Aswan and Philae, and finally a rather sustained peace treaty between Roman Egypt and Meroe negotiated on the Aegean Island of Samos in about 20 BCE. This peace treaty or pact favored Romans to the extent that they won regional peace, but it favored the Blemmyes and Nubians with a reasonable salaried tributary status. This evidence suggests a very long regional theme of 'rivals on the Nile' as well as a broad tendency to have the borders generally oscillate between the first and second cataracts with the 'Golden Age' exceptions for both being greater territorial extent. Even in the 19th century CE Nubian forces (under the Sudanese Khalifa 'Abdullahi attacked as far north as Toshka in Egyptian Nubia). Various times in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have found very positive to very negative relations between modern Egypt and Sudan. It is the position of this paper that the famed *baqt* drawn in medieval times was very much a part of this tradition or rivals, irrespective of who was controlling Egypt and Nubian resistance was a far more significant factor in the equation that usually understood from Egypto-centric interpretations.

### **A closer look at the provisions of *baqt* accords**

Although there is no surviving original text of the *baqt*, early Arabic writers began to report about the *baqt*. According to Among the Arab scholars are al-Maqrisi and al-Mas'udi (reported by Spaulding 1995; Vantini, 1975: 132-133; Welsby, 2002: 70-71). 'Abd al-Hassan ibn Hussein ibn 'Ali al-Mas'udi was a famed scholar, traveler, and geographer who was born at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Abasside Baghdad of a family from the Hedjaz. Already the renowned *khulafa* of Baghdad such as Mansur (754-775) and the *Baet al-Hikma* of Ma'mum (813-833) had already reached celebrated status in scholarship and the sciences. Nonetheless the original *baqt* document was already lost and the Muslim side of the equation was not inclined to look objectively at the Christian side and there the documents, if there were any in the first place, had also been lost. His forty years of extensive travel resulted in his *Kitab al-Tanbih wa al-Ashraf* and his *Muruj al-Dahab...* published in the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century. Thus even the very best scholarship did not have all the possible views or understandings of the *baqt*.

Reconstructed from the Egyptian side, it was expected that the Nubian king should export 360-365 slaves to the (Muslim) Egyptian treasury. Second, a special allotment of 40 slaves was allocated for the Egyptian *emir's* personal use. Third, another allotment of 20 slaves was directed to the Aswan-based, Egyptian overseer of the *baqt*. Fourth, a group of five slaves was accorded to the Aswan-based Egyptian judge who also

regulated the observance of the *baqt*. Each of the twelve witnesses of the Aswan transaction received a slave for their service. With this all considered, Egyptians expected a group of from 437 to 442 exported slaves any time the provisions of the *baqt* were being observed. In addition to the basic slave exports, some number of exotic goods such as animal hides; wild animal, and likely, ivory and ostrich feathers and eggs were also exchanged but not expressly noted in the inherited record. The ethnicity of these slaves is not noted but they were presumably taken from slave raids in the eastern and southern Sudan such as in the Ethiopian borderlands or in the Nuba Mountains. But without military occupation of Nubia the Egyptians had little capacity to enforce these provisions. Moreover in Abbasid times (750-1258 CE) Egypt was technically subordinate to Baghdad as it had been subordinate to Damascus in the earlier Ommayyad times (661-750). Even when Egypt was ruled more directly from medieval Cairo in Fatimid times (969-1171 CE) internal security disorders sometimes resulted in weakness at the borders or heavy recruitment of Nubian soldiers in their armies. Certainly that was not consistent with the provision in the *baqt* that limited mutual relocation to the others' lands.

On the side of the Nubian elite, their reciprocal expectation was in foodstuff and cloth. The food goods were itemized as 1000 *ardeb* of wheat (about 200,000 liters), 300 *ardeb* (about 60,000 liters) of wheat to those designated by the king of Christian of Mukkura, and another 1000 *ardeb* of barley. The king also received 1,000 jugs (presumably of wine or beer), while his court members received an additional 300 jugs. Loving horses, the Nubian king also received two of the highest quality horses. All of the other regularly designated items were cloth. There were 4 pieces of *qabati* cloth for the king, 3 pieces of *qabaati* cloth for his representatives, along with 8 pieces of *buqturiya* cloth, 5 pieces of *mu'tama* cloth, a mantle of velvet or wool *mukhmala* cloth, 10 pieces of *Abu Buqtor* cloth, and 10 pieces of *Ahasi* cloth.

The scale and nature of this trade was not only preceded by in a variety of formal and informal relations between Egypt and Nubia, but it is very much parallel to the later Atlantic slave trade in West Africa. In both cases, the slave consuming regions exported food, cloth, spirits and manufactured items for slaves while the slave exporting regions used their exports for precapitalist state development and for maintenance of respective kings and sultans and their retinues. Viewed from the point of view of the respective elites the *baqt* could well have been seen in terms of balanced reciprocity and elite gift giving. When coercion was applied it was more than likely be resisted. In addition, while the items clearly were different, the overall contemporary value of the imports and exports on either side was fairly well balanced in economic terms, if not in human terms. Slavery was an established part of global medieval societies.

Moreover in the early period where the *baqt* was supposed to function 641-652 it was clearly not observed effectively and only when Nobatia and Mukkura were merged in 697-707 CE did Nubia speak in one voice. Southern Nubia or the kingdom of Alwa at Soba apparently does not ever figure in the understanding or enforcement of then *baqt*. Thus the first 50 years of the *baqt* were shaky at best and internal stability between the two lands only weakened the accords however understood.

### **Nubian Christianity as a failing State in the Fifteenth Century.**

The Synod of Florence was held 1438-39 to try to resolve the schismatic differences within Christianity between Rome, Alexandria and Ethiopia. It failed, as did

the earlier attempts. Such divisions in eastern Christendom were very significant in the fall of the Holy Roman Empire of the East to Islam in 1453. It became just a matter of time before Muslims would advance further in Nubia. A passing reference to Joel of Dotawo hints that some Christians were still extant in 1464.

### **The End of Nubian State Christianity in the Sixteenth Century**

At last, the southernmost Nubian Christian kingdom of Alwa collapsed in 1504 AD during Burji Mamluke rule in Egypt to the north. However Alwa was brought to an end by the rise of the Islamic Funj Sultanates further south at Sennar. Although the Christian kingdoms had been defeated, isolated Christian communities in Nubia were still reported as appealing for religious support from Christian Ethiopia as late as 1520. Such was the case during the visit to Ethiopia of the Portuguese missionary Francisco Alvares. Another visitor, in 1522, was the Jewish traveler, David Reubeni, who visited both Soba and Sennar and later met with the Pope and Spanish king with a plan to resist the Ottomans who had only come to power in Egypt a few years before. For much of the following two centuries, Christians in Ethiopia, backed by the Portuguese sought to avoid Arab control of the Eastern Mediterranean, managed to maintain a rather stable frontier between Funj and Ethiopia. A variety of religious Christian missions and contacts took place during the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1541 there was a mission to neighboring Ethiopia. In 1624 Bishop Christdoulous, an 'Ethiopian' monk at the Monastery of the Forty Martyrs died in Egypt, where he was buried. In 1647 a visit to Sennar was undertaken by the Portuguese priests, Giovanni d'Aguila and Antonio da Pescopagano; and in the 1699-1711 period which saw three papal missions to Ethiopia all of which passed through Dongola and Sennar on the way to Ethiopia.

Even after Islam was instituted as the state religion in Nubia there is an interesting case of Christian survival at Dotawo ('below Do') that continued as a small Christian principality located in Lower Nubia near the second cataract. It is known from textual references on Old Nubian. Its domain ranged from Qasr Ibrim to Jebel Adda or possibly further south into the Butn al-Hajr. According to William Adams (1977), some eight minor kings, George, Basil, Paul, Simon, David, Siti, Elteeit, and Joel are known from the small Christian kingdom of Dotawo from the mid 12th century until its record fades in the 15th century. Based on linguistic and geographical evidence it is probable that Dotawo may be the same as Jebel Adda. Evidently they were often tributary to the king of Mukkura at Dongola. The closing chapter for Christian Dotawo is with the proclamation of the Muslim leader Kanz al-Dawla as king in 1323. His Beni Kanz followers were probably subdued in 1365 as Egyptian Muslims swept into the region and the ruling king of Dongola (Mukkura) took up residence at Dotawo. After the arrival of Islam in the early 14th century it was much weakened but it survived along with that of Alwa until about the late 15th century. Trapped between expanding Islam in Egypt and declining Christianity in Nubia probably explains the confusion about the extent and allegiance of Dotawo. Possibly Dotawo was a refuge for Christians fleeing from Islamic excesses in Egypt. This may be the case for Atiri Island.

### **Some General Observations**

The *baqt* between Muslim and Christians on the medieval Nile was one of many common historical efforts adjudicate the regional rivalry that had existed for millennia

and still exist to the present in current tensions between Cairo and Khartoum and Sudanese efforts to foment instability in Egypt. This is very much an established Nubian practice to put competitive pressure on Egypt especially in Lower Nubia as well as Nubian interest in alliances with Egyptian enemies, such as the Hyksos (in the Second Intermediate Period) and the Crusaders (in medieval times). Muslim Egyptians certainly sought to expand into Nubia from the 7th century onward. But effective Nubian resistance, alliance building with Crusaders, non-payments of the *baqt*, raids into Egypt, early unification of Nobatia and Mukkura, and isolation of Alwa made it impossible for centuries and slow even when it did take place. Even when Muslims reached Nubia it was mostly due to the complex kinship, cultural and linguistic relations of Muslim Kenzi Nubians and the Kanz ad-Dawla with Christian Danagla Nubians that lubricated this process. Even when Islam finally reached Dongola in 1317 with the Christian church being transformed into a mosque this was almost 700 years after Islam entered Egypt. Moreover it was still another two centuries before the last Christian kingdom fell as Soba and even then it was not Egyptian Muslims who took over, but it was the start of Sudanese Islam in the form of the Funj and Fur Sultanates. And even then there were some small surviving Christian enclaves such as Dotawo lingering on in Lower Nubia.

In addition it is difficult to define precisely when the *baqt* was fully in force or which date should be used for its termination. The reasonable confusion to define the period in which the *baqt* was operative is matched by trying to determine the degree to which it was enforced and for whose purposes and whose understandings. Perhaps as much as one third of the period that it was supposed to be in effect, one could argue that it had, in fact, lapsed. Thus the miracle of the *baqt* was not so much that it worked perfectly, for it did not, but that its ambiguous and flexible interpretations allowed the *baqt* metaphor to be so enduring in any form to manage the endless push and pull of Egypto-Nubian relations.

### **Summary Points**

In principle the long lasting *baqt* shows that common resolve and common interests can make a generally workable and lasting peace. It also shows that in a present region characterized by conflict there have also been very long periods of internal and external peaceful relations. As much as we need to know and understand what circumstances promote and cause conflict, it is also important to understand what circumstances promote sustainable peace. True, the length of the observance of the *baqt* is somewhat mythological since it was not that unique and was often violated or ignored. The presentation of its 'durability' periodically served the interest of the two, or more, elites of the two or more 'nations' involved. Was it supposed to last this long? Even the starting and ending dates could be debated as well as very long periods when it was clearly not in effect because of suspended exchange or military or political upheavals.

1. The asymmetry of the official protocol of the *baqt* was 'adjusted' by Nubians by failing to pay the tribute and periodically attacking Egypt, especially in inter-regnum periods of relative weakness in Egypt. It periodically lapsed and was renewed as could be negotiated or enforced, or ignored by the separate parties at times of their relative strength or weakness. Despite the provisions that Nubians should not reside in Egypt and that Egyptians should not reside in Nubia this was clearly overlooked

for much of the time. Indeed the export of slaves from Nubia meant that the provisions of the *baqt* could not help but be violated.

2. There are multiple and varied definitional and perceptual differences in the understanding of the *baqt*. Were the exchanges supposed to be annual or every three years? If this was negotiated by mutual agreement then there could be little provision for enforcement. And if by mutual agreement, then was this mainly an agreement to control the economic terms of the Nile valley slave trade? A case can be made (Welsby, 2002:209) that the *baqt* was, reality, heavily centered on the ancient and subsequent Nile Valley and Saharan slave trade. In this respect it is very similar to the West African trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in terms of the scale, organization, and the nature of the goods exchanged for slaves. Did the delayed or unilateral record in the Arabic sources truly reflect the original understanding? Was there a corresponding record kept in Old Nubian or Coptic that reflects the same or different understanding of the *baqt*?
3. The *baqt* is not so extraordinary in terms of the long-lasting regional rivalry between Nubian and Egypt. Greco-Roman times reached the same practical result and the Old and Middle Kingdoms had their score of huge mud bricks fortresses to separate the Kerma rivals from Egypt. Still Kerma was allied with the Hyksos to try to restrain the Egyptians. Even in the case of the five centuries of Egyptian imperial rule over Nubia the most important figure in its administration was the 'King's Son of Kush' whose main tasks were keeping order and maintaining a flow of Nubia goods as tribute to Egypt.
4. In short, the process of the arrival of Islam into Nubia was longer, more complex, more contentious, more negotiated, and more Nubian than one normally imagines if judging from the Egyptocentric perspective that sees Nubia only as a pale reflection of greater Egypt. Rivalry and cooperation on the Nile was there before, was there then, and apparently is here to stay. This paper concludes by saying that the study and analysis of the *baqt* is really only starting rather than ending. There is much more to see in this relationship than meets the eye.
5. **Post Script, 2008:** Perhaps the modern peace treaty, the CPA, (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) struggling but still in force; the ESPA (Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement), rather well holding; and the DPA (Darfur Peace Agreement) mostly failed, may work as well (or as poorly) depending upon point of view. With the observations of the medieval *baqt* in mind and a modern foundation of rivalries for wealth, land, natural resources, military power, natural resources, and political administration suggests that vigilance will be required and that there will be many tests along the way. Win-win scenarios of mutual benefit can survive, those built on mistrust and external forces are clearly in much greater jeopardy.

#### State Formation in the Sudan from Ancient to Today: Lessons learned?

Far earlier, far more sweeping, and far more complex than the known regional history of Darfur is the vast prehistory and history of Sudan when it has passed under various names, domains and territories. These include Kerma (independent Yam, Irem, 2500-1500 BC); Kush (colonial, 1500-1000 BC); Kush or Dynasty XXV (imperial, when Nubians ruled Egypt); or Napata (independent, 664-350 BC). These were followed by Meroe (350 BC to 350 AD); X-groups (350-550 AD); Christian Kingdoms (550-1504

AD); the Funj Sultanates (1504-1821 AD) and then on to the periods that were just noted in the micro or regional view of Darfur. In these relatively few pages, this is not the place to comment on or investigate all of the events, personages, relationships and engagements that are involved.

However, with the focus at hand on failed states and changing state relations it is reasonable and appropriate to use a summary form of the relevant data to see what the past has provided for the present analysis. In turn this can lead us to deeper anthropological analysis of the proceeding state relations in the region. Virtually any variety of state relations can be found ranging from when Nubians (Sudanese occupied Egypt to the longer period when Egyptians occupied Sudan. There are times of independence and of indifference, there are times when states failed mainly because of internal collapse and crisis, and there are times when states along the Nile failed because of external invasion or aggression. With this historical cornucopia at hand several observations can be made about the cases of when states failed in the past and when and when they can or could fail at present.

Most common internal factors for state failure have been in interregnum crises of succession and or famine and drought. Since most of these ancient Nile valley civilizations had their agricultural economies based on river irrigation they were immunized from the persistent Sahelian and Saharan droughts. States away from the Nile relied on rain fed agriculture so they were more vulnerable or were usually, much smaller in size.

As for external factors for failed states, vigilant enemies, (e.g. Egypt, Ethiopia [Axum],) Darfur and so forth could see weaknesses in Sudan that they could take advantage of with foreign aggression and military occupation (e.g. Egypt, Turks, Britain). At the same time, considering this long sweep of history and looking specifically of the modern cases of colonial occupation of Sudan in general and of Darfur in particular has an equally long history of resistance. Sudan in general and Darfur in particular are so large scale and the climate so harsh that colonialist should think very carefully before engaging in a strategy to occupation. The bones of very many have filled the graves in Sudan and the wealth gained has often not been worth the cost to stay.

With such perspectives in mind, and the recent post-colonial history of Sudan in view, this light from the past can illuminate the present. Although starting the independence period in 1956 with multi-party democracy, the southern Sudan was already in revolt in 1955 and was much neglected not to mention subject to discriminatory treatment. By 1958 this government was toppled by a military coup d'état that endured until it was, itself toppled by a popular mass uprising in 1964 that brought democracy back to Sudan. Struggle with the on-going conflict in the southern Sudan the democratic government could not find its political footing and by 1969 the military regained control. This government by General Gaafar Nimieri quickly found the solution for the conflict in the south with the 1969 Regional Autonomy accord and in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1971 that empowered the marginal and aggrieved southerners. However, Nimieiri morphed from his socialist phase to his capitalist phase and finally to his Islamist phases and finally consumed all good will and constituencies and well as overshadowing his major peace achievements. He was himself toppled in 1985, with a brand new formation of anti Khartoum resistance (the SPLA) built in the south but with a national agenda. The civil war in the south then went on indecisively for another twenty

years and plural and vibrant democracy was returned to the Sudan from 1985 to 1989. Four years of that, and the military step back in to rule Khartoum with an authoritarian form of Islamism that was closely linked to the al-Qaeda movement of Osama bin Laden who resided in Sudan from 1990 to 1996. While he has gone to unknown locations, that government of General Omer Beshir is still in place in 2008. To recapitulate: every democratic epoch in Sudan has been followed by a military regime. A democratic government replaced every military regime. Neither the military nor the democratic regimes have permanently solved the problems of political representation. The bottom line of 52 years of post-colonial independence is 11 years of democracy and 41 years of military rule, with crises being generated faster than resolved. Large parts of the Sudan are not under effective control of the central government. If it were not for key diplomatic allies, huge amounts of oil revenues and relative security in Khartoum (the three towns) the Sudan would be a failed state. Widespread revolts, widespread poverty; interregnum crises, and with some potential enemies looking on with their proxy forces ready to carry out destabilizing activities. Since Sudan has ceased to function in normal state manner it is not surprising that its component provinces are suffering from the same maladies to an even greater extent. As seen in the sketch of the past where interregnum crises, famine, massive migrations to the capitol and brain drain outside of Sudan, and rebellions have brought down the major states of then past, one could say that Sudan is on life support. If it were not for the lack of effective northern opposition, a reign of fear of the security apparatus, and critical revenue generated from oil discoveries, the regime would have probably already gone into the history books. It has already lasted longer (19 years) than the last military government (16 years) that had three distinct identities

To this point we have looked at the specifics of Darfur as a state and as a province of a state as well as its internal complexities and the complex connections it has with the nation of which it is a part and the region where it is situated. Also noted are the general typologies, structures and functions of States.

Trying to investigate all of these variables is a daunting task for the modeler, but one can focus on causal (independent variable) especially if prediction is an applied objective. On the other hand, presented with such a rich and long history there are many cases from which empirical and concrete lessons can be learned. Causes for failing and surviving states can not be viewed in a vacuum without some view on the effect (dependent variables). Moreover, many variables are synergistic and are locked in feed back relations in which cause and effect are difficult to pry apart. One framework is multi-variable, step-wise regression analysis, as long as there is a data base that is large enough, the variable are well defined, as the measures are taken accurately.

With this all considered, how are the right variables selected for analysis with funds and time always being limiting factors? A working hypothesis here is that climate and ecological impact are problematic factors that can generate conflict, especially in the context of poor governance.

### Summary Model Generation

To be useful models need a solid theoretical and definitional foundation; an empirical basis and they need to be testable. Hopefully they should be predictable.

#### Issues that launched the conflict

- Water and Land Issues

- Lack of Conflict Resolution mechanisms
- Climate Change and Desertification across the Sahel
- Representation in Governance; Power Sharing
- Access to the Political Economy of Sudan
- Proliferation of Small Arms
- Identity and Discrimination
- Democratic debate about Religion and the State.

#### Issues at present

- AU/UN Peace Makers and Negotiators.
- Plans to bring Antagonists together.
- Adequate Logistic support for AU/UN peace keepers.
- The status of the Khartoum government as it moves to elections.
- The status of the other traditional parties in Sudan.
- The deterioration of relations between Sudan and Chad.
- Internationalization of the Conflict
- New issues with the ICC

#### Issues needing attention in the post-conflict future

- ◆ The status of the CPA and the SPLA in general.
- ◆ The status of the referendum over North/South unity.
- ◆ The status of Abyei.
- ◆ The status of the eastern Sudan and conflicts with Ethiopia.
- ◆ An unstable Horn of Africa and the struggle against “terrorism”.
- ◆ Capacity Building for the AU forces.
- ◆ The formation of AFRICOM by the US DoD.
- ◆ The outcome of the American elections.
- ◆ Discovery of more oil or water in Darfur.

#### Observations and aiming toward testable hypotheses and research questions:

By way of a conclusion, this paper has looked backward to see forward. It has also tried to see the conflict in Darfur not only in its own terms and context, but also with the multiple connections it has with the wider region. Clearly there are many additional “wild card” variables at this regional and global level. The variable “conflict” can be defined operationally by level or scale of violence. It could also be defined historio-graphically by change of regime, not just change of dynastic personnel. The history of Sudan provides numerous relevant examples of possible outcomes following different circumstances. So, to bring this all into sharper focus the following eight questions are left for further investigation.

1. Are there a greater **number of conflicts** between, or within, nations that are close to the ITCZ (8-12 degrees north of Equator or 8-12 degree south of the Equator)? Why?
2. For nations with **good governance** (transparency, accountability, grievance procedures) that lie in this zone are there more or less conflicts than for Africa on average?

3. For nations with adequate provision of **water** that lie in this zone are there more or less conflicts than for Africa on average? Can conflict generation be reduced by programs providing for water drilling and more wells?
4. Are conflicts less likely with **democratic or military governments**? Note that all peace agreements in Sudan were promulgated under military governments. Note that most of Sudanese post-colonial history was under military governments; note also that post-colonial strategies of state-based counter insurgency and rebel-based asymmetric warfare have not resulted in military victories on either side.
5. Are revolts (South, East, Darfur) **causes** by active political marginalization or is this an **effect** caused by climatic crisis and lack of good governance. Indeed, how are cause and effect distinguished in complex feedback relations?
6. Are **failed or failing states** just a part of the normal evolution of states and should they just be managed, rather than hopelessly trying to avoid them with unintended consequences?  
 Note that when **Kerma failed** (1500 BC) it was by military conquest by New Kingdom Egypt. When **New Kingdom colonialism failed** it was from internal problems of succession (Dynasty XX) and over-extension. Default independence of Nubia (Kush) did not result in chaos, just local rule. When **Dynasty XXV failed** it was from external aggression (Assyrians) and over-extension. When **Napata failed**, the capitol was simply moved to Meroe. When **Meroe failed** (350 AD) its conquerors (Axumites) did not stay and it mainly devolved into the X-Group period of local polities and not chaos or anarchy. Or when the last **Christian state (Alwa) failed** (1504 AD) it was rather calmly replaced by a syncretic Muslim Funj Sultanate? And when the **Funj Sultans failed** (1821) they summoned little resistance to the Turks. And when the **Turco-Egyptians failed** (1885 AD) they did so with an initially popular, and militarily-founded Muslim jihad (Mahdists), based, in part by the Arab groups (Ta'isha Baggara from Darfur and Kordofan). And when the **Mahdists failed** it was as much from internal collapse rooted in famine and repression as it was by military conquest of the Anglo-Egyptians. And when the **Anglo-Egyptian colonialists failed** it was chiefly by broadly democratic Sudanese agitation and their own problems of an over-extended empire.
7. Can **win-win, mutual benefit, conflict-reduction scenarios** be promoted? How? Note the centuries long *baqt* (peace treaty) between Christian Nubia (Sudan) and Muslim Egypt.
8. The one thousand years of successful **Muslim jihads across the Sahel and the Sahara** suggests that they will be here to stay. Should Muslims *jihads* just be viewed by its revivalist and anti-colonial resistance content rather than be fearfully perceived by it form and treated with polarizing strategies and tactics?

#### Footnotes

1. Presentation at the Military Operations Research Society (MORS) at the Argonne National Laboratory, Illinois, 15-17 April 2008]

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